

# A Deconstructive Approach to Edgar Allen Poe's the Cask of Amontillado

## Edgar Allen Poe'nun Amontillado Fıçısı'na Yapısökümsel Bir Yaklaşım

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### Öz

Bu makale, Edgar Allan Poe'nun *Amontillado Fıçısı* adlı eserinin yapısökümcü bir analizini sunar ve metnin görünürdeki tutarlılığını istikrarsızlaştıran metnin içindeki çelişkileri ve belirsizlikleri araştırır. Edebiyat eleştirisinde sıkça karşımıza çıkan yapısöküm, edebi bir metnin kesin anlamlarını, bütünlüğünü, birliğini ve sınırlarını kurmaya yeterli olan temeli, dil sisteminin sağladığı varsayımını çökerten veya aşındıran bir okuma teorisini ve uygulaması ortaya koyar. Hem 1960larda ortaya çıkan yapısökümcü yaklaşımla 1846 yılında yazılmış dünyaca meşhur bir hikâyeyi analiz etmek hem de kısa bir öyküde yapısökümün izini sürmek çalışmanın özgün yanındır. Hikâyede kelime oyunları ve kelime tekrarları ile çoklu anlam yaratımları, farklı dillerden kelimelerle hikâyenin derinlik kazanması, zaman kullanımları, farklı anlatım hızlarının tercihi, olay örgüsü açısından bazı mantıksal boşluklar gibi hem içerik ve anlam hem de yapı olarak hikâyenin oluşum, kurulma ve birleştirilme yerleri, yapının zayıf noktalarını, dolayısıyla yapısöküm yansımalarını gösterir. *Amontillado Fıçısı* iç çelişkileri ve anlamsal belirsizlikleri aracılığıyla yapısöküme birçok örnek barındırır. Hikâyenin mantıksal yapısı, dilin karmaşıklığı ve metin içindeki doğal boşluklar nedeniyle kendine karşı güçleri de doğal olarak oluşturur ve edebi metinlerdeki anlamların doğasında var olan istikrarsızlık ve çokluğu kapı aralar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Edgar Allan Poe, Cask Of Amontillado, Yapısöküm, Derrida

### Abstract

This article employs a deconstructive analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's *the Cask of Amontillado*, examining the contradictions and ambiguities within the text that disrupt its apparent coherence. Deconstruction, a prominent approach in literary criticism, challenges the assumption that language alone can establish precise meanings, integrity, unity, and boundaries in literary works. This study is distinctive in its application of deconstruction to a renowned 1846 short story, juxtaposing it with a critical theory that emerged in the 1960s. The analysis delves into how the story creates multiple meanings through wordplay, repetitions, and linguistic depth, while also exploring its temporal structure, narrative pacing, and plot inconsistencies. These elements reveal the story's vulnerabilities and illustrate deconstruction's influence on its interpretation. *The Cask of Amontillado* exemplifies deconstruction through internal contradictions and semantic ambiguities. The complexity of its language and inherent textual gaps naturally undermines the story's logical structure, exposing the instability and multiplicity of meanings within literary texts.

**Keywords:** Edgar Allan Poe, Cask of Amontillado, Deconstruction, Derrida

## Introduction

### 1.1. Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) is considered one of the most important and influential figures in contemporary philosophy and literary theory. His critiques target Western philosophical traditions, particularly their privileging of presence, identity, and logocentrism. He rejects the phonetic understanding of writing as proposed by Plato, Aristotle, and Saussure (Derrida, 1994: 47). Using the concepts of logocentrism, phonocentrism, and *différance*, he demonstrates that meaning cannot be fixed within the text. The rare power of the text is that cannot be captured and therefore limited while it is being said or expressed (Derrida, 1986: 198). From this point of view, he questions the assumption of a transparent and stable language and emphasizes the inherent instabilities and contradictions in language and thought. Derrida accepts Saussure's position that meaning is the product of differential relations between signifiers, but he goes beyond Saussure in claiming that the temporal dimension cannot be left out of account and sees language as a never-ending chain of words in which there is no extralinguistic origin or end to the chain (Newton, 1997, p .112). His emphasis on the contingency of meaning and the openness of texts has inspired interdisciplinary approaches to understanding culture and society, challenged traditional interpretations, and reshaped the understanding of dominant thinkers in Western thought by revealing hidden complexities and contradictions in texts.

