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HAUNTING WOMEN: THE GOTHIC IN POE AND TIM BURTON

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This work is dedicated to my father, who always believed in me and to my supervisor, who gave me all the support.

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This work is dedicated to my father, who always believed in me and to my supervisor, Raghuram Sasikala, who gave me all the support.

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RESUMO

Este artigo examina, sucintamente, elementos Góticos nos contos “The Fall of the House of Usher”, “Ligeia”, “Berenice”, “Morella” e “Eleonora” do escritor Norte-americano Edgar Allan Poe, enfocando as protagonistas. O objetivo foi estudar a intertextualidade entre o escritor e a obra de cineasta Tim Burton, com referência específica ao filme *Corpse Bride*. Ambos os artistas refletem o Romantismo negro. O estudo das teorias sobre o Gótico explicadas por Botting (2010), Stevens (2010) e Hogle (2011) formaram a base deste trabalho e demonstraram a subversão de expectativas sobre o Gótico por Burton, através da introdução de elementos de humor e crítica social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gótico. Intertextualidade. Subversão.

ABSTRACT

This article briefly examines Gothic elements in the short stories “The Fall of the House of Usher”, “Ligeia”, “Berenice”, “Morella” and “Eleonora” by Edgar Allan Poe, focusing on the female protagonists. The objective was to study inter-textuality between Poe and the work of the filmmaker Tim Burton, with specific reference to his film *Corpse Bride*. Both artistes reflect the dark side of Romanticism. The study of theories about the Gothic expounded by Botting (2010), Stevens (2010) and Hogle (2011) demonstrates that Burton subverts our expectations about Gothic by introducing elements of humour and social criticism.

KEY WORDS: Gothic. Inter-textuality. Subversion.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Romanticism appeared in the late eighteenth century as an art of dream and fantasy, in opposition to the Enlightenment, which valued rationalism. The Gothic accompanied the rise of Romanticism in England, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) being the first famous novel of the genre. William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) are other well-known Gothic novels. In North America, Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798) was the first best-selling Gothic novel. The Gothic genre was popular because it appealed to all classes of readers, creating terror, fear and suspense by presenting stories featuring the mysterious and the supernatural. Edgar Allan Poe (1809 -1849) used Gothic elements in his short stories to illustrate the psychological condition of his central characters, emphasizing guilt, fear, monomania and evil. His short stories also demonstrate an obsession with the premature deaths of beautiful women and their return from the dead. From the early twentieth century onwards, the cinema also used the visual medium to excite fear in the viewer. Tim Burton, an admirer of Poe and of Vincent Price's performance in innumerable horror films, has adapted the Gothic mode in his work. Burton describes himself as an introverted child who loved horror movies: "I've always loved monsters and monster movies. I was never terrified of them. I just loved them from as early as I can remember." (SALISBURY, 2006,p.2). Our objective in this article has been to study similarities to some of Poe's short stories in Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*, which was inspired by a Jewish folk tale, and to point out his originality in the use of Gothic elements.

2. WHAT IS GOTHIC?

E.J.Clery (2011,p.21) declares that the use of the term *Gothic* to describe the literature of terror is fairly recent. Gothic literature represents a time when bourgeois society was on the rise. David Stevens says that “The Gothic represented tradition, hierarchy and aristocracy against dangerous modern, democratic- or at least populist-ideas.” (2010,p.9). Gothic has been defined by Fred Botting as “a writing of excess” (2010,p.1). He points out that Gothic “condenses the many perceived threats” to humanist and enlightenment values, “threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption.” (BOTTING 2010,p.2). David Stevens affirms that the Gothic style was a reaction against the classical order and formality of the eighteenth century. According to Botting, Gothic writing fascinates an increasingly secular world because it transgresses rational limits, moral laws and social proprieties, emphasizing emotion and imagination. Gothic fiction “seemed to promote vice and violence” (BOTTING 2010,p.4), presenting the possibility of “complete social disintegration in which virtue cedes to vice, reason to desire, law to tyranny.” (BOTTING 2010,p.5) At the same time, Gothic writing was never totally isolated from the problems of the period in which it was written.

The term “Gothic” is derived from the Germanic people called Goths regarded as barbarians because they have a different culture and belief of the Romans. Their traces were diluted by Roman culture, but an architectural innovation emerged during this period, the Gothic architecture, which was marked in many European cathedrals.

Jerrold E. Hogle comments that the phrase “Gothic fiction” includes prose or verse narrative, theatre and film, and that it “has become a long-lasting and major, albeit widely variable, symbolic realm in modern and postmodern western culture, however archaic the Gothic label may make it seem.” (2011,p.2). Kenneth Branagh feels that “...these Gothic tales seem to satisfy a deep seated fascination with the limits of human experience. They discuss what birth, life and death mean –why we’re here.” (*apud* STEVENS, 2010,p.37).

