Gothic Elements in the poems of G. A. Bürger, J. W. von Goethe and E. A. Poe

Romić, Iva

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2019

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:209213

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-04-20**

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Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Iva Romić

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Mentor: doc.dr.sc. Ljubica Matek

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Odsjek za engleski jezik I književnost

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Završni rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc.dr.sc. Ljubica Matek

Osijek, 2019.

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Mayor BA Programme in English Language and Literature and German Language and Literature

Iva Romić

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Bachelor Thesis

Supervisor: Ljubica Matek, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2019.

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English

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Gothic Elements in the poems of G. A. Bürger, J. W. von Goethe and E. A. Poe

Bachelor Thesis

Scientific area: humanities

Scientific field: philology

Scientific branch: English studies

Supervisor: Ljubica Matek, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2019.

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U Osijeku, datum

9.9.2019.

IVA ROMIĆ, 0122222341
ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

Abstract

This paper deals with Gothic elements as they appear in the ballads of Gottfried August Bürger, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Edgar Allan Poe. Although parts of different national literatures, these works exhibit similar themes and motifs which revolve around a woman who creates the suspenseful atmosphere in the ballads. Other elements common to the Gothic genre and to the American and European Romantic movement include strong emotions, such as fear, terror, and passion, as well as a combination of love and death. The paper starts by explaining the theoretical and historical background of the Gothic in Germany and America, whereas the analysis covers detailed usage of Gothic elements in the ballads, alongside their interpretation.

Keywords: Gothic elements, Gottfried August Bürger, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Edgar Allan Poe.

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Introduction

Gothic fiction appears in the late eighteenth century as a part of medieval revival and a rising interest in things unknown, dark and different. The first literary usage of the term "Gothic" is usually the one found in the subtitle of Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto,* which he classifies as a Gothic story. Since then, a plethora of elements have been united under the name "Gothic", as they provoke deepest human emotions and challenge the rational point of view towards the irrational and uncanny. The principal effect of Gothic elements is not only to provoke unpleasant emotions, but rather to explore human inwardness, its secret desires, fears and other repressed emotions. Among Gothic elements one can observe unusual setting that creates an eerie atmosphere, dark family history that shapes the main protagonist and controls his actions, unknown entities that dominate and therefore provoke fear, or elements concerning mental disorder or madness.

A similar, innovative writing style and exploration of unusual themes and motifs incorporated in *the Sturm und Drang* movement makes Bürger and Goethe known as the predecessors of Gothic fiction in Germany. During the time of American Romanticism, Edgar Allan Poe puts an emphasis on the human soul in his works and offers a different exploration of human inwardness, particularly one as imagined in psychologically disturbed individuals, which can produce a higher level of terror than any other source. A detailed analysis of their works reveals many similarities despite their geographical and national distance.

The first part of the paper aims to theoretically and historically explain Gothic fiction and Gothic elements in the paper's first two chapters, while the second one consists of three chapters and includes analysis of Gothic elements in the chosen ballads by Bürger, Goethe, and Poe. The detailed analysis will be focused on the meaning of these elements and their contribution to the shaping of the action. Since a woman is the central figure in the ballads, the role of the female character will also be explored and exemplified.

1. Gothic Literature and Gothic Elements

Gothic fiction is a complex term derived in the late eighteenth century and refers to fiction that displays influences of various previous styles, and traits coming from different genres co-existing in the given time period. The original meaning of the term "Gothic" was "to do with the Goths", which implied something barbaric or "deriving from the Middle Ages" (Raškauskienė 11). Although the term partially changed in its original meaning, alongside with the change of cultural values, the "Gothic" became a synonym for "dark", "grotesque", "sublime" and "supernatural". The first usage of the term "Gothic" was in Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto*, which he classified as a Gothic story, since it challenged the views of the rationalistic era with something new, dark, mysterious, but at the same time beautiful. It was his idea to combine past and present, alongside with usual and uncanny, all of which created the genre:

> It was an attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the later, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. But if, in the latter species, Nature has cramped imagination, she did not take revenge, having been totally excluded from old romances. (Walpole 7)

The novel contained a variety of elements that will later become known as the Gothic elements. The elements of Gothic literature include different phenomena that evoke the feelings of terror and horror within the reader.

The most notable characteristic of Gothic literature is its setting. The action is usually set in an old castle, mansion, estranged area, or a secluded house. According to Humme, "the setting exists to convey atmosphere", because "the key characteristic of the Gothic is not its devices, but its atmosphere". The atmosphere in Gothic literature is ominous, foreshadowing certain scary or violent events that will most definitely occur in the future which is inevitably connected to the past. A Gothic author describes the details of the setting and the atmosphere equally as well as the inner occurrences within the characters. Gothic setting, combined with eerie atmosphere, occasionally creates a sublime environment. Burke notes that "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" (20). The sublime can be explained as an extreme beauty

arising from an incomprehensible terror that the reader or the character witnesses: “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” (Burke 39).