Perhaps the most striking and prominent of these ideas put forward by Derrida is the concept of deconstruction. However, he says that deconstruction is neither a theory nor a philosophy nor a school nor a method (Derrida, 2009: 243). Some argue that deconstruction should not be turned into a method for literary works because of Derrida's belief that "literature has no essence" (Derrida and Attridge, 1992: 41, 47). To Derrida, literature is not something that can simply be asked what it is (Derrida, 2000: 177) because the question of what it is in a philosophical sense relates to essence and truth. However, his deconstruction practice with regard to the texts he analyzes has also been a major influence on literary critics since, in contrast, for example, to New Criticism, he does not set out to demonstrate the structural coherence or organic unity of the text, but to show how the text undermines its own assumptions and is thus divided against itself (Newton, 1997: 112-113).

Deconstruction has indeed resulted in a new and influential approach on literary, philosophical and cultural studies. There are elements in all texts that are by no means ungrammatical, but whose semantic function is not grammatically definable, neither in themselves nor in context (De Mann, 1997: 140) and these undefined elements are open to varying meanings and/or gaps in meaning. Therefore, deconstruction finds its basis in the fact that language is always in a "incessant movement of recontextualization" (Derrida, 1988: 136). Deconstruction is a philosophical and critical approach to texts that challenges traditional concepts such as fixed meanings, binary oppositions, and hierarchies. It questions the underlying assumptions of a text, highlights the ambiguity of meaning, and disrupts fixed interpretations, ultimately opening up space for multiple interpretations. The meaning of texts is related to what is not said, and to prove this, Derrida focuses on the details of the text with the method of deconstruction, stating that the text denies its own logic, saying the opposite of what it seems to say (Moran, 2010: 202). The meaning of a text is not a stable and stable meaning, it is contradictory and therefore ambiguous. Deconstruction casts doubt on the belief that language is suitable for producing a precise and consistent meaning, because the literary writer conveys meaning indirectly through images, symbols, and rhetorical games, making the text's meaning implicit (Moran, 2010: 203). Deconstructionists are not interested in problems such as the consistency and integrity of the text; on the contrary, they point out contradictions, inconsistencies, text parts and details that play a destructive role in the text, and thus they want to reveal how the meaning is distorted (Moran, 2010: 205).

### 1.2. Edgar Allen Poe, His Literary Aspect and *the Cask of Amontillado*

Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) is an American writer known for his macabre and gothic stories, poems and criticism. He is most famous for his works such as *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Raven* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*. In addition

to being one of the key figures of the Romanticism movement in American literature, he is also regarded as one of the first writers of short stories in the United States. Poe is considered the inventor of the detective genre and is credited with contributing to the science fiction genre (Stableford, 2003: 18-19). His writings frequently explore themes of madness, death, and the supernatural. The way he uses language and creates atmosphere in his texts attests to his literary mastery. Poe's life was marked by tragedies, including the loss of his parents at a young age and struggles with alcoholism and poverty. Poe, the first well-known American writer who tried to make a living only with his writings, continued his life and career in economic difficulties (Meyers, 1992: 138). Despite these difficulties, Poe grew stronger in a literary sense, becoming one of the most influential figures in American literature. His works continue to resonate with readers across generations.

