

Edgar Alan Poe Essay

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The nineteenth century audience of Edgar Allan Poe might have found his tall tales believable and scientific. This is because the science of the time was becoming increasingly popularised and accessible en-masse however the rigid style of science made it easy for false information to be distributed. By exploiting this flaw, Poe created believable scientific prose for the common audience and introduced a level of satire for the intellectual reader. By analysing his narrators, form and attention to detail, we can explore the scientific significance of his prosaic ambiguity.

Poe's narrators seem deliberately equivocal to create distrust in the narrative, and it is within this distrust that one can see Poe's criticisms of [science](#). The first example is the [narrator](#) from 'MS found in a bottle' who, as a physical philosopher, cannot imagine and thus his narrative relies solely on fact, 'I observed a very singular, isolated cloud, to the N. W. It was remarkable, as well for its colour, as from its being the first we had seen since our departure from Batavia'. This literal description of the cloud shows us that scientist can see only what is there and makes no connotation, metaphor or simile of the beauty of the cloud. This could suggest that Poe sees science as restricted in its view of the world. This can be confirmed when the narrator enters the supernatural ship and his reasoning is constrained. The narrator declares 'I have made many observations lately upon the

structure of the vessel [...]. What she is not, I can easily perceive – what she is I fear it is impossible to say.’ This shows that the narrator can only describe what the ship is not thus suggesting that the narrators’ reasoning is useless in new circumstances. This seems...

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...ents of character or choose to peruse a deep satire.

In conclusion, we can see that it is difficult to know whether one should believe Poe’s narrators. The nineteenth century audience, being less aware of Poe’s satirical motives, would have believed the Physical Philosopher and Mesmeriser narrators because of a class system that made sure respectable gentleman approved science. Moreover, the popularisation of science made it so that people were more open to new ideas. However, as a modern audience we cannot ignore the satirical methods of Poe that allows us to see his criticism of science at the expense of a realistic story. Therefore, it is reasonable to surmise that the stories have a degree of realism and that the satire has an overall message that needs to be illustrated, so one could argue that the representation of science is believable for both audiences.

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