Gothic literature tends to romanticize the past and set the main trigger of the action directly into the past. In that sense, the family history or heritage tends to be unequivocally linked to the main events in the present and even shape them or strongly influence them. Another key elements of Gothic literature are the prevailing motifs of supernatural and uncanny figures. Within this categorization, one can encounter different types of demonic entities, vampires, zombies, doppelgängers and ghosts incorporated in everyday life. The prime source of fear and terror is the acknowledgment that strange and demonic events can occur everywhere and to everyone, without any “obvious” reason or warning. Sometimes the Gothic authors put an emphasis on love in an uncanny form. Coupled with that, one can observe Bram Stoker’s Dracula as an estranged and mystical lover and female vampires as dominant female characters. Edgar Allan Poe’s *Annabel Lee* indicates a timeless love affair between a living creature and a beautiful corpse that has been ended to soon, but is to be continued in the afterlife. In a way, the poem “exemplifies several traits of Poe’s feminine ideal, especially that of being wholly subsumed by the male” (Weekes 152).

Another main aspect of Gothic literature is the ability to differentiate “terror” from “horror”. In Ann Radcliffe’s posthumously published essay it is explained that: “‘terror and horror are so far opposite’, her speaker declares, ‘that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them’” (149). Motifs of physiological disorder or mental illness, accompanied by an immense emotional trauma, represent another notable characteristic of Gothic literature. Disorder within the characters replicates the chaos and mayhem that the character witnesses and is surrounded with. Through this technique, the author explains how strongly the character and the environment are connected, influencing one another and finally liberating one another from the feeling of terror and helplessness. In “The Black Cat”, Edgar Allan Poe explores the human soul to portray the darkest feelings and desires that compel his character to commit the gruesome crimes: “Beneath the pressure of torments such as these the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts” (88). The character’s awareness and recognition of something uncanny within him evokes fear and violence which instigates madness and deterioration. Dreams, visions and omens may foresee future events or their outcome. Dark and negative dreams can replicate in

the future or indicate one's wrongdoing; such is, for example, Victor's dream in *Frankenstein* in which he kisses the love of his life, and the horrific acknowledgment that she transforms into a decaying corpse of his mother. After waking up, Victor sees the monster in front of him. Dreams in Gothic literature intrigue the readers and, in Freudian interpretation, force them to explore and reach various conclusions:

> the "final solution" to the enigma of the meaning of dreams, in fact submits the reader to a repetition effect of horrific dreams of compounding grotesqueness alternated with disorientating absurdity. Meanwhile the elaborate "interpretations" of the dream return the reader to apparent normality and rationality – and yet as they become more and more complicated and far-fetched, it seems more and more as though their function is to turn the most banal dream text into the realm of the absurd and fantastic. The reader is increasingly impressed by the author's extraordinary skill in transforming the most recalcitrant material of apparently banal dream-text into an ingeniously elaborated interpretation. (Young 20)

Symbolism in Gothic literature is indicated through different metaphorical or onomatopoeic expressions that have a deeper and hidden meaning. A sudden rain may suggest change in the course of events, stormy weather evokes fear, and flickering candle presents of some uncanny entity. Onomatopoeic expressions create the atmosphere and deepen the detailed description of the scenery.

The protagonists in the Gothic are people faced with diabolic entities they have no control of. They tend to have a dark secret that dooms them or an inner struggle they have to overcome. The end of the story frequently brings about the end of suffering, even if it means death as a form of liberation; for example, Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray struggles with the burden of his picture, while constantly meandering morally between right and wrong. Dorian's death liberates him from evil as he takes his own life while destroying the picture.

Gothic literature shaped modern literature by using fear as the modus operandi in developing action. Only in the Gothic can one find a variety of contradictory topics formed into one unity, functioning simultaneously as a representation of an era and its people:

> No other form of writing or theatre is as insistent as Gothic on juxtaposing potential revolution and possible reaction – about gender, sexuality, race, class, the colonizers versus the colonized, the physical versus the metaphysical, and

> abnormal versus normal psychology – and leaving both extremely sharply before us and far less resolved that the conventional endings… (Bruhm 13)

2. Gothic Literature in the *Sturm und Drang* and the Nineteenth Century American Literature

Gothic literature is a long-term phenomenon that transcends genres, national borders and literary periods. Since Gothic elements appear in fiction throughout the entire literary history, it is only possible to contrast them and texts that use them, or to observe and note the prevailing element in a given time period.

The *Sturm und Drang* ("Storm and Stress") movement, which emphasises emotions concerning the feelings of individualism and unity with nature, has appeared as an opposition to the Enlightenment, whose main focus is reason and liberation from church dogmatism (Bahr et al.). The concept of the *Sturm und Drang* movement explores and signifies emotions, depicts the lifestyle of the era and provides escapism in the form of literature. The usage of Gothic motifs and elements was noted in 1781, when Friedrich Schiller published *Die Räubers* (*The Robbers*), his most significant dramatic piece. It is important to note that "German Gothic barely existed before he [Schiller] did so much to establish it" (Bridgwater 151). The dark setting and family feud serve as prevailing motifs in characterizing Schiller's work as a predecessor in the usage of Gothic elements in the *Sturm und Drang* movement. Bridgwater points out that Schiller was highly influenced by Walpole when it comes to the aesthetic descriptions of the castle and the mood of the drama, as well as by Shakespeare and Milton in creating suspension and the main character:

> […] in his review of *The Räubers* he [Schiller] linked the "noble" criminal Karl Moore to Milton's Saran, prototype of the 'heroic villain' of the Gothic novel. It was a significant point, for the very idea of the "hero-villain" impinged on one of Schiller's central concerns, the interface between heroism and villainy, sublimity and depravity. (152)

Schiller's way of writing and introducing the new concept of hero, who embodies the dominant characteristic of Romanticism as well as Gothic traits, will serve in producing his most Gothic novel titled *Der Geisterseher* (*The Ghost-Seer)*. Being so highly influenced with Gothic literature, Schiller managed to turn "his hero-villain into a larger-than-life-sized figure and

Satanist" (Bridgwater 153). Alongside Schiller, Goethe often explored and used Gothic elements in his writing. For instance, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), though not a Gothic novel as such, has obvious Gothic features, including the abyss and "the view of the universe as an all-consuming, devouring monster" (Bridgwater 151). Another connection to the Gothic style of writing is Goethe's indirect usage of the motif of Doppelgänger:

> The relationship between Goethe and Werther, Goethe and Jerusalem, and between Werther and Albert points forward to the play of doubles that informs Goethe's work. […] Werther is not Goethe as he is or was, but he *is* Goethe *potenziert*, the author as he could so easily become if he had allowed subconscious fear of the abyss to flood into his consciousness. (Bridgwater 63)

Like German literature, American literature also exhibits Gothic features, although the early nineteenth century literature in America was truly native. It was the literature written after the American Revolution and after the War of 1812. Alongside William Cullen Bryan, Washington Irving and James Feinmore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe initiated a major development in literature (Blair et al.). The Romantic Period in American Literature lasted from 1830 to 1865. It was a period of major historical changes in America which shaped American society by establishing drastic reforms concerning slavery in the northern and southern part of the land. So, similarly to European Romanticism that owed a lot to the French Revolution of 1789, American Romanticism was equally influenced by revolutionary events in America. Romanticism in literature can be defined as:

> a literary and philosophical theory which tends to see the individual at the very centre of all life and all experience, and it places him, therefore, at the centre of art, making literature most valuable as an expression of his unique feelings and particular attitudes and valuing its accuracy in portraying his experiences, however fragmentary and incomplete, more than it values its adherence to completeness, unity, or the demands of genre. It places a high premium upon the creative function of the imagination, seeing art as a formulation of intuitive imaginative perceptions that tend to speak a nobler truth than that of fact, logic, or the here and now. (Holman 468)

Among the American Romantics, Edgar Allan Poe is probably the most famous one. His literary opus can be defined as a combination of Gothic elements coupled with the usage of logic and pure imagination. It is believed that with his tale "The Murders in Rue Morgue", Poe

originated the modern detective story. Poe's short stories of terror have produced the main Gothic elements and widened their previous inadequate usage in American Literature. In his preface to his collection of previously published short stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe disavows himself of any German influence: "If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul" (Poe 4). In every one of his short stories, Poe introduces the aspect of the soul which is torn between right or wrong, and good or bad. Apart from that, terror in Poe's work annihilates the proper judgement of the main character, making his inner struggle hopeless and ceaseless. An analysis of his work can provide a reflection of historical and social context that surrounds him:

> the conflicted positions of central Gothic characters can reveal them as haunted by a second "unconscious" of deep-seated social and historical dilemmas, often 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. (Hoggle 3)

In his work, Poe strives to achieve a *unified effect*, which is "the effect striven for may be one of horror, mystery, beauty, or whatever the writer's mood dictates, but once the effect is hit upon, everything in the story […] must work toward this controlling purpose" (Holman 181). The dominant themes in Poe's literary opus include death, isolation, reincarnation, madness, premature death of a beautiful woman, and mourning. His writing skills allow him to metaphorically present social issues of the era; for example, *The Fall of the House of Usher* symbolises the decay of a prominent family. Autobiographical elements can also be found in Poe's work; in the poem "Annabel Lee", Poe discusses the matter of premature death of a beautiful woman, which can be compared to his lost love Virginia. Although the two cannot be directly linked, the concept of mourning, eternal love, and renewed unity in the afterlife can be applied to both Poe and the narrator.

3. Gottfried August Bürger: "Lenore"

Bürger's ballad "Lenore", published in 1773, opposes the norms and conventions encountered previously in the *Sturm und Drang* Movement. Although still containing a strong connection to nature and inwardness, Bürger explores motifs od death, life, and religion, which will later result in understanding of "Lenore" as "A ballad about the undead": "[…] a spectral romance in which a ghostly rider, posing as Lenore's dead lover, carries her away on a macabre night ride through an eerie landscape illuminated by flashes of lightning ("Gottfried August Bürger")." "Lenore" is written in the native language, and its writing style is simple, accompanied by repetition of refrain throughout the poem. Bürger's ballad "Lenore" served as a template for Goethe's "Die Brauth von Korinth" and Poe's "Lenore", which were published later: "its sensational theme, had a profound effect upon the subsequent development of Romanticism throughout Europe" ("Gottfried August Bürger").

