

# ***The Masque of the Red Death : Poe's symbolism as a timeless commentary on "Death" and "Disease".***

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## ***Abstract:***

*The Red Death, transporting unreservedly among the seven rooms, is the plague that carries demise to Prince Prospero's masquerade party. His essence is ubiquitous and transcendent. Poe makes the Gothic monastery in the story an allegory, an uncanny space where an inescapable and all-knowing force enters and carries end to every one of the individuals who are enchanted in their unremarkable heaven, and have a deception of getting away from death. All in all, Poe's Gothic convent executes the desire of the Red Death, which slaughters all. Poe makes the dark room a representation, showing the marvel of light diminishing towards the surrounded space, emblematic of the limited Universe and the marvel of gravity as a power that brings all iotas into the middle. Sovereign Prospero and his revelers are hence figuratively equivalent to the molecules being moved back to the middle. Prospero's pursuit after Death is emblematic of horrendous, victorious Death overwhelming men in their section to the chasm. This paper hence intends to demonstrate that both the Red Death and every one of the items in the Gothic monastery is Poe's representative immortal analysis on illness and its guaranteed decision that is death itself. Unavoidable by any strata of the society the paper seeks to explain the universal phenomenon that no matter how one, being privileged, down in their pleasure tries to escape the crisis by being segregating themselves in their mansions, escaping their social obligation, death being represented as a divine expression ultimately catches everyone. The paper thus analyzing the universality of the symbol being embedded in the text and aims further to correlate those symbols to the present chaotic condition of our time.*

*Keywords: Red Death, seven rooms, masquerade party, gothic monastery, illness, universality of symbols.*

“And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.”(Poe)

Edgar Allen Poe writes *The Masque of the Red Death* in a forebodingly obvious style. Poe's utilization of unique, polysyllabic, and melodious yet frequenting language, accomplishes a premonition and treacherous temperament that fosters the subject of the certainty of mortality. In the story Poe builds up his mellifluous style with delightful words, for example, "candle holder, strikingly, velvet, well proportioned, decora, midnight, embellishments, red, and wonderfulness," to paint the picture of a Gothic palace on a dull evening, spilling over with wealth. His word usage brings us into the universe of Prince Prospero; a world wherein he believes he can get away from Death. Anyway his demonstrative style with the world, for example, "concealed, ghosts, pendulum, blood-hued, and bombastic," shroud the dimness just beneath the outside of the mellifluous words. These delightful yet strangely dim words make a premonition tone that bothers the pursuer. The always ticking clock, the crimson goods and veiled gathering visitors, suffocating in wealth, anticipate Prospero's destruction.

Written as an allegory ,the story contains the Poe's timeless commentary on death and disease. Though there is no specific disease with the exact symptom described by Poe in the story but what he focused instead is on the horror , the fatality of disease, and the due effect that is the inevitable death itself. Poe in this short story combined many incidents and events in which human nature despite being limited in its capability tries his best to escape the effect of the disease but catches the inescapable consequences. In the story prince, Prospero, as his name suggests, is the symbol of power and might who to avoid being infected tried to hide in his abbey with the bunch of many other wealthy nobles and guest, locked the gates carefully, and threw away the keys to keep away from the Red Death. The palace where he was sheltered was secluded from the masses. It was a large building with strong ,high walls and has an iron gate .These high walls and iron gates resemble the human efforts to resist the diseases and their deadly impact:

This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts.They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions, the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisators, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death.(Poe)

In *The Masque of the Red Death* the terror of the disease was set in advance .Poe in the story describes the disease in such a way that it appears to be a deadly pestilence, it idolizes the same horror where we at this present juncture is already facing. It's been shown in the story that how through times disease as deadly as such makes people helpless, horrified, uncertain and doubtful:

No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous... There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the

aid and from the sympathy of his fellow men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour. (Poe)