David Stevens (2010:46) points out some textual characteristics of the Gothic as being:

- a) a fascination with the past, especially the medieval era;
- b) a liking for the strangely eccentric, the supernatural, the magical and the sublime, sometimes subtly intermingled with the realistic;
- c) psychological insights;

- d) representation and stimulation of fear, horror, the macabre and the sinister within the context of a general focus on the emotional rather than the rational;
- e) frequently exotic settings and locations, although this tendency may be contrasted to a more 'domestic' Gothic tradition;
- f) plots within plots, often with multiple narrators, and other stylistic characteristics such as the use of overt symbolism.

Traditionally, the setting portrayed in Gothic literature is dark, obscure, gloomy and mysterious, invoking the return of the past and provoking both terror and laughter in the reader. Often Gothic fiction referred to the feudal period when the church had a strong influence on society, because the Catholicism and their rules of morality, chastity and celibacy wielded great power and dictated moral rules in that time. However, the recreation of a past era was less important than the creation of mood and atmosphere, according to David Stevens (2010,p.47). Botting describes the Gothic landscape as “desolate, alienating and full of menace” (2010,p.2). At first, Gothic locations were wild and mountainous. Often the action was set in haunted castles, churches and graveyards, and ruined buildings which were associated with medieval times. Later, the labyrinthian, dark streets of modern cities and old family homes also appeared in Gothic literature, full of threats of violence. Gothic fiction portrays mysterious incidents, secrets from the past, ghosts, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, fainting heroines, madmen, criminals. Evil in Gothic fiction is the result both of individual passion and social corruption. The supernatural element and the presence of the unknown in Gothic fiction create terror and strong emotion in the reader:

Linked to poetic and visionary power, the sublime also evoked excessive emotion. Through its presentation of the supernatural, sensational and terrifying incidents, imagined or not, Gothic produced emotional effects on its readers rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response. (BOTTING, 2010:4)

As a result, imagination dominates reason. At the same time, Botting affirms that Gothic novels utilize transgression to underline the dangers of ignoring established values. This is because at that time fiction was seen as a form of social education.

In the nineteenth century a change occurred in the setting of Gothic fiction, which became more domestic, portraying family dramas which were the results of the anxieties caused by the progress which was a consequence of political revolutions, industrialization, urbanization and scientific discoveries. Some writers incorporated both types of settings in

their stories. In the eighteenth century, the objective was the expulsion of the evil elements and the restoration of balance and limits, through the victory of the good characters. In the nineteenth century, the era of political revolutions led to the instability of social institutions. Gothic settings did not cause terror in the reader. The Gothic “became part of an internalized world of guilt, anxiety, despair, a world of individual transgression interrogating the uncertain bounds of imaginative freedom and human knowledge” (BOTTING 2010,p.10). As a result, psychologically disturbed states began to appear in Gothic fiction. Hogle adds that:

the conflicted positions of central Gothic characters can reveal them as haunted by a second “unconscious” of deep-seated social and historical dilemmas, often of many types at once, that become more fearsome the more characters and readers attempt to cover them up or reconcile them symbolically without resolving them fundamentally. (2011:3)

The Gothic provides the best-known examples of the strange and ghostly figures that Freud saw as examples of “the Uncanny” (Ibid :6)

The darkness of the Gothic, in Botting’s conception is “metaphorically threatened the light of reason with what it did not know” (2010,p.32), generating mystery and uncertainty. Graveyard poetry was very popular in the eighteenth century and influenced Gothic fiction. The topics it dealt with were graves, churchyards, night, ruins, death, and ghosts, all subjects excluded by rational culture. As society was secularized, with weakened religious fears, the objective was to warn people about death and the transitory nature of physical pleasures. Underground vaults, burial chambers, and cold corpses caused horror in the reader. The Gothic also reminds us, according to Misha Kavka, that “the boundary between life and death is not forever fixed; it may not be the one-way passage we would like rationally to believe.” (apud HOGLE, 2011,p.211) Kavka points out that the same point can be made about history. The Gothic is always set in an earlier period, so the boundary between the past and the present is also blurred.

Romantic writing presents heroes in the gothic mould: “gloomy, isolated and sovereign, they are wanderers, outcasts and rebels condemned to roam the borders of social worlds, bearers of a dark truth or horrible knowledge” (BOTTING 2010,p.98).