*The Cask of Amontillado* (1846) is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe featuring two characters: Montresor, the vengeful narrator, and his noble friend Fortunato, who has insulted him. Although it details how Montresor commits the murder, *the Cask of Amontillado* is fundamentally a mystery story because it revolves around the intriguing question: "Why did he do this?" (Baraban, 2004: 47). So, the reason is an insult, but what kind of insult can lead to such terrible revenge is a mystery and what the insult is is not shared. Montresor lures Fortunato to the vault beneath his house, which also serves tombs, with the promise of tasting Amontillado, a rare wine. There, he chains Fortunato to a wall and entombs him alive behind a brick wall. The story addresses themes of betrayal, revenge, and the darkness of the human soul. Montresor's slow and deliberate execution of his plan, combined with the eerie atmosphere of the catacombs, amplifies the horror of the story. *The Cask of Amontillado* is renowned for its exploration of human nature and the lengths to which individuals will go to seek revenge. It exemplifies Poe's mastery of Gothic fiction and his ability to instill fear and unease in his readers.

## 2. Deconstructive Reflections in *the Cask of Amontillado*

To identify the deconstructive elements in *the Cask of Amontillado*, the techniques and themes challenging traditional narrative structures, fixed meanings, and binary oppositions will be examined. This includes analyzing the unreliable narrator, which prompts readers to question the reliability of the narrative and consider alternative interpretations, as well as exploring ambiguities in the plot and contradictory situations created by subverted expectations. Deconstructionists often examine contradictory elements within the text until they reach an aporia, demonstrating that the text's contradictory meanings are irreconcilable and revealing the text as a house (structure) divided within itself (Quinn, 2006: 111) will be discussed in the story. This analysis will highlight how these deconstructive elements invite readers to engage critically with the text, challenging fixed interpretations and encouraging a nuanced understanding of human experience's complexities.

One might assume that short stories, being less voluminous, can more easily maintain their integrity in terms of meaning, structure, and language, thereby presenting fewer semantic and formal inconsistencies. If the story in question is by an author like Edgar Allan Poe, who is universally acknowledged for his strong literary talent, finding contradictions, inconsistencies, and elements that disrupt the text's integrity might seem even more challenging. Furthermore, applying a deconstructionist strategy to a text naturally increases this difficulty. One challenge is Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher who influenced prominent critics such as Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, and Geoffrey Hartman, and who is central to postmodern writing (Moran, 2010: 199). Another challenge is the deconstructionist strategy of the late 1960s, as a style of reading, which is open to multiple meanings of the text or which shows the internal differences of the text and draws attention to its repressed contradictions or inherent weaknesses (Sim, 2001: 221-222). However, all texts consist of signs and all signs are a structure of separation, and signifiers and signifieds constantly either break apart from each other or come together in new combinations (Derrida, 1994: 32-36). Accordingly, a literary work contains premises contested - deconstructed - by some aspect of the work (Mikics, 2007: 81). Despite these difficulties, this article will discuss Edgar Allan Poe's *The Cask of Amontillado* using Derrida's deconstructionist critical perspective.

From the outset, expressions creating discontinuity and duality in meaning appear. The story is told from a first-person perspective, and Fortunato is introduced in the first sentence, where the narrator, Montresor, explains his

intent to kill him. Fortunato's name, which means "lucky, fortunate, successful" in Italian (Airlie, 2007: 95), contrasts sharply with his gruesome fate. By concealing the meaning of Fortunato's name in another language, Poe creates a contrast between the word's meaning and the events, thus engaging in wordplay. Poe further complicates the narrative with the opening words, "The thousands injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge" (Poe, 2004: 16). One insult amidst thousands of injuries leads to revenge, culminating in the grim fate of the 'fortunate' (!) Fortunato. The specific insult is never revealed, adding to the ambiguity. These statements exhibit an excess, an illogical conclusion, and wordplay. Of course, it is a fact that literary texts have always been 'fictional', i.e., characterized by a deliberate 'play' that consciously takes the void and radical differences between sign and meaning, language and empirical reality (Spanos, 1997: 65). Here, the interplay of fictionality and deliberate reality confronts the reader from the beginning, creating thought-provoking situations in the logical connection of meanings. When the hierarchy is reversed through deconstruction, some certain indeterminacies left in the particular discursive field (Ousby, 1996: 244) become apparent from the story's outset.