In the story, the title in itself is so horrific that it lead the reader to fill with awe. The name of the story that is "The Red Death" when pronounced creates a kind of an image, a picture resembling blood. The fictional plague is named the "Red Death" "because it makes people bleed out of the pores on their faces" (Poe). It's been so dominantly personified that it appears like a terrible omniscient creature present everywhere, within everyone creating an unavoidable fear. The "Masque" in the story can be suggestive of the hideous nature of the disease which is though present but could not be identified. The use of the word "Masque" is very much universal in its approach as from times the world has been continuously facing pestilences and plague which acts like a personified enemy, takes innumerable lives but couldn't be visualized. Red symbolizes blood and violence. As Red is the color of the plague "Blood was its Avatar" (Poe), it symbolizes scenes of terror, something like a bloody kind of thing that appears because of some slaughter or murder. In the story Poe has given the description of the luxurious abbey which has all sorts of comfort and entertainment and in the downside of the abbey there were rows of the seven rooms where each room has been decorated with lights of seven different colours. This series of seven rooms have been arranged from east to west. This arrangement from east to west could be given different sorts of interpretation but the analysis which is most often used is Shakespeare's ideas of the stages of man, representing the progression of life. The arrangement of rooms with their colour code has so been designed that the first room that is blue represents birth, purple colour of the room represent youth, green adolescent, Orange, of course, represent adulthood while "White" represents old age, colour "Violet" represent the dotage and the Seventh room that is the last of the rooms, situated in the farthest west represents the setting of the sun and the end of the man's life. In the story, it's been shown that no one wants to go there as everyone fears the darkness that ultimately signifies that everyone fears imminent death. In the story the last room has so been decorated that it appears quite unusual and different from the other six rooms mentioned. Poe to give it a deadly gothic view describes the room as it was:

....closely shrouded in velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet — a deep blood color. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all. (Poe)

The description of the red color in the story is the symbol of disease, the plague whereas the black colour defines the ultimate end or the death. The combination of these two colours in the decoration of the last rooms signifies the coherent relationship between the diseases and the surefire death. Further in the last part of the story where the powerful, wealthy duke largely followed the Red Death, symbolizes the struggle between the worldly power and the ultimate death. The death of the duke at the end of the story symbolizes the submission of worldly glory or power in front of the unbounded death. So at the concluding part of the story where the "Red death" met the Prospero at the darkness of the room highlights the cause and effect of the disease on human mortal life where the fatal disease seizes human life and anything that had its power overall is darkness or the ultimate death "And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all" (Poe). As the arrival of the disease bring with itself all sorts of trauma and distress and with the spread of those disease mental anguish too takes place. Poe in the story too highlighted this theme but through the use of visual colours. He in the story through the careful selection of the colours, tries to portrait the psychological condition of the horror of the disease and the uncertainty of life. Poe revelers back to the real world, and let individuals feel dread and frenzy. In the series of rooms, the first room has been décor with blue. Blue communicates sentiments like distance, calm and separation. It is additionally used to portray individuals' terrible state of mind. The expression of blue in articulations like "feeling blue" and "to have the blues" signifies "discouraged" or "misfortune"; while "blue Monday" can be clarified as "unfortunate Monday". In the story, the principal room was a blue one. All decorations and windows of this room were blue and revelers were glad to go all through this room. It was the image of individuals' mental status at the underlying condition of plague - despondency, yet not being influenced by this feeling. The design of this room introduced a bogus impression, similar to the fantasy which could comfort individuals in a film. This game plan took into account all individuals at the gathering. Rather than confronting the plague, revelers picked to smother their internal sadness and uneasiness through calmness and separation on the surface. It was a clue foretelling their stun when the Red Death showed up. The subsequent room had purple trimmings and embroidered works of art; here the sheets were purple like lotus. Purple addresses respect and abundance, appearing differently concerning the despairing of the main room. When going into the room, revelers quickly failed to remember their difficulties, entertained themselves with the wonder brought by their honorable status. In this nation of plague, they making the most of their predominance once and for all before they kicked the bucket. This was as per the first goal of the sovereign: all satisfaction and harmony were inside the seprater, while the Red Death was outside of the enclosure. He was adequately silly to accept that the crown could keep the sickness out of the enclosed wall. Here, Poe utilized the shade of purple to scrutinize and caricature the sovereign for his pride and obliviousness. The use of colour green in the abbey is frequently used to portray individuals who are ignorant or lack preparation or information as, "green hand" signifies "no experience". What's more, green is likewise used to designate "desire" also, "envy". "Green with envy" signifies incredible desire. The third room in the novel was green, which implied obliviousness. It was a parody of individuals inside the enclosure. The death was approaching nearer, while the revelers were unconcerned and self-deluding. The revelers in the nunnery are not aware of the clock-like state of the seven rooms, however are significantly influenced by the rings of the black clock. Despite the fact that they follow the Prince and lock themselves in the nunnery,