The in medias res beginning of the ballad evokes an uncanny and strange felling within a reader: "Lenore fuhr ums Morgenrot / Empor aus schweren Träumen: / 'Bist untreu, Wilhelm, oder tot?'" (Bürger 1-3).[1] Bürger provides a real historical background to the ballad, making the further context more realistic as well as frightening: "Er war mit König Friedrichs Macht / Gezogen in die Prager Schlacht" (Bürger 5-6). The acknowledgement that Wilhelm may be dead repines Lenore and she disassociates herself from God: "Gott ist kein Erbarmen" (Bürger 39). The line itself introduces a motif of blasphemy, which determines the course of action by focusing on "Gothic" and uncanny: "Gott hat an mir nicht wohlgetan!" (Bürger 46). As a punishment for her blasphemous behaviour, Lenore dies at the end of the ballad, accompanied by a candid and pious request that God should have mercy on her soul: "Gott sei der Seele gnädig" (Bürger 256). Bürger indicates a contextual reverse and a departure from grieving Lenore into a godless and fearless creature by showing her firm belief that no type of faith or religion may retrieve her Wilhelm:

> „O Mutter, Mutter! Was mich brennt,
>
> Das lindert mir kein Sakrament!

[1] The paper uses the original, German text of the poem, as there are many English versions of "Lenore". In fact, the first person to translate it into English, William Taylor, later asserts that "no German poem has been so repeatedly translated into English as 'Ellenore'" (Summers 245). Moreover, there is a full book dedicated to early English translation of the ballad, namely Oliver Farrar Emerson's: *The Earliest English Translations of Bürger's Lenore: A Study in English and German Romanticism* (Western Reserve University Press, 1915).

Kein Sakrament mag Leben

Den Toten wiedergeben.“ (Bürger 53-56)

Lenore’s despair and hopelessness caused by unrequited and impossible love corresponds with the sensibilities of the *Sturm und Drang* Movement, but her melancholic and deranged thoughts lead to her gradual deterioration: “Der Tod, der Tod ist mein Gewinn! / O wär ich nie geboren! / Lisch aus, mein Licht, auf ewig aus!” (Bürger 68-70). Lenore’s troubled mind cannot ease until the late night when she is confronted by an unknown stranger: “Holla, holla! Tu auf, mein Kind! / Schläfst, Liebchen, oder wachst du?” (Bürger 106-107). Before their encounter, the night is calm and starry: “am Himmelsbogen / Die goldenen Sterne zogen” (Bürger 96-97), and will gradually become stormy and unpredictable, creating the effect of sublimity in the ballad: “Ach. Wilhelm, erst herein geschwindt! / Den Hagedorn durchsaust der Wind,” (Bürger 118-119). Wilhelm reveals himself to be a supernatural entity when he declares he cannot stay much longer and that it is crucial that they ride into the night immediately: “Ich darf allhier nicht hausen. / Komm, schürze, spring und schwinge dich / Auf meinen Rappen hinter mich!” (Bürger 125-127). Bürger uses repetitive lines to create an atmosphere and an eerie feeling of unexpectedness, making the outcome uncertain and frightening: “Sieh hin, sieh her, der Mond scheint hell. / Wir und die Toten reiten schnell” (Bürger 134-135).

The above-mentioned lines influenced different subsequent Gothic writers who incorporated them into their work, therefore creating an atmosphere or signalising a twist in the action. For example, Stoker uses a direct reference to “Lenore” in the opening chapter of *Dracula*:

> As he spoke he smiled, and the lamplight fell on a hardlooking mouth, with very red lips and sharp-looking teeth, as white as ivory. One of my companions whispered to another the line from Burger’s ‘Lenore”.
> ‘Denn die Todten reiten Schnell.’ (“For the dead travel fast.’)
> The strange driver evidently heard the words, for he looked up with a gleaming smile. The passenger turned his face away, at the same time putting out his two fingers and crossing himself. (Stoker 15-16)

A blurred reference to “Lenore” can be traced in Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* during Scrooge’s and Ghost’s conversation:

> 'Seven years dead,' mused Scrooge. 'And travelling all the time?'

'The whole time,' said the Ghost. 'No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.'

'You travel fast?' said Scrooge.

'On the wings of the wind,' replied the Ghost. (Dickens 29)

In that instance, Dickens' correlates the lives of living and dead, indicating similarities in emotional torments, escapism and constant pursue of bliss and peacefulness. By confronting life and the undead, Dickens shows a strong relation between the two worlds and disaffirms death in the end. By using Gothic motifs, Dickens manages to create a useful and positive guidance that can be relatable and life-changing, therefore he succeeded in applying positive traits to an eerie Gothic creature.

Bürger's epithets in the description of a marriage bed suggest a metaphorical usage and an indication that the "marriage bed" is an actual tomb: ""Sag an, wo ist dein Kämmerlein? / Wo? wie dein Hochzeitbettchen?" – / "Weil, weit von hier! . . . Still, kühl und klein! . . ."" (Bürger 138 - 140). Wilhelm and Lenore's guests are the "undead" who serve as a chorus, invoke the God to have mercy on Lenore's soul and sing songs of the dead:

Horch Glockenklang! horch Totensang:

„Lasst uns den Leib begraben!"