In the second sentence of the first paragraph, there is an appeal to the reader: "You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat." (Poe, 2004: 16). The reader who is new to the story is expected to know very well the nature of the soul of the Italian character of an American writer and therefore to understand that although he decides to take revenge, he does not openly threaten him. In the story, a direct address to the reader occurs only here. To deconstruct a text is to read how it weakens the philosophy put forward and the hierarchical opposition on which it is based, by determining the basic argument claimed by the text and the rhetorical operations created by the key concept (Culler, 1982: 86). If such a re-reading is made, it can be said that two elements of deconstruction come into existence here. The first is to destroy the fictional reality of the story by addressing the reader, that is, to make a reference to non-fiction. Addressing the reader is an exit from fictional reality within fiction, a movement of juxtaposing non-fiction and fictionality. The second is that the reader is claimed to know the nature of the soul of a fictional character as a real person, thus making the reader a kind of accomplice in what will happen next. If the reader knows the narrator closely, he should know what kind of insult would cause such a terrible death. At this point, there is a break in meaning that tears the meaning and creates a pause between the reader and the story. Because is the nature of the narrator's soul the same as the nature of human souls or the nature of the souls of the characters in stories? Or is the mental structure of this narrator the reader needs to know related to the author? Or what if the reader does not know? Upon further reflection, it seems that Poe, knowingly or unknowingly, has caused a proliferation of meaning here. These two situations shake the desired integrity structure of the story from the very beginning and give the feeling that the structure of the story may be dismantled.

The hero in the story comes across Fortunato, who has had too much to drink, at dusk, one evening when the carnival days are at their peak, and he is so happy to see him that he shakes his hands harder than he has ever shaken (Poe, 2004: 16). From these sentences it is understood that he meets Fortunato by chance. But a few situations that disrupt this coincidence stand out in the story later. For example, while going to the vault with Fortunato, he takes off a black silk mask and puts it on, wrapping his cloak tightly to avoid being recognized (Poe, 2004: 17). When they come to his house, there is no one there. Because he deliberately told his servants that he would not come until the morning and not to leave anywhere, so that they could go for the carnival and the house would remain empty (Poe, 2004: 17-18). Moreover, during the carnival time when people are busy, they do not encounter anyone along the way. Other coincidences added to the coincidence appear as a montage place in the story and serve a dismantling function. Language is something unstable to a degree that structuralists cannot think of, and it appears as a limitless, scattered network in a constant mutual relationship and transformation, in which no element can be defined absolutely, and everything mixes with everything else and leaves its mark (Eagleton, 2011: 155). Coincidences in the story weaken the linguistic stability of the story and challenge the absoluteness of the story by being in transformation. Coincidences in the story weaken the linguistic stability of the story and



challenge the absoluteness of the story through the state of its transformation. Montresor's actions actually show complete preparation on his -perhaps the author's-part rather than a coincidence. Therefore, the fact that things progress so smoothly for something unexpected gives a feeling of artificiality in the story.