away from the outside universe of the plague, they sense the sickness approaching as the clock rings, which produces in them certain emotions. Time rules the nunnery, and helps all the disguise revelers to remember its reality, driving them to frenzy, pity, and despondency. There are harmonies in the hearts of carelessness that can't be contacted without feeling. The dark clock is the courier of death that sends information on its arrival. Poe subsequently utilizes the clock to make a feeling of frightfulness in the revelers and makes it ring more musically than once. The dark clock is a villain that means to remove the hearts of the revelers, whom it derides for their obliviousness of the plague. Even though there was death approaching them in form of the monster chime where, individuals were sometimes though stirred, apprehensively pondering but later notwithstanding, after the chime, serenity returned, and individuals proceeded to sing and move to praise the fun occasion. However, when the story comes to its end it could be witnessed that anything those revelers could do was to open their mouth and get dread. The next room which was decorated as orange in the text, represents the imperativeness of life. It was of uncommon aim for Poe to design the fourth room with an orange tone. Individuals at the gathering couldn't stop their internal dread, even though they attempted to dress, dance hysterically with the backup of the band, beat energetically with dynamic hearts, and chuckle enthusiastically and merrily. The imperativeness on a superficial level could be clarified as the void of their heart. By all accounts, they carried on serenely. However, truth be told their hearts waved precariously. This solid differentiation between the splendid shade of imperativeness and the dull shade of death improved the fear impact. The color white in western culture represents magnificence, neatness, and virtue. It was the deception that blurred every one of the revelers. At the point when they ventured into the white room, they erroneously accepted that they had been saved. However, the demise was gradually drawing closer. Though, after the amusing carnival, they expected some recovery but the situation was to be opposite as it the trial of the demise was already hanging tight for them. So the plague, the "Red Death" came, their fear flooded like a flood after the embankment broke. For individuals at the gathering, when Red death, the Satan whom they didn't try to consider for quite a while, now was in front of them and it was now pointless to mislead themselves anymore. Their internal feelings of fear came to a peak. From orange, the image of essentialness to white, the image of death, and afterward to violet, the image of later years, the attitude of revelers was evolving. From the outset, they utilized hallucination to get away from discouragement, and afterward, they picked self-misdirection, at long last, the alert of death went off. Different from purple which shows rights and riches, violet suggests the sundown years and the pattern of life. In any case, indeed, for these revelers, demise in this way was sumptuous. Youthful and solid knights, design women and the pompous ruler couldn't escape from the Red Death. Here, the natural demise was diverged from the demise of agony and suffering, uncovering revelers' extraordinary fear of Red Death.

Indeed, dark is indivisible with red. The infection of Red Death, which went through the full text, was really the Black Death. As the most obscure shading, dark represents demise, enduring and distress. "The Black Friday" is viewed as the most perilous day. Dark is frequently connected with evil and fallen angels. The shade of dark shows up much of the time in the text. Against the west wall stood an immense dark clock. Consistently it tolled noisily, profoundly and plainly, filling the palace with its long, bleak sound. To revelers, it was the ringer of death. The room at the west end was depicted with most subtleties. "The dark floor

covering and the enclosure appeared to be brimming with anguish, and the profound tolls of the dark clock sounded even terrifying." Here, Poe joined the two shades of red and dark, offering pursuers with visual stuns. Nobody set out to go into this room, since it was odd, frightful and amazing; no life could escape from this room. The dread impact was impeccably made. Obscurity and blood, evil and ultimately death was introduced in this room. Individuals' ultimate terror of death was amplified until the latest possible time. At the point when the sovereign fell upon the dark rug, revelers brought their mental fortitude to go into the darkroom. However, they tracked down, no apparent carcass under the clothe was found. Toward the finish of this stor , the final straggler in the palace was only the Red Death. The subject of the story was stressed once more, and the dread impact came to apex. So in today's social reality while pursuing material interests and sovereign rights, we should draw lessons from The Masque of the Red Death as the story can be used as a mirror to detect the "Red Devils", "Blue Devils", "White Devils"... around us.

