

# Mental exploration with super natural elements

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Man is born with love, happiness, gloom and desperation but along with it, an essence of an unknown fear. It is a fear of strange phenomenon that has imbibed within their soul from their ancestors' ardent belief in supernatural forces in their social and cultural lives. The aura of feelings of that strangeness is so strong in many that they begin to believe their activities and their lives as a result of the strong influence of this strangeness.

The traits of these feelings dominates' their mental powers to the extent that they deem all the supernatural elements a reality. These feelings also rely on all the displeasures and pains that he feel in the life which he mostly find in environment and nature around. He began to feel nature as personification of devils and witches, the shapes given by folk-lore of the generations past and have become so part of our life that they took many of us in its vintage of belief.

All the stories, Poe's " Fall of the House of Usher", Hawthorne's " Young Goodman Brown", and Bierce's " An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge", are psychopathic novels. In all these stories, protagonists have strange feelings of supernatural elements with evilness and dread-ness not withstanding shrouding in them but along with that there are also scenes of lives they had passed and hope for a future if they would have lived long.

These stories are not just shrouding with physical fear and gruesome murder tales but there are certain more intrinsic qualities examining mental upheavals and heart swearing souls of protagonists. They are not in certain supernatural as other tales of Gothic literature but are given the supernatural touch to the objects and environment so close to protagonists.

Poe gave the House of Usher a supernatural realm and Roderick Usher felt himself into close associated with the house and owed his odd behavior to the house. Usher had a feeling that his morale and his behavior were dependent on this house.

From the beginning of the story only, it had been told that there was something very unusual and peculiar about this house. When narrator met Roderick Usher, he remarked... “ The physique of the gray walls and the turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought upon the morale of his existence.” (Poe, 1515). In the house, narrator also felt a sense of gloominess. Usher’s family though belonged to the ancient clan could not flourish, as there remained only one survival member from generations. It happened with Roderick Usher too, his twin sister Madeline died and Roderick with the help of narrator buried Madeline in the tomb in building itself.

Often Roderick would become very uneasy and would hear strange sounds and often mutter himself. They also saw the bright looking gas surrounding the house. Roderick felt that they had buried Madeline alive and she would often come out of the tomb and felt that she was standing behind the door. Wind blew the door opened and Roderick was confirmed as he saw her standing in white robes covered with blood as if she was struggling to escape. She attacked Roderick as life was passing from her and Roderick died due to fear. Along with the death of Roderick, the house too collapsed and narrator escaped from the house.

There is no doubt of the fact that writer had espoused upon the supernatural elements while giving the mental dilemma of Roderick. Poe developed claustrophobia in the story. The supernatural element is naturally the ghost of Madeline. Some scholars even point to the fact that Madeline never existed but only the part of Roderick's mental imagination but Madeline was there.

Both were twins and shared same sense of dispositions. Though Madeline died soon yet Roderick never found himself separated from Madeline: this is main thrust of the story and they were again united in the end when Madeline became the cause of Roderick's death. There is no thematic element in the story but only reflects the psychological and claustrophobic disturbances that can haunt any lonely person in a huge mansion from the walls of which spring woeful tales of his ancestors.

Hawthorne shared same tendencies with Edgar Allen Poe to bring supernatural elements. His writings shook our nerves; with his ardent touch of supernatural elements, he showed us our fears and inhibited desires. "Young Goodman Brown" has both the elements of supernaturalism in the form of devil having snakelike staff that he always carried with him. Hawthorne portrays devil as equal to Brown as if there is a certain common link between the two. It emphasizes the puritan theology, that devil is everywhere in the world. It implies every man has the qualities impersonalized by goodness as well as evilness and we easily get distracted towards evilness.

Brown got every chance to go back to Faith, his wife representation of religion, purity and goodness but he fell into the trap of devil as his ancestors did. This meeting with supernatural element in the wilderness left Brown completely distorted in his vision of the world and as a result he got psychologically disturbed and began to live with empty heart. He began to see devil behind every bush and in the heart of every man but without realizing that devil was in his heart.

He always felt within him evilness and his end mounted in hopelessness and wretchedness. Hawthorne said, "A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man, did he become, from the night of the fearful dream." (Hawthorne, 612) He could not even listen to the holy psalm, because sin had already overpowered his soul.

As compared to Edgar Allen Poe, his Young Goodman Brown has an element of theme. It is the theme of Christian doctrine over evilness. If a person once gets into the trap of evil, it is impossible for him to come out of it. He went into the evil world full of darkness and even though tried to come out of it could not emerge out and finally fell into an eternal doom.

Ambrose Bierce's Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge is a clear picture of man whose end is near-his feelings; psychological desires and tendencies brunt open his inherent willingness to live into this world. It is again a psychological dilemma of man punished to be hanged till death at Owl Creek Bridge. There is no direct supernatural element in this story as is in Hawthorne's or Poe but Peyton Farquhar thoughts and some strange sounds

when he saw the log drifting in the stream below and the strange light when he was falling in the river and drowning.

There is an essence of realistic touch in the end of the story. In his dream, what Peyton Farquhar saw “ strange roseate light”, trees that look like “ giant garden plants”, and “ great golden stars” (Bierce 274) are though supernatural in essence and immersed in the words as real but what exactly Peyton Farquhar’s was looking at were only artificial substances woven in his mind.

All events of his attempts to escape and finally when he fell down from the shot was the psychological manifestation of a man within whom there was a realization that he could escape from the clutches of death and become free like a log drifting in a river before. His love and remembrance for his wife and children was so imbibed in his soul that he felt some supernatural power would come to save him from death, but his death was inevitable. Though he thought he had escaped from soldier’s claws yet when he was going to meet his beautiful wife, he fell down from the shot and in the end, we saw him dangling from the Owl Creek Bridge.

There is a misdirection of plot in story pleading a man’s desire of life but if death has to come, then no one can escape from it. This is a thematic game that Ambrose Bierce's played so naturally with the mental trip of Peyton Farquhar.

Middle age was the period of Gothic literature-Witches, ghosts, spirits, etc. have formed the part of these stories and the whole environment have the feeling of strangeness in the midst of real lives, but the depth to which these

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stories are presented gave these stories a different dimension. These stories are more of man's mental disturbances and emotional upheavals that take the form of supernatural beings. What a man thinks, idealizes and gets set backs in life is all form of devils and witches coming to grasp him in his jaws. This is the thematic element, Poe, Hawthorne and Bierce's so profoundly and dexterously espoused in their stories.

#### WORKS CITED

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