Another question mark regarding the coincidence of the encounter occurs in the vault. As they move through the vault, Fortunato makes a gesture to Montresor, but he does not understand what it means. Fortunato tells him that he does not understand it and that he is not a member of the brotherhood in this case (Poe, 2004: 19). Montresor does not understand the brotherhood at first, and when Fortunato adds that he means being a "mason", Montresor says that he is a mason, emphatically and repeatedly but sarcastically. When Fortunato asks him to prove this with a sign, he takes out the trowel that he is carrying for the wall he will build from his pocket. Because the word "mason" also means "bricklayer, a skilled worker" (Procter, 1997: 870). here is a play on words and therefore a play on meaning. Another meaning is hidden behind the first meaning that the reader understands. The fact that Montresor, confused between Fortunato's sign of masonry and another sign corresponding to that sign, takes the trowel out of his pocket, is not only a suspicious move among these coincidences but also it creates a thought-provoking situation on why the concepts of "brotherhood" and "mason" are used in the story. The relationship between the trowel and the bricklayer is a door left open to readers who see behind the words. It is not known whether Poe is simultaneously criticizing the relationship between the wealthy and the society, and whether he is making fun of the character by saying that he will end this relationship with the trowel, or whether he is referring to another symbol of meaning. Deconstruction is the careful search for blind spots or points of conflict with oneself or aporias where a text unintentionally betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic, between what it obviously wants to say and what it has to say despite everything (West, 1998: 253). What is seen here is an aporia arising from a similar meaning tension. As a result, after a incidental encounter, it is felt that there is a preparation that cannot be called coincidental at all, and this distorts the expression of coincidence. In addition, the references to some structures in which the rich are involved, such as "brotherhood" and "masonry", create unstable and changeable meanings on the reader.

Another deconstructive example of "conflicting forces within the text itself serving to dissipate the seeming definiteness of its structure and meanings into an indefinite array of incompatible and undecidable possibilities" (Abraham & Harpman, 2009: 73) is that although Montresor states that he should pay attention to two things when deciding to punish Fortunato to take his revenge, an incompatible meaning emerges at the end of the story. First of all, he will do this in a way that he will not be punished, and also, the avenger will make the person doing the wrong feel that he is taking revenge, because if he does not make him feel it, then that wrong will not be corrected (Poe, 2004: 16). In the second statement, it becomes clear that Montresor is taking revenge on Fortunato and that Montresor must make him feel the wrong he has done to him. But by the end of the story, Fortunato has drunk a lot and in his last words he says that this is a joke and that they will laugh at what happened when they return to the "palazzo" (Poe, 2004: 21). In other words, it is doubtful how much the storyteller Montresor makes Fortunato feel his mistake by taking revenge on him. In the story, he states that after the insult made to him, he did nothing to make Fortunato suspicious and continued to laugh in his face as before (Poe, 2004: 16). In other words, it can be understood that Fortunato has no trace in his mind of the insult, and that he even comes to the vault of his own free will, without suspicion. In this case, it is unclear how aware Fortunato is, who has drunk too much and in whose last words he says nothing about revenge or insult, of what is happening. While Fortunato should understand that he is being avenged for the mistake he made, a picture emerges as if he does not understand anything, and this creates a meaning gap between the beginning and the end of the story. A typically deconstructive reading thus attempts to show that conflicting forces within the text itself serve to disperse the apparent certainty of its structure and meanings into an indeterminate set of incompatible and undecidable possibilities. (Abraham & Harpman, 2009: 69).

Another notable example of deconstruction can be seen in the use of time within the story and the pacing of the story. Discourse time is the time spent reading the entire text, which can be measured by the number of words,

lines or pages in the text, but story time is the fictional time occupied by all the action in the text (Jahn, 2012: 100). The construction of time in the story is made clearly and disproportionate to the time of discourse. It is possible to divide the times in which the story events take place into three: the time in the first paragraph when Montresor, who is hurt thousands of times, is insulted and decides to take revenge, the actual time of the story from the first paragraph to the last paragraph, the time when the frame story is stated by saying that this event happened fifty years ago as the story ends in the last paragraph. It is not clear how many years passed between the time Montresor decided to take revenge and the time he took his revenge. After the first paragraph, the event progresses at a normal pace, but in the last paragraph, it is stated in a single sentence that half a century has passed since the event. In other words, the narrator narrates an event he experienced fifty years ago as if it were today. Time moves quickly until the opportunity for revenge arises and very slowly during revenge, but then it suddenly jumps 50 years. It may also be a bit confusing how old Montresor, who was hurt thousands of times in the story and finally decided to take revenge, was at that time, how many years had passed when he took revenge, and how to compare it with a human life when 50 years are added to these events. In Lodge's words, it is surprising that sentences describing a "moment" in time are followed by another sentence summarizing a long period of time (Lodge, 1993: 188), and this is a feature that reflects the fictionality of fiction, that is, deconstruction points. Time is an image confined to sentences and determined by writing; In other words, it has a fictional character and reveals the bonding points of the structure in the context of time and places suitable for deconstruction.