With reference to women in Gothic fiction, young Gothic heroines were threatened by the external world, as they were the victims of villainous noblemen and bandits, and sometimes of their own families. The focus is on female virtue. However, both virtue and the security of domestic space serve only to imprison women in a system of values which

privilege men, according to Botting (2010,p.58). Hogle seconds this opinion when he says that “from the start...the oppression and “othering” of the female seen from her point of view has been a principal Gothic subject, even to the point of depicting her reduced to an object of exchange...between men” (2011,p.10). The imprisonment of women in much Gothic fiction is the result of an attempt to repress an “unruly feminine principle” (Ibid).

The female character is always in a confined space, and the male narrator sees it as a shadow of himself, that he fears but at the same time worships, her thoughts oscillating between the desire to keep her alive and her secret desire to see her dead, since death also adds beauty to his loved one.

David Stevens (2010,p.108) points out some characteristics of feminine characters in Gothic fiction:

- a) the silence and passivity of many feminine characters;
- b) the stereotyping of female characters according to male fantasy;
- c) conversely, the relevance of some Gothic texts to the real concerns and plight of women;

3. GOTHIC IN POE

Eric Savoy (2011,p.180) expresses the opinion that Poe’s addiction to drink, his financial problems, difficulty in finding employment and his difficult personal relationships made him “in several senses a denizen of the urban underworld”. His despair and death drive are often reflected in his short stories, where we find many accounts of “persons bricked up in walls, hidden under floorboards, or jammed in chimneys a mythology of enclosure, constriction and victimization.” (SILVERMAN *apud* SAVOY,2011,p.181) His stories are not set in a specific epoch. In Poe’s tales the theme of the suffering caused by the death of a beautiful woman becomes an obsession. This can be seen in the tales “The Fall of the House of Usher”, “Berenice”, “Eleonora”, “Ligeia” and “Morella”. This obsession has been traced by critics to the illness and early deaths of many women whom he loved, including his mother, foster mother and wife.

Eric Savoy comments that “female characters enter [Poe’s] fiction ...always already oriented toward the tomb; the point of the fiction is to dramatize their return from a state of

death to fulfill their erotic mission, one which finds its counterpart in the death drive of his male protagonists” (2011,p.183).

In his remarks in the essay “*The Philosophy of Composition*” (1845), Poe relates how he composed the poem “*The Raven*”, he says that the poem takes effect it is necessary a harmony in its preparation and that the problem of the poem is part of a superior beauty without being based on impulse or intuition, which comes loaded with truth and passion, in this case, it is the mourning for the woman he loves:

When indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect- they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul- not of intellect, or of heart- upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the "beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes- that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment- no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is most readily attained in the poem. (POE, 1845 *apud* Thompson, 2004, p. 678)

The theme of the beloved dead in Poe’s tales makes him believe that emotions such as sadness and melancholy should be worked in the poetic text.

The male characters in Poe’s stories are filled with conflicting emotions. Since many of the female characters, like Ligeia and Morella, are morally and intellectually stronger than the male protagonists, they are seen by them as threatening shadows, and the man’s thoughts oscillate between the desire to keep the woman alive and the secret, suppressed desire to see her dead.

Botting describes Poe’s stories as macabre and hallucinatory (2010,p.119). The terrifying Gothic setting serves as a background for the abnormal psychological states of the male protagonists. :

The horror in Poe’s tales exhibits a morbid fascination with darkly exotic settings mirroring extreme states of disturbed consciousness and imaginative excess, presenting fatal beauties, bloody haunting, premature entombment and ghastly metempsychosis. Human desires and neuroses are dressed in the lurid hues of the supernatural to the extent that nightmare and reality become entwined (BOTTING,p.120)

Commenting on Poe’s stories, Botting says:

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 concern with modes of representation; the scientific transgression 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. (2010,p.23)

The supernatural phenomena in Poe's stories cannot be rationally explained, unless they are interpreted as manifestations of obsessive and troubled minds.

Poe is a master at creating a Gothic atmosphere, as the opening of "The Fall of the House of Usher" illustrates this:

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. (POE,38)

Here we can see a correspondence between the landscape and the narrator's state of mind, showing the writer's interest in psychological conditions.

"The Fall of the House of Usher" is the story of the disintegration of the mind, house and family of the protagonist Roderick Usher. He is a hypersensitive character, confined to his decaying family home. His sister, whom he has prematurely buried, rises from her coffin to accuse him. Both fall dead at the moment of confrontation. In this story, the "ghost" has a rational explanation – Madeline Usher was not dead when her brother buried her. At the same time, Roderick's guilty conscience is responsible for the fear he experiences and his death, there are also hints of incest. When the brother and sister, the last members of the family, fall dead, their ancient house also collapses. This disintegration could be symbolic of the Gothic concern with the collapse of social values.