In the story, Poe explores the depth of self-indulgence, health paranoia, and the futility of the affluent members of society attempting to survive a social crisis by gating themselves off from the rest of the suffering masses.

The present case of COVID19, when depicted as an incredible leveler, has reliably and gradually uncovered that our openness to the infection and its connected dangers are of course not equivalent. The disparities that have been awkwardly uncovered during the pandemic highlight, specifically, the distinct divisions in the public eye corresponding to social class gathering and financial status.

Individuals who can hole up generally effectively with secured wages will find in the media the revealing of famous people appreciating lockdown in their second homes close by tales about extraordinary interest for food banks and huge scope redundancies in as of now monetarily hardhit zones. There is no getting away from that our situation in the public eye matters ten times in a wellbeing emergency and affects upon who is in danger and of what.

Obviously, discussing hazard is unpredictable. Dangers are wide-going. The most clear danger is the danger to our wellbeing. The danger of coming down with the infection, the danger of getting seriously sick from contracting the infection and, obviously, the danger of kicking the bucket from the infection. In any case, there are other related dangers that numerous individuals are worried about.

These thoughts are surely being scrutinized amid the Covid episode. The aftermath from COVID19 uncovers that even though we are all in the tempest together, we are each in altogether different boats. Someone with a nursery and stable pay, for instance, is in an agreeable and solid boat. Those in second homes in probably the most delightful pieces of the world are in extravagance yachts. Others dwelling in skyrise pads with no admittance to open air space are remaining above water on pontoons, and individuals in the most critical of conditions may just have a lifejacket to hand. However, one is not needed to depend on my similitudes to see these distinct contrasts – they are turning into all-around very obvious to see. On initial feeling, the imbalances amid COVID19 demonstrate social class is more significant now than it at any point has been. The social class actually contributes towards who gets what – the lifejacket, the pontoon, the agreeable boat, or the extravagant yacht. It is consequently too innocent to get rid of social class when the current circumstance shows such disheartening contrasts.

The more extravagant we are, the almost certain we are to be taken out from hazard. The less fortunate we are, the almost certain we are to be nearer to chance. We as a whole encounter hazard, however, some are in more dangerous circumstances than others – something that has gotten obvious in the pandemic. Hence, places of hazard can extend our comprehension of social disparities in a manner that talks both to the tempest and to the boat.

The last words in that passage are particularly important to the narrative. Unlike many of the stories being composed at the time and even now, in which social turmoils are depicted as experiences of moral growth for most of the characters, Poe is willing to explore the limited extent of our moral virtues; concluding that there exists a point at which human decency and empathy will be easily abandoned in favor of self-preservation. The sovereign of the land, Prince Prospero is the base embodiment of the aristocratic, affluent few in society, who in time of need does not reach out to alleviate the suffering of their subjects, but instead, find it more convenient for their survival to horde the necessities to survive from the deadly disease:

They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair or frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions, the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime, it was folly to grieve or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death".(Poe)