The differences in the pacing of the story are also striking. It can be said here that "the undermining of time is itself undermined by the subjectivism of a novel 'written' by a narrator desperately trying to catch up with himself and dissolving all events into the present of his discourse" (Waugh, 1984: 71). The main story consists of coming to the vault, walking to the place where a wall is built over Fortunato, and building the wall. While the story moves quickly when coming home from outside, it slows down during the walk in the vault. Normally, a vault area is close to the one of a house, but here the vault is reflected to the reader as an extremely large place. Even Fortunato, one of the few wealthy families of the region, surprisingly finds the vault quite large (Poe, 2004: 19). Wines and graves are side by side in the vault. The vault passes under the river and extends to its opposite side (Poe, 2004: 19). The story moves slowly here, and this walk takes up more than a third of the story. The vault is seen in the reader's mind as if it were a larger place than the outside. The narrative returns to its normal pace as Montresor builds the walls of the chamber where he chains Fortunato. The difference in these pacing of the story reveals the places where the story structure is added together. In *the Cask of Amontillado*, the differences in both the use of time and the speed of story progression indicate the points not only where the structure is assembled but also where the structure is dismantled.

Deconstructive readings track down within a text the aporia or internal contraction that undermines its claims to coherent meaning (Baldick, 2001: 60). The torches / flambeaux in the story are an example of this. Montresor enters the vault with Fortunato, takes two flambeaux and gives one to Fortunato (Poe, 2004: 18). When they reach their destination, Fortunato's flambeau does not illuminate the inside of the crypt because its light is weakened (Poe, 2004: 20). But Montresor's flambeau still burns strong. At the end of the story, when he is about to finish building the wall, Montresor throws a torch into the last remaining opening when there is no sound from Fortunato inside (Poe, 2004: 22). There is a semantic blockage regarding the flambeaux, such as the number of flambeaux taken and the number of flambeaux used, and one becoming dim but the other still burning strong. Maybe Montresor throws away his own torch and is left without one, but it is not both clear and logical. The reason for the existence of deconstruction is the fact that not every element can be carefully calculated, and a complete integrity can be established within the text while the story is being woven.

It is not very believable that a person like Montresor, who is a nobleman, a mansion owner, and has servants, builds the wall with the materials he has kept ready there after chaining Fortunato to the wall and then plasters the wall because doing all of these requires mastery. The fact that an upper-class person can do the work that the working class can do is not convincing in the story. The text deconstructs itself at these points. The fact that the

author gives the main character the skills he needs to do while he is completing the tasks designed in the story in pursuit of revenge seems artificial in the narrative and naturally brings with it deconstructive elements.

Narrative is a representation, and "realistic representation is precisely an illusion of presence" (Childs & Fowler, 2006: 50). These illusions are the areas of existence of deconstruction. The relationship between what Montresor drinks and what should happen is a good example of the illusion of reality. Montresor says that when he meets Fortunato, he approaches him with extreme warmth because he has drunk too much (Poe, 2004: 16). When they arrive at the vault, they each drink a bottle of wine to protect themselves from the dampness (Poe, 2004: 18). After walking a little, Montresor gives him another bottle of wine (Poe, 2004: 19). He meets Fortunato in the evening, and it is midnight when he is about to chain him up and build a wall over him (Poe, 2004: 21). While building the first row of the wall, Montresor says that the voice coming from Fortunato does not belong to a drunk man (Poe, 2004: 21). But there is no sound from Fortunato while he is doing his last work on the wall, and in this case the reader may think that he has passed out. It is impossible for Fortunato to wake up based on the time that has passed, and it even seems better to pass out before he reaches the place where the wall is built. These logical inferences undermine the meaningful course of the story and point to a deconstruction.