"Ligeia" describes the return of a dead wife in the body of her successor. Ligeia is beautiful, intelligent and learned. She loves the protagonist deeply, but falls ill and dies in

spite of her strong desire not to submit to death. There are many hints that the narrator does not respond to Ligeia's physical desire for him, though he admires her intellectual achievements. The widower marries again, though he does not love his new wife. Her aristocratic family has agreed to the marriage only because he is rich. The second wife, Rowena, falls seriously ill. On the night of her death, the protagonist, who is sitting near her, sees her rise from the bed. He is shocked to see however, that the woman before him is tall and dark-haired like Ligeia and not blonde like his second wife. He believes that Ligeia's will was so strong that metempsychosis has occurred. But the reader does not know if the return of Ligeia is real or an opium dream of the narrator's:

There was a mad disorder in my thoughts – a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be Rowena at all – the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine? Why, why should I doubt it? [...] but had she then grown taller since her malady? What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and disheveled hair; it was blacker than the raven wings of midnight! And now slowly opened the eyes of the figure which stood before me. “Here then, at least,” I shrieked aloud, “can I never – can I never be mistaken – these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes – of my lost love – of the lady – of the LADY LIGEIA. (POE, 141-142)

In “Ligeia”, the description of the nuptial chamber specially prepared by the narrator for his unloved second wife, Rowena, is a reflection of his morbid, sadistic, opium addicted mind, at the same time having all the characteristic of Gothic interiors:

After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honored memories connected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. [...] The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. [...] The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device.[...] and there was the couch too – the bridal couch – of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. (POE, 137-138)

The decorations are not suitable for a bridal chamber and seem to show that the narrator wants to frighten his wife, and even wants her to die.

“Berenice” is the story of Egaeus who feels a strong attraction to the white teeth of his cousin, Berenice. He marries her though she is very ill and he does not really love her. Talking of his obsession the protagonist says:

Alas! Its emaciation was excessive, and not one vestige of the former being lurked in any single line of the contour. My burning glances at length fell upon the face [...] They parted; and in a smile of peculiar meaning, the *teeth* of the changed Berenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view>Would to God that I had never beheld them, or that having done so, I had died! (POE, 150)

The obsession grows with time: “[...] and still the *phantasma* of the teeth maintained its terrible ascendancy, as, with the most vivid and hideous distinctness it floated about amid the changing lights and shadows of the chamber” (POE,151).When Berenice dies, Egaeus cannot control his obsession and violates her coffin to remove her teeth. But he is unconscious of what he has done until sometime later, when one of his servants points out what has happened:

[...] he whispered me of a violated grave – of a disfigured body enshrouded, yet still breathing – still palpitating – *still alive!*
He pointed to my garments : they were muddy and clotted with gore.[...] he took me gently by the hand: it was indented with the impress of human nails. He directed my attention to some object against the wall.[...]it was a spade. With a shriek I bounded to the table, and grasped the box that lay upon it.[...] in my tremor, it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, with a rattling sound, there rolled out some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white, and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor. (POE,152)

His obsession has caused the death of Berenice, as she had been buried alive, in a catatonic state (like Madeline) and he violated her grave to break off her teeth.

In the tale “Morella”, the heroine is a young woman who has great knowledge. The narrator marries her because he is fascinated by her intelligence and they spend their time studying together. After some time, Morella falls ill, and her condition deteriorates. One afternoon, she feels death approaching. The narrator is surprised by his wife’s acceptance of death. But her last words are also a curse, as she has always known that he has never loved her as much as she loved him:

‘It is a day of days, ‘she said, as I approached; ‘a day of all days either to live or die. It is a fair day for the sons of earth and life – ah, more fair for the daughters of heaven and death!’
I kissed her forehead, and she continued:

‘I am dying, yet shall I live.’

‘Morella!’

‘The days have never been when thou couldst love me – but her whom in life thou didst abhor, in death thou shalt adore.’

‘Morella!’

‘I repeat that I am dying. But within me is a pledge of that affection- ah, how little!- which thou didst feel for me, Morella. And when my spirit departs shall the child live-thy child and mine, Morella's. But thy days shall be days of sorrow-that sorrow which is the most lasting of impressions, as the cypress is the most enduring of trees. For the hours of thy happiness are over; and joy is not gathered twice in a life, as the roses of Paestum twice in a year. Thou shalt no longer, then, play the Teian with time, but, being ignorant of the myrtle and the vine, thou shalt bear about with thee thy shroud on the earth, as do the Moslemin at Mecca.” (POE, 154-155)

When she dies, Morella gives birth to a daughter. The narrator loves the child deeply, but is frightened to see his daughter grow very similar to her mother, both physically and intellectually:

And, hourly, grew darker these shadows of similitude, and more full, and more definite, and more perplexing, and more hideously terrible in their aspect. For that her smile was like her mother's I could bear; but then I shuddered at its too perfect identity-[...] in the sad musical tones of her speech, and above all – oh! above all – in the phrases and expressions of the dead on the lips of the loved and living, I found food for consuming thought and horror – for a worm that would not die. (POE, 155)

On the day of her baptism, the narrator says that his daughter's name will also be Morella. The child immediately falls down dead, saying “I am here!” (POE,156). The biggest shock comes when he goes to bury her in the family tomb: “But she died, and with my own hands I bore her to the tomb; and I laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no traces of the first, in the charnel where I laid the second, Morella” (Ibid).The theme of metempsychosis in this story is like “Ligeia”, only the mother is reborn in the daughter both body and soul, and the motive for this is revenge against the husband who did not love her enough.

In the tale “Eleonora” the young narrator is in love with his cousin. Eleonora is as beautiful and loving as the women in Poe's other short stories. She is innocent and fragile and critics feel that she may be based on Poe's cousin and wife Virginia, whom he married in her adolescence. When Eleonora falls ill, the protagonist promises not to marry again. After her death, he meets and marries Ermengarde. Contrary to expectations and to Poe's other stories, Eleonora emerges from the tomb and liberates the protagonist from his promise:

“Sleep in peace! For the Spirit of Love reigneth and ruleth, and in taking to thy passionate heart her who is Ermengarde, thou art absolved, for reasons which shall be made known to thee in Heaven, of thy vows unto Eleonora”. (POE, 146)

Eleonora is different from the other heroines of Poe’s tales because she does not cause the destruction of the protagonist, but forgives him instead.

Poe’s heroines (Madeline, Ligeia, Rowena, Berenice, and Morella) have many of the characteristics of the heroines of Gothic fiction. They are victims of their male companions, and objects of their fantasy. Their love for their companions is often not reciprocated. They are beautiful and intelligent, yet they are subject to the will of their families or husbands. Madeline and Berenice are imprisoned alive in coffins. Rowena is confined to her bedroom after her family forces her to marry a man she does not love because he is rich. Ligeia and Morella are unable to free themselves from their strong love for their husbands. Many Gothic heroines suffered imprisonment, but Poe’s heroines have strong spirits and return to take revenge on the destructive males who have destroyed their lives. The men fear their superior capacity in life and their reappearance after death. As we have seen above, the supernatural appearances of the heroines in Poe’s stories are really frightening. But he always leaves an element of doubt as to whether the ghosts are “real” or results of the fear and guilt in the minds of their men.

4. GOTHIC AND THE CINEMA

Poe’s work has always been very popular in film adaptations because of the fascination with terror, violence and the supernatural. Botting draws attention to the fact that:

One place...has perpetuated distinctly Gothic figures: the cinema. From the 1930s vampires, Jekylls and Hydes, Frankensteins and monsters have populated cinema and television screens in a variety of guises ranging from the seriously sinister to the comic and ridiculous. Their popularity, as well as the way they ambivalently reflect cultural anxieties, locates them firmly in the non-literary, cultural, tradition that conventionally remains the true locus of the Gothic. (2010,p.13-14)

Botting feels that this is a sign of the preoccupation with the limits, effects and power of representation in the formation of identities, realities and institutions.

Misha Kavka points out that there is “something peculiarly visual about the Gothic” (*apud* HOGLE,2011,p.209) which makes it very suitable to the cinema. Kavka cites the

ruined castle, the abandoned house, the dark cemetery, heavy wooden doors, high arched leaded windows that cast shadows, a cloud passing across the moon as some distinct visual codes that characterize Gothic films.

The early Gothic films made in the 20s and 30s were re-workings of gothic classics like *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The beginning of Poe's classic film occurred in 1914 when D. W. Griffith was based on short story "*The Tell - Tale Heart*" to make his film *The Avenging Conscience*. In 1932 one of Poe's classic tales adapted for the film was *The Murders in The Rue Morgue*, played by Bella Lugosi, famous for playing Dracula character in 1932. Two years later, in 1934, *The Black Cat*, directed by Edgar G. Ulmer, also became part of the films based on Poe's tales. In 1960, the actor Vincent Price and the director and producer Roger Corman, have become icons of Gothic cinema acting in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Pit and The Pendulum* (1961), *Tales of Terror* (1962), based on three short stories "Morella," "The Black Cat" and "The Facts in The Case of Mr. Valdemar"; *the Raven* (1963), *The Tomb of Ligeia* in 1964, based on the short story "Ligeia" and "The Masque of Red Death".

More recent directors have concentrated less on the classics, inventing new Gothic creations. They emphasize the realistic strand of Gothic tradition, as in the films of Alfred Hitchcock. David Stevens (2010,p.37) refers to Tim Burton's films (such as *Batman* and *Edward Scissorhands*) as excellent representations of the more fantastic strand of the tradition.

