

After reading the novel, I believe the distorted mental world of our protagonist, Roderick Usher, played an important role in the destruction of his own family. His sensitive and stubborn soul, driven by an insane love for his twin sister Madeline Usher, lead to his hysterical act of burying the sister alive. On top of that, the exquisite relationship between the narrator, Roderick and his sister Madeline is another interesting question that is worth looking into.

Tortured by his so-called mental illnesses, Roderick has a distorted, unhealthy inner world. He has a reserved nature from an early age, unwilling to confide his true thoughts or disclose his mental world. The only person he could turn to in his most desperate moments was his childhood friend. This autistic nature contributed to the aggravation of his mental illness. The gloomy, oppressive living environment of the dwelling of the Usher family also played a part in his twisty soul. Upon approaching the house of the Usher, the narrator instantly felt a surge of terror and grief. Having spent his whole lifetime in this kind of environment, chances are that the darkness and oppressiveness of the environment may also permeated into Roderick's soul. Moreover, the strange traditions of the Usher family may be another trigger in the devastation of its own fate. In Roderick's words, the family was long affected by factors of strong sentiments and superstitions. Also, the family had a straight manner of inheritance, which means that they frequently conducted intermarry between the family. This can not only account for Roderick and his sister's illness biologically, but also help to explain the way how Roderick's reserved, autistic personality came into being due to restricted communications and human connections. An intrinsic nature of reservedness and paranoids, together with a lack of healthy relationships, lead to the special personality of Roderick and account for the disaster of his own fate.

But Roderick's characteristics alone are not enough to explain why he chose to bury his sister alive. Roderick had an insane love for his sister. When mentioning his sister's disease, Roderick "*buried his face in his hands*" and burst into cry. Apparently, this unordinary love has gone beyond the scope of love between family members, but fermented into affection between lovers. Because of this extreme love, when the condition of his sister worsened with time, for some reason, Roderick chose to kill his sister himself. However, it's worth noticing that the author deliberately chose to let Madeline look exactly the same as her brother. When Madeline went across the room for the first time, the narrator noticed that "*Her figures, her air, her features—all, in their very minutest development—were identically those of the Roderick Usher*". Being born as twins, Roderick and Madeline shared exactly the same appearance, the same personality and even more. When Roderick was looking at Madeline, was he staring at his own reflection? When he poured his love out to his sister, was he only admiring and appreciating his own figure? When he suffered mentally from the upcoming death of Madeline and chose to bury her alive, was he actually conducting a form of suicide?<sup>1</sup>This sick, unhealthy love, with its nature of narcissism, is embodied in the strange relationship between the twins and further explains the disordered mental world of Roderick.

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<sup>1</sup> 孙维林. 致命的自恋人格——从自体心理学角度看《厄舍古屋的倒塌》主人公之性格[J]. 徐州师范大学学报, 2005(01): 48-51. DOI: 10.16095/j.cnki.cn32-1833/c.2005.01.008.

Although Roderick's mental disorder may come as extreme and unrealistic, the novel also reflects upon themes of more general mental experiences in our life. After Roderick buried his sister alive, there was an intensive fear in his mind. His hysterical confidence betrayed his mind — “Not hear it? —yes, I hear it, and have hear it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not —oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! —I dared not —I dared not speak!”. Haunted by his guilty feelings, and because of his sensitive and superstitious nature, he must have gone through extreme torture every day. Such feelings after sinful commitments are not uncommon in the real world. When the dark side of human nature was intrigued and people committed something bad, were their minds not constantly occupied and tormented by guiltiness and horror? In fact, another novel of Edgar Allan Poe involves exactly the same theme. In *The Tell-Tale Heart*, Poe took great length to show the horrible feelings the murderer felt when talking with the police.<sup>2</sup> Poe used the seemingly unrealistic designs in his novels to reveal the dark side of human nature that we may all intrinsically bare in our minds.

Based on the analysis above, I think one of the many important features of this novel was its deliberate revelation of a deeply sick, unhealthy human mind. Roderick's reserved, stubborn and narcissistic soul was an important contributor to the “fall of the house of Usher”. After searching for some background information of Poe and of the overall environment in American society, I've learnt that the work might got its influence from both Poe's miserable life experiences and the unpromising conditions of the Southern States.<sup>3</sup> But there's no doubt that, Poe's wonderful dissection on human's mental world still bears an endurable value beyond the limit of time.

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<sup>2</sup> 叶超. 注定的悲剧——《厄舍府的倒塌》罗德里克·厄舍精神分析[J]. 安徽师范大学学报(人文社会科学版), 2005(01): 105–109. DOI: 10.14182/j.cnki.j.anu.2005.01.022.

<sup>3</sup> 朱晓宁. 死亡主题——埃德加·爱伦·坡作品研究[J]. 沈阳大学学报, 2006(03): 97–99.