Und näher zog ein Leichenzug,

Der Sarg und Totenbahre trug.

Das Lied war zu vergleichen

Dem Unkenruf in Teichen. (Bürger 164-169)

Lenore's unawareness of the situation will become lethal for her as she is incapable to comprehend the reality and is only disgusted by Wilhelm's constant mentioning of the dead: "Hurra! Die Toten reiten schnell! / Graut Liebchen auch vor Toten?" – /„Ach nein! ... Doch lass die Toten!" (Bürger 191-193). Lenore will remain unaware until the near end of the ballad, when both the climax and Wilhelm's revelation occur:

Des Reiters Koller, Stück für Stück,

Fiel ab wie mürber Zunder.

Zum Schädel, ohne Zopf und Schopf,

Zum nackten Schädel ward sein Kopf,

Sein Körper zum Gerippe,

Mit Stundenglas und Hippe. (Bürger 235-240)

Bürger's usage of sublimity and a significant turning point occur in revelation that Wilhelm and Lenore depart in the midnight hour: "Wir satteln nur um Mitternacht. / Weit ritt ich her von Böhmen" (Bürger 114-115). Onomatopoetic expressions deepen the terror that is soon to be revealed and help in creating the atmosphere surrounding Wilhelm and Lenore during their troublesome ride: "Und hurre hurre, hopp hopp hopp! / Ging's fort in sausendem Galopp" (Bürger 150-151). Bürger describes the cemetery area as dark and hidden but accompanied by the moonlight and stars, creating the horrifying peacefulness among the dead: "Und über Gräber ging der Lauf. / Es blinkten Leichensteine / Rundum im Mondenscheine" (Bürger 230-232).

Another major Gothic motif in "Lenore" is her unconditional love that physically and figuratively breaks Lenore's heart, causing her demise.

Geheul! Geheul aus hoher Luft,

Gewinsel kam aus tiefer Gruft.

Lenorens Herz, mit Beben,

Rang zwischen Tod und Leben. (Bürger 245-248)

The chorus announces her death, accompanied by folkloric rituals of singing, evoking, and dancing: "Nun tanzten wohl bei Mondenglanz, / Rundum herum im Kreise, / Die Geister einen Kettentanz" (Bürger 249-251). The undead appear to be in the God's service, proclaiming that Lenore is to be punished for her sins and blasphemous behaviour: "„Geduld! Geduld! Wenn's Herz auch bricht! / Mit Gott im Himmel hadre nicht!" (Bürger 253-254). An abundance of folkloric and Gothic elements shapes the ballad, combining the elements of fear, remorse and unexpectedness. The reader may encounter duality in the ending of the ballad; on the one hand Lenore can be considered damned and banished from heaven, but on the other hand she may be considered reunited with Wilhelm and deprived from misery that surrounds her.

Bürger's innovative style of writing combines folkloric elements with the Gothic, joining the both with prevailing elements of the *Sturm and Drang* movement, creating a new era in German literature and contributing towards further development of Romanticism throughout Europe. Marti Lee describes the influence of Bürger's literary opus:

> In short, Bürger's achievement, while minor in itself, helped father an international movement that led directly to the massive popularity of Gothic works then and now. [...] As the Gothic novel borrowed many of its original conventions from the German ballads, as popularized by "Lenore", we can fairly say that Bürger is one of the most influential founding fathers of the Gothic and horror genres. (qtd. in Stewart)

4. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "Die Braut von Korinth"

Goethe is widely considered to be one of the originators of the theme of literary vampires, alongside Bürger's "Lenore" and Stroker's *Dracula* (Waltje 35). In his poem "Die Braut von Korinth", published in 1797, Goethe explores the motifs of romance and sexual attraction between a human being and a beautiful vampire. Goethe combines love and vampirism while producing a poem that explores the mystical and uncanny, and relying on basic human emotions such as love, fear, sadness, and sorrow in creating Gothic atmosphere: "As in Bürger's Lenore, the use of the word 'vampire' is suspiciously avoided, although Goethe himself referred to 'Die Braut' as his 'vampiric poem'" (Waltje 35). Even though Goethe was inspired by Phlegon of Tralles' *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Frayling states that "Goethe was first to make the vampire respectable in literature" (qtd. in Waltje 35). A correlation of Gothic fascination, folk elements and the spirit of the *Sturm und Drang* movement allowed Goethe to deeply explore the world of the undead and to even strongly describe the two lovers through their narration, background, and emotions. Usually, "Die Braut von Korinth" is considered a ballad: it is focused on a description of a single episode, it has a swift development, minimalistic description of a surrounding and an emphasis on the dramatic elements and the intensity of narration (Waltje 36).