Linda Costanzo Cahir (2006,p.14) explains that films inspired by literature must be seen as *translations* of the source material by which a fully new text "a *materially different entity*" is created. It is from this angle that the influence of Poe's fiction on the films of Tim Burton must be analyzed.

5. GOTHIC AND BURTON – CORPSE BRIDE'S ANALYSIS

Tim Burton is recognized for his distinctive style. A big fan of fantasy stories, he uses the world of reality and fantasy, humor and horror as the basis for his films: "His body of films thus far, fourteen features released in a style so distinctive that it is referred to in the vernacular as "Burtonesque". (MAGLIOZZI and HE, 2010,p.17)

The filmmaker uses resources such as the *stop-motion* effects for animation, as in the case of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *The Corpse Bride*. In addition to his fascination

with the Gothic tale, especially by Edgar Allan Poe, he also has a great admiration for the actor Vincent Price, and received an award for his first short film called “Vincent”, which depicts a young admirer of Vincent Price’s films and horror tales.

Tim Burton's films present duality, in which the Gothic elements are embedded in narratives that contain complex stories about human values. Themes such as death, life, generosity and corruption, beauty and monstrosity are incorporated and he is original in adding humorous elements to his tragic tales. We have chosen *The Corpse Bride* for analysis because the bride of the title resembles the female protagonists of Poe’s tales in many ways.

The film *The Corpse Bride* (2005) is set in Victorian England. At that time, the Industrial Revolution had changed the social structure of the country. English society was more prosperous, materialistic, urbanized and industrial. In this period, marriages among the upper classes were often not based on love, but on financial motives. Burton’s film shows a Gothic characteristic as it deals with the social problem of arranged marriages in the Victorian era. The plot is based on a nineteenth century folktale about a young man who is travelling home to marry. The wedding ring he is carrying turns up on the rotting finger of a murdered girl, who returns from the grave claiming to be his true wife. He goes to the underworld to set things right while his fiancée waits for him among the living.

In Burton’s film, the Everglots, an aristocratic but decadent family, arrange the marriage of their daughter Victoria to Victor Van Dort, the son of wealthy fish merchants, in order to improve their financial situation. The two have never met and Victor is very shy. Meanwhile Lord Barkis, a villainous aristocrat in the Gothic tradition, also wants to marry Victoria, thinking she has money. Botting has pointed out that the evil in Gothic fiction is the result of social corruption. Many ill omens typical of Gothic fiction occur during the wedding rehearsal, which is a failure when the candle does not light up, the groom falls against the altar, the ring falls, and Victoria’s mother’s dress catches fire.

Victor tries to practice the wedding ceremony outdoors at night. The wedding ring accidentally ends up on the fingers of the skeleton of a dead bride, Emily, who has been abandoned and murdered by her bridegroom. She is happy to be married at last and sees Victor as her true husband. Victor does not know how to escape from the situation. He tries to tell Victoria what has happened, but Emily takes him to the underworld and a big celebration is arranged. However, Victor must be poisoned and die so that he can belong to the world of the dead and marry Emily. As she truly loves him, Emily cannot allow Victor to die, and she permits him to marry Victoria.

The story is as simple as a fairy tale but Burton makes it original by the way he uses Gothic elements. In the film, he uses two different colour codes to portray the worlds of the living and the dead: The streets of London reflect the Gothic tendency to portray the labyrinthian, dark streets of modern cities; The colours used are opaque blacks, grays and purples; There is little furniture in the Everglot home and this is dark and heavy; The safe is empty and full of cobwebs; There are tall, dark staircases; Old family homes were common backgrounds for Gothic fiction; The dense, dark atmosphere of the world of the living reflects their obsession with money and lack of feeling; Emily's murder and the forced marriage of Victoria are results of the materialism of Victorian society; The clothes worn by Victoria, and the other ladies and their tightly bound hair show the repression of Victorian times, while Emily's dress and hair are loose and flowing, showing her freedom from conventions.

Victoria is imprisoned by her own parents in her room because she refuses to marry Lord Barkis. She is a victim of family ambitions like the Gothic heroines and Poe's Rowena. Barkis corresponds to the villainous seducer as we are told later that he is the man responsible for abandoning and killing Emily.