The Prince, and his refined friends, shut themselves off in cheerful blankness inside their gated local area, impassive and uninterested about the detestations that abide past their merry experience. So lost do they become in the whimsical, cheerful world they have made for themselves that, a long time into the scourge, while the plague seethed most irately abroad, the now completely confined Prince figures out how to, engage his thousand companions at a concealed bundle of the most strange brilliance. It is significant for a peruser to stop and reflect on the message the creator is attempting to pass on. The world is scholarly kicking the bucket around the last couple of individuals who have the way to sustain against the torment, and their essential interest is in pointlessly engaging themselves with balls and disguises. Not agonizing over discovering a fix to the disease, or building an arrangement by which society is to be safeguarded and secured through the emergency. Only a determined craving to enjoy the qualities of existence with similarly imprudent companions. Never have the words out of sight, out of mind been more opportune than they are to this scene. All through the composition, Poe invests a lot of energy enumerating the expressive and costly highlights of the palace the privileged has kept itself in. This never really brings the peruser into the highlights of the plot; optionally, it serves to show the uselessness of the privileged characters, who see no danger, no torment, no need, as significant as their need to stay undisturbed and uninformed about the concerns of the debilitated masses. Nonetheless, behind this method of self-supported absence, lies a condition of steady distrustfulness for the wealthy residents. Having shown the condition of severely covered worry displayed by the gathering visitors, the story proceeds to recommend how the principal interruption that exists for the impostors is Prince Prospero's offbeat beautiful accomplishments made uniquely for the night. Both the Prince and his chic embellishments of the seven chambers making up the assembly hall corridors, are portrayed as bold and fiery, yet additionally over and over again alluded to as frantic either straightforwardly, or by suggestion. To

suit his preference for the night, the Prince had made it a prerequisite for the impostors to camouflage themselves as peculiarly as could be expected; a solicitation that seems to have been entirely satisfied by the participants. The justification this solicitation seems to have little reason other than for the Prince to additionally represent his erratic energy, however, it can't be precluded that the basic reason could have something to do with the Prince's longing to show how he is unaffected by the anxiety about death that his kindred bluebloods appear to show. As the night winds down, the refined impostors get themselves increasingly restricted, as they thickly pack into one chamber, while deserting others. The hotspot for this conduct is the appearance of a visitor nobody had recently seen, regardless of his striking appearance: "But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood -- and his broad brow, with all the features of his face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror." (Poe) The actual appearance of the strange figure was one that profoundly upset the generally oddly covered gathering participants, because, "his venture was dabbled in blood-- and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror." (Poe)

His outfit was that of the Red Death. Here, the blue-bloods, who have gone through years covering up away ecstatically from the dread and misery that encompasses them, are finally compelled to see firsthand the picture that is simply the reason for their forced containment the genuine wellspring of their steady nervousness. Ruler Prospero's response towards the outsider was unlimited fierceness "Who dares insult us with this blasphemous move. His outfit was that of the Red Death. Here, the individuals of high standing, who have gone through years concealing ceaselessly euphorically from the fear and wretchedness that incorporates them, are at last constrained to see firsthand the image that is just the justification the constrained the certifiable wellspring of their consistent apprehension. Ruler Prospero's reaction towards the outcast was limitless wild. "Who dares" -- he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him -- "who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him -- that we may know whom we have to hang, at sunrise, from the battlements!" (Poe)

This statement of shock is imperative since it is coming from a man who showed no thought for the enduring of his subjects, who holds no respect for anything past his narcissism, yet is presently shouting in all honorableness about being derided about being annoyed anxious to maintain to some cloudy similarity to the guideline. In any case, despite the Prince's harsh order, nobody challenged move towards the interloper, making the Prince himself. "It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddened with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure,..." (Poe)

The disease the inhabitants of the castle had spent so long to shelter from had at last penetrated through their iron gates, "and the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired." And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all." (Poe) All misrepresentation has now been deserted by the impostors, for the outsider was not a costumed gatecrasher, for now, was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. The illness the occupants of the palace had spent such a long time to shield from had finally entered through their iron doors.



If there is one subject that Poe distinctly catches in his frightful story, it is that, eventually, with regards to illness conveying microbes, it doesn't make any difference how much abundance or force one possesses. It doesn't make any difference who—or what—we are, or where we live in our social hierarchy. Infection doesn't, and can't, care about the discretionary station framework or social mores we specific culture has chosen to embrace; it is nature's ideal equalizer. The lone thing sickness knows is to spread and execute aimlessly. Also, when the microorganism conveying bodies of the lower classes start to accumulate all around our gated local area, no measure of wealth will shield us from the destiny that it conveys. It's extremely merical, in a creepy manner.

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