On some words in the story, Poe plays with words by creating multiple meaning references. Not only do words appear to merge signifier and signified, but in this confusion the signifier appears to be erased or become transparent, allowing the concept to present itself, as if it referred to nothing other than its own existence (Derrida, 1972: 32-33). In this way, there are an increase in meaning, reverse references and meaning erosions through and word games within the story. Like the word "Fortunato", "amontillado" is also a specially chosen word. It is not just a drink, but also a bait that draws Fortunato inside while everyone is out having fun. Amontillado is a metaphor and alludes to the grave. Its root, -mons or montis is related to the meaning of "grave" (Baraban, 2004: 55). Moreover, in Old Spanish, it means "gathered, piled up in a heap" (Baraban, 2004: 56) and seems to describe the piling up of bones in the vault.

Another word, "nitre", used in firearms, covers everything in the vault and is like a net into which Fortunato is dragged and caught. Montresor asks Fortunato to touch and feel the nitre (Poe, 2004: 20). This word is also used quite often, but beyond being a substance found there, it has the image of a net that will catch its prey and not let go. Again, Montresor offers Fortunato to return at regular intervals, but he continues. The expression "to return" turns into a statement that there is no turning back, and when Montresor chains him up he says, "Indeed, there is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in your power." (Poe, 2004: 20). There is a play on words in the story with the expression "to return" and the opposite meaning is implied. Here, the concept of it erabilit e (repeatability), one of the key words of Derrida's theory of deconstruction, comes to mind: "Whenever a sign is repeated, that sign appears/reappears in a different context and conceptual change, and in this case the meaning of the sign in question inevitably changes." (Zima, 2015, p, 219). In other words, with the repetition of words within the story, their usage expands and turns into a kind of word game, opening the door to deconstruction approaches.

Deconstruction is a philosophically sceptical approach to the possibility of coherent meaning in language (Baldick, 2001: 59), and one of such dubious approaches is Montresor's family arms and its motto mentioned in the story. When Fortunato is surprised by the size of the cellar, Montresor says that his family is very large. When Fortunato asks him what his family arms are, Montresor tells him: "A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure: the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel." He adds for the motto, "Nemo me impune lacessit". (Poe, 2004: 21). It is quite strange that Fortunato does not comment on the interesting depiction on the arms and the meaning of the Latin words. The language of the story is English, the setting is Italy, and although Latin is close to Italian, it is a different language. Moreover, the phrase "nemo me impune lacessit" is also an expression associated with the Royalty in Scotland for centuries and is the national motto of Scotland. Therefore, the dialogue in the story seems to exist to give information to the reader, and a language confusion occurs between the language of the story, the language of the country where the story is set, and the unused Latin, all of which draw attention

to the fictionality of the fiction. Moreover, even if the meaning of such strange arms and its motto are understood, the fact that its content does not attract any attention is another element of deconstruction in the flow of the story and creates a semantic gap in the text. Therefore, the reader is left face to face with "a fundamental tenet of deconstruction that the nature of language is such that any discourse, including a literary text, can be shown under analysis to be full of gaps and contractions which undermine its claim to have a determinate meaning." (Lodge, 2002: 104).