The first appearance of the supernatural is when Victor puts the ring on a twig and a skeletal hand catches him as the skeleton bride comes out of the grave. This makes the audience expect something really terrifying. Skeletons were a sure way of provoking the reader's fear and terror. As Kavka has pointed out, the appearance of ghosts and skeletons in Gothic fiction, and the work of Poe and Burton, serves as a reminder that there is no fixed boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead and that many things cannot be rationally explained. Another element that refers to the Gothic style is the number of ravens that fly out, reminding us of Poe. But Burton's objective is to show us that the real world we live in is much more frightening than the world of ghosts and spirits. Maggots come out of the corpse bride's eye, there are lots of coffins and an underground vault (as in Poe), a skeletal dog is Emily's wedding present to Victor – but all this is more comic than horrifying.

Emily rises from the grave, like Poe's heroines, because she has died prematurely and has not enjoyed love and marriage. Ligeia and Morella have a strong desire to live again and recuperate their lost youth and lack of reciprocal love from their husbands. There is no doubt (unlike Poe) that Emily's is a real supernatural appearance.

However, the world of the dead is not as frightening as the world of the living, in Burton's conception. The colours used to depict the underworld are bright and strong. The loveless marriage between Victoria and Barkis in the world of the living looks more like a funeral, while in the underworld, the preparation for the wedding of Victor and the Corpse

Bride, Emily, happens in an atmosphere of enthusiasm, even the cake is much bigger. The dead enjoy their “lives” more than the living. They celebrate the arrival of the newcomers and the gateway to the underworld is a bar, a place of relaxation and a place to find old friends and make new ones. Skulls tell the story of the young Emily and how death is part of the life of each one:

Die, die we all pass away
 But don't wear a frown cuz it's really okay
 And you might try 'n' hide
 And you might try 'n' pray
 But we all end up the remains of the day
 (Part: Remains of the day)

Burton explores a subject as delicate and inevitable as death in a humorous way, with the use of music. In this song, entitled “Remains of the day”, Skulls shows that everyone will have to go through this process, regardless of social class, color, creed, and that despite all the sadness contained in this rite of passage, we must get used to this idea, and face it as best as possible. Burton’s novel portrayal of the underworld illustrates the characteristic of “a liking for the strangely eccentric, the supernatural, the magical and the sublime” described by Stevens (2010,p.46) as a characteristic of the Gothic.

Tim Burton explores in his film two distinct sides of belief: the church, completely linked to rituals and full of prejudices, and the mystical side, involving books about religion, death and magic potions. Two characters represent these characteristics: Pastor Galswells, represents the rigid side of Evangelism with his harshness and dogmatism, and the Elder Gutknecht, an ancient and rickety skeleton who with his magic potions based on the books of charm and magic. Both these aspects of religion also appear in Gothic literature. Burton pays homage to Poe, as the Elder is always accompanied by a raven, like the narrator of Poe’s poem of the same name.

Unlike the conventional picture of the underworld and the supernatural as cruel and frightening, Burton presents the inhabitants of this world as happy, and just. The Elder Gutknecht tells Emily that when they are amongst the living, they must abide by their rules. This is in contrast to the lack of scruples shown by the living.

Poe’s influence on Burton can be seen in the creation of the Gothic atmosphere and the use of the supernatural element when Emily, the Corpse Bride, returns from the dead claiming her right to be married and happy, just as Poe’s heroines come to claim justice for

themselves. She is as beautiful and ladylike as Poe's heroines, and as loving. Poe's description of Eleonora could be applied to her: "The loveliness of Eleonora was that of the Seraphim; but she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers: No guile disguised the fervor of love which animated her heart." (POE,144)

While Victoria, Emily and Poe's heroines are victims of society and male exploitation, Burton's Emily is generous and not vengeful like most of Poe's heroines. She resembles Eleonora when she allows Victor to marry the woman she loves. The last image of the film shows Emily turning into many butterflies. When she frees Victor and Victoria, she frees herself too. This reverts to an earlier scene where Victor frees an imprisoned butterfly. Victor, Victoria and Emily are trapped in a situation for which they are not personally responsible. But Emily, from the world of the dead, frees them all and makes happiness possible. The scene reminds us of the setting of Poe's "Eleonora" in the "Valley of Many-Colored Grass".

The element of social criticism is stronger in Tim Burton's Gothic than in Poe's. Poe is more interested in psychological states. But Burton subverts our conventional images of the supernatural with humour and constantly juxtaposes it against the real world, making us question conventional ideas and values.

6. CONCLUSION

Both Poe and Burton are masters at creating a melancholy Gothic atmosphere, though Burton has an advantage as he is using a visual medium. Poe's preoccupation is with guilt, fear and madness. Burton's Victoria and Emily, the Corpse Bride, share some of the characteristics of Poe's heroines, as they are victims of men and family ambitions. However, Burton's attitude is more positive than Poe's. He portrays the selfishness and materialism of nineteenth century society and dysfunctional families, but at the end of his family drama, evil is conquered and the good characters are victorious. Victor and Victoria marry, with Emily's unselfish permission and Lord Barkis is defeated. There is no such happy end for Poe's troubled heroines. Burton's originality lies in the introduction of the comic element when he portrays the world of the dead as pleasant and happy, in contrast to the cruelty of the world of the living. Not only does he remind us, as all Gothic fiction does, that death is inevitable, but he also seems to say that we need not be afraid of it. There seems to be more justice and happiness in the world of the dead than in the world of the living.

