
The Biography of Edgar Allan Poe and His Contribution to the Horror Genre

For most readers, the name of Edgar Allan Poe has become a byword for horror and fear. Moreover, the images and motifs created by the novelist had an immense influence on the following generations and works of other authors, so that they even became immersed in the popular culture. Poe's memorable images and quotes became an integral part of the world's cultural heritage, giving inspiration to the horror movie scriptwriters and novelists. As a result, many fans of the horror genre don't even rate Poe's contribution to its true value, taking his efforts for granted. For nearly two centuries so far, Poe has been providing realistic images of morbidity, fear and the horror of life to everyone who is interested in the genre or makes parallels between fiction and certain moments in life.

The biography of Edgar Allan Poe is full of mystery which can be explained by his own passion for exaggeration and fantasies, which confused biographers who were trying to learn about his life from his works or his own words. However, most biographers agree that Poe hardly knew his parents and when biographers claim that he was a spoiled child, they mean the family who adopted Edgar. Edgar was born in a family of young actors. His father was an alcohol addict, whose addiction went so far that he even was drunk on the stage. Once he left his wife and kids and nobody saw him ever again. Edgar's mother fell ill and died when Poe was only a child. That's how Edgar was adopted by the Allens, the family of successful businessmen (Meltzer, 2003, p. 24). School teachers said that Edgar was a very talented boy with numerous talents, including even the knowledge of French and the skills of translating simple Latin authors (in primary school), but his parents gave him too much pocket money which made him mischievous and ill-behaved. Despite all the support Edgar received in childhood, he was left on his own when he was in college, as Mr. Allen refused to help him. There are many guesses as to what made him leave his adopted son without any financial support, but it's an important biographical fact that after receiving a substantial education at school.

Edgar had no opportunities to go to college, and it was only his own choice that he decided to receive a higher education; and the knowledge he got was a valuable contribution to his talents which helped him create all the wonderful works of literature which became well-known all over the world. Poe's realistic use of science fiction allowed him to deceive his readers and keep the public under pressure with his vivid images and horrifying scenes. The innovative approach to fiction writing made Poe stand out from the crowd of his contemporaries so that the stories created by Poe are similar to those created by modern writers.

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Another aspect which makes Poe's works unusually modern is his ability to describe narcotic visions and mental diseases. Thus, Poe believed that opium can intensify imagination and improve the perception of reality. Even though it was nothing new, and this tradition was preceded by more than a century of drug-inspired visionary tales, such as Aldous Huxley's works, for instance, Poe went even further than his predecessors in describing the inner world of his characters and making most readers sympathized with them or at least understand their worries and motives. In his story 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether', Poe emphasizes the thin line between the lunatics and sane individuals (Quinn, 2008, p. 46). In this story, the director of a madhouse goes insane and tries to inspire his former patients to rebel against nurses and the personnel of the institution. This storyline not only illustrates Poe's views as to how easily the borderline of sanity can be crossed but also his claim that the individuals whom the society thinks to be insane actually are the chosen ones who see more than the rest. There were times when Poe's approach to fiction even was taken too seriously by his contemporaries, like with his poem Eureka, for example. Poe insisted that this work should be treated as nothing more than a poem (Meyers, 2000, p. 93). However, his contemporaries rated the ideas expressed in Eureka rather high and concluded that it should be recognized as a scientific treatise. On one hand, Poe's description of the universe destiny and creation was obviously lacking some more or less reliable scientific ground.

On the other hand, at the times when Poe lived, even scholars did not know much of the world's creation and thus, the ideas expressed by Poe and based on the classic theories of his times were scientifically significant. Although Poe put emphasis on intuition, instead of deduction or induction, he made some important suggestions, trying to solve the riddle of the universe creation. This little-known side of Poe's creative work shows the author's approach to his writing, in which he usually tried to synthesize imaginative fiction and scientific findings, tried and tested by the time and experiments.

All the innovative approaches used by Edgar Allan Poe in his works have become an important contribution to the world's literature and have been integrated with the modern concept of horror and sci-fi genres. Putting the scientifically proven facts into the basis of the plot and using his intuition, Poe created outstanding poems and short stories which further influenced other authors and entire trends in literature and cinematography of the following centuries.

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