As can be seen, semantic particles, phrases, word games and referential expressions that are formed against the integrity of the story are included in the text, consciously or unconsciously. These structures pave the way for the deconstructive approach and enable the text to be seen from within and from the places where it was made. No doubt that by orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the freeplay of its elements inside the total form" (Derrida, 1997: 115) but this "freeplay is the distortion of presence" (Derrida, 1997: 118). A deconstructive reading can turn a text's logic against itself by showing how the logic of its language can differ from and play against the logic of its author's stated claims and also deconstructors tend to seize on the inconsistencies, inequalities, or hierarchies which are expounded or glossed over either by a text, by a whole discourse, or even by an entire system of beliefs (Sim, 2001: 222). The expressions mentioned in the story also show how semantic inconsistencies within the text can be elements against the text. The expressions in the text that convey the meaning that the author has created within himself may not complete the meaning that he wants because the meaning of a signifier is related to all other signifiers, and these different signs emerge when they come into contact with the reader. This makes the ground of meaning slippery. The deconstruction method shakes the logic of the text itself by focusing on details that are considered unimportant and shows that the opposite of what the text seems to say is also stated (Moran, 2010: 202). In this case, a text is not a whole where chains of fixed meanings come together. Meanings and/or structures within the text may be volatile and carry ambiguities. As can be seen, deconstructionism is a theory that is skeptical of the belief that language is suitable for producing a precise and consistent meaning, and in this respect, it constitutes one of the cornerstones of the post-structuralist way of thinking (Moran, 2010: 203). Therefore, the reason why different and even contradictory interpretations are reached when reading the same text is not because the reading methods and approaches are different, but because the contradictions arise directly from the rhetorical/grammatical opposition in the text's formation process (Rifat, 2008: 95). Since the meanings that Edgar Allan Poe thinks in his stories are expressed with signs, they naturally enter the multi-game slippery ground of language and the narrative is formed with cracks within itself, an example for which is *the Cask of Amontillado*.

### 3. Conclusion

Deconstruction, a common approach in literary criticism, challenges the assumption that language systems provide a sufficient basis to establish precise meanings, integrity, unity, and boundaries in a literary text. It emphasizes that the conflicting forces within the text transform the apparent certainty of the structure into an incompatible and ambiguous form of meanings, thus functioning to distribute meanings. This approach draws attention to the forces of meaning that oppose themselves within the text. A deconstructionist critic seeks to identify elements that appear illogical within the system, threats that dismantle the text, or the loose stones that destroy the wall of the text. A narrative is deconstructed in terms of structure and content, with elements used against itself. This study exemplifies a deconstructionist analysis by revealing clear traces of deconstructive reflections in Edgar Allan Poe's *the Cask of Amontillado*.

*The Cask of Amontillado* contains many deconstructive elements that challenge the apparent coherence and stability of the story. Although Montresor emphasizes Fortunato's awareness of the reason for his punishment at the beginning of the story, Fortunato's inability to comprehend what happens at the end creates a gap in meaning. The large and distinct differences in the use of time in the story shed light on the construction and assembly of the structure. While the exaggerated use of the cellar as a location greatly contributes to the horror, it also creates a weakness within itself. Additionally, the story, written in English, features Italian characters and uses some Latin



expressions, causing linguistic confusion and duplication of meaning. Numerous coincidences, such as Montresor encountering Fortunato by chance during a carnival, not meeting anyone on the street, having a mask in his pocket to avoid recognition, having no servants at home, and carrying a trowel in the vault, seem like elements that damage the story's integrity. Another example of deconstruction is the use of words like Fortunato, amontillado, mason, and nitre, which open the door to different meanings. Ambiguous points in the story, such as Fortunato's drunkenness, the use of torches, and a gentleman's ability to become a bricklayer, create meaning gaps in the story's structure.

In summary, *the Cask of Amontillado* is a good example of deconstructive reflections in a short and famous story written long ago and of how language can pose risks for an author in his effort to establish a cohesive meaning. Elements such as the unreliable narrator, temporal gaps, symbolism and wordplay, spatial ambiguities, irony, and multiple meanings emphasize the instability and diversity of meanings in the story and the inadequacy of language to convey a precise meaning. By juxtaposing the logical structure of the story with the language, it is seen that the text naturally creates gaps and forces against itself, allowing the text to be examined from within. Some expressions mentioned in the story show how semantic inconsistencies within the text can turn into elements against it, demonstrating that the text is not a whole where chains of fixed meanings come together, and that deconstructionism is a theory that views language's ability to produce precise and consistent meaning with suspicion.

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