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8. ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHED A

Tim Burton – A Short Biography

The American filmmaker Tim Burton, was born August 25, 1958 in Burbank, California, the oldest child of Bill Burton and Jean Erickson, Burton has two brothers. He was an introverted child and spent much of his time lost in the world of fantasy, having a great admiration for Edgar Allan Poe's tales and horror films starred by Vincent Price. A dark style with a touch of humor is characteristic of his films, where he honors other icons of terror such as the actor Christopher Lee and producer-director Ed Wood. His wife, Helena Bonham-Carter, the actor Johnny Depp, and the composer Danny Elfman have constantly participated in Burton's films.

Considered one of the most gifted filmmakers to incorporate the Gothic style in his work and capable of attracting a diverse audience, from children to adults, Burton has a long list of films focused on the theme of horror.

After high school, Burton won a scholarship granted by Disney to study at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. After three years he was hired by Walt Disney Studios as an apprentice animator. The short *Vincent*, based on his childhood and the life of Vincent Price is from this period. This was followed by *Frankweenie*, which tells the story of a boy who can resuscitate his dog and the poem and illustrations that were the basis for *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) that was filmed using stop-motion feature.

Three years later, following the Gothic comic line, the filmmaker launched *Beetlejuice* in 1988. This was a jump for he got the opportunity to realize the production of *Batman* (1989) and its sequel, *Batman Returns* (1992).

One of his old projects gave rise to the unforgettable film *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) with Johnny Depp as the protagonist. This began their long partnership and was followed by the film *Ed Wood* in 1994.

His subsequent films, *Mars Attacks!* and *Planet of the Apes*, earned him little profit . Tim succeeded again with the film *Sleepy Hollow* in 1999, about a small town experiencing a series of murders, *Big Fish* in 2003 and *Corpse Bride* (2005) with stop-motion feature. In the same year Burton re-recorded a hit of the 70s, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Burton continued with *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2008), and his latest film is a remake of a famous classic *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)

ATTACHED B

Edgar Allan Poe – A Short Biography

Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19, 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents were the actors David Poe Jr. and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, who died shortly after the birth of his younger sister Rosalie. Poe was brought up by John and Francis Allan, a wealthy tobacco merchant of Richmond, but they did not legally adopt him. Poe's brother and sister were adopted by other families.

In 1815 Poe moved with his new family to England, where he finished his studies at the Manor School. Five years later, he and his family returned to Virginia, where he joined the University of Virginia. But he was involved with alcohol and the bohemian life, and dropped out of his studies a year later and quarreled with his stepfather.

After these troubles, Poe enlisted in the military in 1827. In the same year he published his first book entitled *Tamerlane, and Other Poems*. In 1829, his adopted mother died, and his second book *Al Aaraf* was published. He was reconciled with his stepfather, who helped him to join the Military Academy at West Point. In 1831, Poe was expelled from the academy. This led to the final rupture with his adopted father.

Poe then moved to Baltimore to the home of his aunt Mrs. Clemm. He later married her teenage daughter, Virginia. He began to devote himself to literature and began publishing short stories in magazines, and later moved to Richmond, becoming editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835.

His problems with alcohol led him to move to New York in 1837, where he wrote poems and short stories that dealt with themes of death, the supernatural and the dreams of the human mind. In 1839 he published his collection *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, which was translated into French by Charles Baudelaire who was a great admirer and considered him a genius. In 1846 he published his essay *The Philosophy of Composition* in which he analyzed how he created the poem, *The Raven* that had been published one year before.

It was during this period that his wife Virginia died of tuberculosis in 1847 and Poe plunged into suffering and alcohol again. After the death of his wife, Poe became involved with other women, including Sarah Helen Whitman and Mrs. Charles Richmond. But his problems with alcohol and bad behavior damaged these relationships.

In 1849, he rediscovered an old childhood sweetheart, Sarah Elmira Shelton, then a widow. The same year, Poe died on October 7. The circumstances of his death are a mystery. He was still addicted to alcohol and suffering from depression. His life is full of major losses and tragedies. The theme of death explored in his poems and short stories, makes many critics believe that the representations of dead woman in his work are the results of the loss of

important women throughout his life. This was the reason he wrote works in a tone of melancholy and platonic passion.