Goethe uses a narrative technique at the beginning of the ballad to indicate the former relations between the family and a discord that occurs after the family from Korinth converts to Christianity: "Und sie sind schon Christen und getauft, / Keimt ein Glaube neu" (Goethe 11-12). Goethe sets off a chain of everyday events that precede the strange encounter between the bride and the young man. There are no indications of the uncanny until the nightfall, when the man decides to rest: "Und er schlummert fast, / Al ein seltner Gast / Sich zur offnen Tür hereinbewegt" (Goethe 26-28). The figure who approaches is described as a bride who is luxuriously dressed and beautiful, but at the same time very strange: "Tritt, mit weißem Schleier und Gewand, / Sittsam still ein Mädchen in das Zimmer, / Um die Stirn ein schwarz und goldnes

Band (Goethe 30-32). The encounter between the bride and the man contributes to more strange events triggered by an indication of a dubious and strange bride's appearance: "Wenn sie ihn erblickt, / Hebt sie, die erschrickt, / Mit Erstaunen eine weiße Hand" (Goethe 33-35). Goethe never declares the young woman as a vampiric creature, but rather uses characterization in order to intrigue the reader and evoke fear:

> By the time Goethe published his ballad, simply mentioning the common traits of the vampire rather than blatantly using the word […] was enough to reveal the bride's identity as a vampire. The gradual progression of this revelation creates an atmosphere of suspense in the poem and reflects the novelty and ambiguous nature of the vampires as it was perceived in the eighteen century. (Crawford 53)

It cannot be stated with certainty that the encounter between the bride and the young man has not occurred in a dream:

> There is not mentioning of the youth awakening to someone at his door. This sequence is indicative of the beginnings of a dream which apparently continues for the remainder of the poem and possibly beyond, since there is no indication that the youth awakens and no closure to the ballad. (Crawford 55)

This encounter may be considered imaginary due to the state of dreaming in which Freud explains that in sleep one experiences the unconscious as a landscape "inhabited by those aspects of life that go on living, the realm of the undead spoken trough dreams" (qtd. in Crawford 55). Understanding the motif of a dream would suggest the young man's fear of the "New World" and monstrosity that is brought in by the gradual acceptance of Christianity. The combination of cultural anxiety and repulsive behaviour towards Christianity can be noticed when the young man tries to save his bride and allure her from Christianity into the "Old World": "Liebe, komm und laß, / Laß uns sehn, wie froh die Götter sind" (Goethe 49). To his plead she responds stating that: "Unsichtbar wird *einer* nur im Himmel / Und ein Heiland wird am Kreuz verehrt" (Goethe 66-67). Her vampirism may be considered as a punishment for committing a suicide after she is converted to Christianity against her will: "the bride in Goethe's ballad represents the 'living death' of classical religion and culture in antiquity after Christianization, but also in its renaissance in Germany in the late eighteenth century" (Crawford 53). As an indication of her suicide, the bride explains her embarrassment and feeling as a stranger in the family home: "Ach, so hält man mich in meiner Klause! / Und nun überfällt

mich hier die Scham" (Goethe 38-39). It is suggested that she was kept somewhere during the significant period of time, which can be understood as a coffin or a tomb in which her body is preserved. The undeniable affection between the living and "undead" serves as a basis for his inexplicable behaviour after he realises she is no longer alive: "Seine Liebeswut / Wärmt ihr starres Blut, / Doch es schlägt kein Herz in ihrer Brust" (Goethe 122-124). The man's deranged and inexplicable love for his corpse bride presents an infatuation derived from his fascination with the uncanny and his role as a man, which is to protect a vulnerable damsel in distress: "Hoffe doch, bei mir noch zu erwarmen, / Wärst du selbst mir aus dem Grab gesandt! / Wechselhauch und Kuß!" (Goethe 114-116). The man is besotted with the idea that he is finally reconnected with his stunning bride and refuses to let her go:

> Und sie hört die höchsten Liebesschwüre,
>
> Lieb- und Schmeichelworte, mit Verdruß:
>
> „Still! Der Hahn erwacht!"
>
> „Aber morgen nacht
>
> Bist du wieder da?" - und Kuß auf Kuß. (Goethe 134-138)

As a creature of the night, the bride must retreat before the sunrise in order to be awaked with the sunset. She affirms her identity as she drinks wine in the colour of blood, which may be perceived as a metaphorical representation of human blood:

> Eben schlug die dumpfe Geisterstunde,
>
> Und nun schien es ihr erst wohl zu sein.
>
> Gierig schlürfte sie mit blassem Munde
>
> Nun den dunkel blutgefärbten Wein. (Goethe 92-95)

As Goethe revolves the entire ballad around the inner thoughts and struggle of the bride, the reader may comprehend elements of duality in her character. She is torn between her "new" nature as a vampire which obliges her to kill her victim in order to survive, and protectiveness, which arises from womanhood: "Goethe's bride is a mosaic of compelling and composing characteristics that exist in one being but cannot coexist" (Crawford 52). Aware of her nature, the bride tries to save the man: "Ferne bleib, o Jüngling! bleibe stehen;" (Goethe 50), even though she will eventually feast upon his body:

Aus dem Grabe werd ich ausgetrieben,

Noch zu suchen das vermißte Gut,

Noch den schon verlornen Mann zu lieben

Und zu saugen seines Herzens Blut. (Goethe 174-177)

The contradictory traits that coexist within her lead to her passive, but at the same time, destructive behaviour that is lethal and harmful:

> As a woman and as a vampire the bride is a multifaceted and unique monster. She is at once the contemporary ideal woman in her beauty, her modesty, and her classically inspired composure as she faces her fate, yet she is a vampire and a femme fatale who is subject to irreversible compulsion to kill the one she loves the most. […] Goethe's bride is a prime representative of the impossibility of the dual concept of the Eternal Feminine existing in one person. (Crawford 52)

As she declares that she intends to kill the young man, the bride mentions a promise that was broken and which determines her demeanour. The bride equally blames her mother as well as the family's conversion to Christianity, which drove her into madness and sealed her destiny:

Dieser Jüngling war mir erst versprochen,

Als noch Venus' heitrer Tempel stand.

