



MYSTERY AND MACABRE – EDGAR ALLAN POE’S WORLD

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Widely celebrated as a poet, Edgar Allan Poe, born on January 19, 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts, to actor parents, was a master of various literary talents. Apart from being a poet, Poe was an editor, a critic, and a celebrated writer all combined into one hat that adorned his head like a crown. Towering over the field of world literature, Poe is perhaps most remembered today for his poetry collections and short stories that explored the theme of horror in an unprecedented way. In 1827 he published a pamphlet of youthful Byronic poems titled *Tamerlane, and Other Poems*, followed by the publication of a new volume *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* in 1829. Significantly influenced by the likes of John Keats and Mary Shelley, Poe also released a volume, *Poems*, in New York. While working as the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond, Virginia, Poe began a lifelong conjugal relationship with his young cousin Virginia Clemm, who was only thirteen at the time.

The year 1839 marked the official emergence of Poe as a celebrated writer. After joining *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* in Philadelphia as the co-editor, he wrote the first of many short horror stories that would eventually define the gothic genre. He wrote some of his most well-known stories during this time, including *William Wilson*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and *Tales of Grotesque and Arabesque*. In 1840, Poe penned his first detective story, *The Murder of the Rue Morgue*, published in *Graham’s Magazine* a year later, thus introducing detective C. Auguste Dupin to the world. This was appropriately followed by the publication of his most famous poem “The Raven” in the *New York Mirror* on January 29, 1845.

Poe’s calculated use of language, unforgettable settings, and acute sense of strangeness remain some of the most dominant elements of his works which continue to challenge readers’ consciences and evoke a wide range of emotions from extreme terror to immense passion. Psychological intensity is also a common thread



in Poe's works, most notably in stories like *The Black Cat*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Such classics often feature a first-person narrator who simultaneously probes their own psyche and that of the reader. When combined, these characteristics ensure a curiously haunting atmosphere both inside and outside the story, effectively forging a connection between the reader's and the character's worlds.

Additionally, Poe is credited with conceiving two other popular genres: science fiction and the detective story. The moods of both were soon replicated by many future authors, most notably H. P. Lovecraft . For instance, in *The Unparalleled Adventure of Hans Pfaall* and *Von Kempelen and His Discovery*, Poe successfully exploited a widespread fascination with science and technology to produce fantastic narratives that offered both realism and escapism to its readers.

Just as Poe influenced several succeeding authors, his works also bear influences of earlier literary figures, such as E. T. A. Hoffman and Ann Radcliffe. While he remained largely obscure during his lifetime, he did earn his due respect and fame as a gifted writer and poet, especially after the publication of "The Raven," which gained him national acclaim. However, only after his death did Poe become the talk of the town in the most literal sense. Thanks to R. W. Griswold, Poe's onetime friend, who attributed the depravity and psychological aberrations of several of Poe's fictional characters to Poe himself, Poe's name suffered a period of vilification. Nonetheless, it is because of this episode that Poe received the deserving attention that somehow evaded him in life. Shortly after, a 1941 biography by A. H. Quinn offered a rather balanced view of Poe himself as an individual, his work, and the relationship between his life and the imaginary world he created . Nevertheless, the association of Poe with the fictional murderers and madmen of his works continued to gain popularity throughout the twentieth century, which went hand in hand with his works being deemed worthy of serious literary readership.

Poe is widely recognized as a pioneer of modern literature for both his popular and artistic forms, as well as a genre spectrum ranging from horror and detective fiction to more complex narratives. With his "ratiocination", his work has emerged as a staple read for maturing kids across the globe, offering tales of adventure, horror, and excitement with solid plot-driven stories that also provide food for thought to young brimming minds. As Herbert Marshall McLuhan states in his essay "Edgar Poe's Tradition," it was Poe who never lost contact with the terrible pathos of his time and explored the "heart of darkness" long before Conrad, and in the most real sense (1944, 24-33) . Despite everything Poe has produced, it is his macabre worlds filled with gothic characters that have left a timeless mark on his readers' minds and in literature, thus establishing him as one of the most widely read and cherished



American authors of all time. At the age of forty, Poe breathed his last breath in Baltimore, Maryland, on October 7, 1849.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES (CHICAGO AUTHOR-DATE)

McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. 1944. "Edgar Poe's Tradition." *The Sewanee Review*, 52, no. 1: 24–33. JSTOR.

SUGGESTED CITATION: Sanyal, Srija. 2021. "Mystery And Macabre – Edgar Allan Poe's World." *PopMeC Research Blog*. Published January 19th.