Mutter, habt Ihr doch das Wort gebrochen,

Weil ein fremd, ein falsch Gelübd' Euch band!

Doch kein Gott erhört,

Wenn die Mutter schwört,

Zu versagen ihrer Tochter Hand. (Goethe 167-173)

Driven by vengeful instinct, the bride declares that she is to awake every night until she finds the man who was promised to her and drinks his blood. After that, she will find another victim and repeat her action in order to display her anger and misfortune to the world: "Muß nach andern gehn, / Und das junge Volk erliegt der Wut" (179-180). Conclusively, before the bride takes the man's life, she addresses him by saying: "Schöner Jüngling! kannst nicht länger

leben" (Goethe 181). In the same stanza the bride explains what will happen to his body: "Morgen bist du grau, / Und nur braun erscheinst du wieder dort" (Goethe 186-187).

Goethe introduces the reader with the female paradox in the ballad, and challenges the role of a mother as the bride explains her mother how she should be killed to re-establish peace and tranquillity. Its paradox lies within the fact that a mother is supposed to give life to her child and not to end it, as it is sought from the bride's mother:

> Höre, Mutter, nun die letzte Bitte:
>
> Einen Scheiterhaufen schichte du;
>
> Öffne meine bange kleine Hütte,
>
> Bring in Flammen Liebende zur Ruh!
>
> Wenn der Funke sprüht,
>
> Wenn die Asche glüht,
>
> Eilen wir den alten Göttern zu. (Goethe 188-194)

Goethe leaves an open ending to the ballad, allowing the reader to decide whether the mother will accept the daughter's request or not. Both mother and daughter are tragic characters trying to escape their unrighteous destiny, but ultimately fail. The daughter is forced to take her own life and seek vengeance throughout eternity, whereas the mother is forced to kill her daughter in order to bring peace, and, at least in death, reunite the lovers:

> The fact that the destructive forces in both worlds, the bride and her mother, are female intensifies the sense of horror in the poem because typically life-giving woman destroys life in this poem: the bride blames her mother for her death by suicide, which compels her to return as a vampire to kill her lover. (Crawford 54)

5. Edgar Allan Poe: "Lenore"

Edgar Allan Poe' s "Lenore", firstly published under the name "A Paean", glorifies the death of a young woman and depicts a loving man who yearns to be encountered with his beloved in Heaven. Generally, Poe's prose is short and breath-taking at same time, which increases the dose of fear and eeriness within the reader:

> Poe insists that a poet's only concern should be the concentrated effect of the work to produce an intense emotional response in the reader; a poem should be short, to be read in one sitting, so as not to interrupt this effect, and should have as its central concern the presentation of the most universal emotion, which he decides is grief over the death of beauty. (Klages 27)

A young woman named Lenore, alongside with Annabel Lee, Eulalie and Helen, represents Poe's artistic accomplishment in depicting the death of a beautiful young woman and the sorrow left behind. Even though Poe uses the name Lenore in both of his poems, "Lenore" and "The Raven", its manifestation is different. In "The Raven", the author negates the possibility of an encounter in Heaven by constant repetition of the word "nevermore". In "Lenore", the author firmly believes and dreams of a possible reunion in Heaven. For the narrator in "The Raven", the mention of Lenore symbolizes immense sorrow, distress and fear: "Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, / Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before (23-24), whereas in "Lenore", the narrator is filled with gratitude, peacefulness and pride: ""Avaunt! to-night my heart is light. No dirge will I upraise, / "But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days! (Poe 20-21). In "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe explains the necessity of a usage of a motif of a beautiful young woman who passed away too soon: "When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover". Even though Poe explained the issue concerning Lenore as she features in "The Raven", it is still applicable to Poe's other works, such as "Lenore" and "Annabel Lee".

Poe opens his poem in medias res, describing forlorn mood after Lenore's death. The narrator, still unknown to the reader, will reveal himself as Guy De Vere. In the second line, Poe mentions the river Styx, which is: "a principal river in the Greek underworld (also called Hades). The river forms a border between the underworld and the world of the living. The word

means hate in Greek and is named after the goddess, Styx" (Geller). By mentioning the river Styx, the narrator indicates that someone whose soul is pure has passed away. Lenore's unexpected death precedes and announces the death of Annabel Lee. In "Lenore" Poe states: "An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young" (6), whereas in "Annabel Lee": "That the wind came out of the cloud by night, / Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee" (25-26). The character of Guy de Vere serves as an embodiment of a repressed human sorrow and sadness. He romanticizes Lenore after her death, reflecting on her impeccable life: "That did to death the innocent that died, and died so young?" (Poe 12). Poe describes Lenore as an angelic being which now can only be encountered in Heaven: "For her, the fair and debonair, that now so lowly lies, / The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes--/ The life still there, upon her hair--the death upon her eyes" (Poe 17-19). Traits of a beautiful woman can be found in most of Poe's poems that share the same theme and revolve around the same narrator-protagonist:

> "Lenore" is one of the many poems that celebrate the fairness of the beloved, in hair, skin, or eyes. When the poetic women are described, they are often fair, with "hyacinth" or yellow hair ("Eulalie," "To Helen") and light eyes; they are never described as having the black hair and eyes of the "Dark Ladies" of Poe's tales. (Weeks 152)

The female character in Poe's "Lenore" symbolises an embodiment of deliverance from harm or evil. She is a faithful companion to her male counterpart and is perfect in every imaginable form. Even though Guy De Vere admits they have sinned, Lenore's purity remains intact: "Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sabbath song / Go up to God so solemnly the dead my feel so wrong!" (Goethe 13-14). Fisher reflected on Poe's male characters in poetry and concluded:

> the speaker is utterly beset by grief, and that, as is suggested in many other creative works of Poe's, his is the loss of an ideal, symbolized in Lenore, who may have been no actual physical woman, but an emotional force that has nurtured the speaker's own emotional wellbeing. (44)

Guy De Vere shows intense emotions as he condemns the entire society for maltreating Lenore. He shows the hypocrisy of the society as it shows no remorse or repentance for their demeanour and show their falsehood by following useless social norms and conventions:

> "Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride,

"And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her--that she died!

"How *shall* the ritual, then, be read?--the requiem how be sung

"By you--by yours, the evil eye,--by yours, the slanderous tongue

"That did to death the innocent that died, and died so young?" (Poe 8-12)

Despite the fact that the society tries to pay homage to Lenore, Guy De Vere despises every form of funeral ceremony that should be conducted. For him, Lenore and her life should be celebrated as she represents the embodiment of perfection of a body and soul. She is saved as she ascends to Heaven and leaves the miserable life of mortals behind. For Guy De Vere, she is to be reunited with God, liberated from any form of evil or harm:

"Let *no* bell toll!--lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,

"Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the damnéd Earth.

"To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven--

"From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven--

"From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of Heaven." (Poe 22-27)

Even though the lovers are parted, their love does not subside. Guy De Vere loves the corpse equally as he loved Lenore when she was alive. Poe romanticizes love beyond the grave as a device in expressing certainty in strong emotions: "The sweet Lenore hath "gone before," with Hope, that flew beside / Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride--" (Poe 15-16). Similar pattern can be found in Poe's "Annabel Lee", which proves that Poe uses strong emotions as fundament in his poetry and emphasises emotions more than the action itself:

I was a child and *she* was a child,

In this kingdom by the sea,

But we loved with a love that was more than love—

I and my Annabel Lee—

With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven

Coveted her and me. (7-12)

It is possible to recognize different stages of mourning within Poe's male characters: "the speaker's emotions gradually transform from denial, with his aimless wandering outdoors, to acceptance of his beloved's death" (Fisher 43). The sorrow that Poe expresses in his poems is more than the sorrow of his male characters; it is the sorrow he tries to identify with the sorrow of an average man. His characters are mostly nameless as they symbolize an ordinary human, perplexed mind and burdened soul. Mary Oliver explains:

> despite all the Gothic machinery of his stories, all his efforts to escape what is commonly accepted as reality, Poe nevertheless grips us because his unreal characters have unlocked in us real emotions, his wraiths relive the grief of our inevitable losses of those we love. (qtd. in Hoffman 124)

A feeling of personal loss permeates Poe's poetry as he reflects on his personal tragedy in poetry that is set in front of the reader. In "Lenore", the death of the beautiful young woman, coupled with an exploration of human most vivid and deep emotions, sets the aim of interpretation. The Gothic elements do not dominate as Poe tries to explore the human inwardness that sometimes has the ability to be even more frightening than the surroundings:

> Poe's ceaseless memory of those he loved and lost – and, indeed, our own unending memory of our own lost loved ones. Although there may be no "surcease of sorrow," this poem does help to create, over time and around the world, a community of shared sorrow […]. (Kopley et al. 195)

Conclusion

In conclusion, Gothic elements can be found in various literary works, even though their main theme does not necessary belong to Gothic fiction. Gothic elements shape contemporary literature, serving as inexhaustible sources of ideas that can be transformed into modern Gothic fiction. Elements found in Bürger's, Goethe's, and Poe's ballads can be classified as the main elements of every Gothic writing, as they include Gothic setting, atmosphere, emotion, and the uncanny. The hero of Gothic fiction is driven by the deepest human emotions that control the action and bring the final resolution. It is very important to note a very specific aspect of Gothic fiction, that is the ability to include the reader in the action. The reader is not a mere observer of the action, but rather an active participant who identifies with the characters and relives their emotions. The exploration of human emotions plays a crucial role in understanding Gothic fiction, alongside with the strange entities that provoke human curiosity of understanding the life beyond the grave. Gothic elements found in Bürger's and Goethe's ballads shed light on the understanding of romance between the living and the undead, whereas Poe's "Lenore" explains the concept of human sorrow in the face of a tragic und unexpected loss.

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