Edgar Allan Poe Essay, Research Paper

BIOGRAPHY OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 in Boston. When he was left by his father he was adopted by a family in Richmond. He got his family name as Allan from this family. When he became a young man he entered the university of Virginia. However, he could not continue because Mr. John Allan did not pay his school fee. Than Edgar Allan Poe was enlisted to the army with the name of Edgar A. Perry but he could not work for the army because he had grade interest in literature. He begun writing experimental stories and gothic tales. He became a good story writer. He begun working at Richmond magazine. He married his cousin Virginia when she was thirteen. Poe was always an unhappy, bizarre man. He begun drinking in the Southern Literary Messenger Magazine where he was working. He quit the magazine and he moved to Philadelphia in 1819 to work in Burtans Gentlemen s Magazine. He wrote his famous story there. In 1844 he moved to New York to work in the Broadway journal. He lost his wife when she was twenty-five. After this event Poe became very much asocial. He went on drinking and he was found dead. He was in Baltimore when he died.

Poe s Significance and Contributions to American Poetry

Although Edgar Allan Poe is known to be a short story, writer he was also known for his poetry. In Poe s poems he dealt with supernatural, bizarre , eccentric and grotesque characters. He questioned perfection and beauty . (Lauter 1363) He used dreams , fantasies and unconscious impulses . His contribution to American Poetry is his great interest in human psychology. Poe s poetry has given rise are themselves indirectly significant of the nature of poetry ( Shoshana Felman). Since he was a romantic, he was interested in the human being. But unlike Ralph Emerson, Poe did not deal with nature of ideal human qualities. He was interested in subconscious and especially with death. For this reason Poe can be accepted as the father of modern psychology. (he was a teacher to Freud or Jung). He was also a model for surrealism in the twentieth century. However his ideas about death were seemed exaggerated. According to J. Alfred Prufrock life is on a collision course with death; the death-wish betrays, whenever it can, the life instinct, this seems madness the mind undoing its on self protective calculation by an uncontrollable, a radical, a primitive impulse . On the other hand according to T.S. Eliot Poe had, to an exceptional degree, the feeling for the in contrary element in poetry, of that which may, in the most literal sense, be cold the magic of verse .

Poe s Poetic Characteristics and Themes

In his poems Poe usually uses the names of women like Helen, Annabel Lee, Eleonora. These women symbolize ideal beauty. He also deals with dreams which show his subconscious. In his subconscious there is always the reality of death. In such poems as The City In The Sea , The Sleeper and Dreamland he uses that as a theme and he uses it with dreams. So dreams and death appear together and they are supported by another theme which is sleeping. The Sleeper or Annabel Lee and also Dreamland are poems telling about his sleeping experiences. His long poem The Raven is also about sleep and he says Nearly Napping . (Lauter 1435). Poe did not fallow his inspiration blindly. Even his fantastic works he never lets himself go. Poe, at any rate, knew how to impose a strict discipline on his nightmares (Bernard Show). There are no relations between these themes and socio-historical environment of the artist. The social historical events in 1850 s were slavery or a coming a civil war which begun in 1861. I can suggest that Edgar Allan Poe did not deal with social or historical events in his time. He was a lonely man and he had a romantic world of his own dreams. Poe s fantastic works which on account of their very nature should be quite impersonal in fact plunge their roots to the inmost recesses of his being (Arthur Gordom Pym) and Baudelarre says that The fantastic elements in Poe s works is grounded in exceptions in human life and in nature… hallucinations… hysteria usurping the place of the will, contradiction set up between nerves and mind and personality so out of joint that is expresses grief with a laugh. As we see Edgar Allan Poe is criticized in different ways. Some authors claim that he is extra ordinary artist while some of them admire him and impressed with whatever he wrote.

Analyses of The Poem Annabel Lee

Theme: The poem is about a beautiful girl called Annabel Lee. The poet has loved her very much and they have loved each other since they were children. But unfortunately Annabel Lee dies and the poet remains alone. In his loneliness, he understands that nobody can resist death and he has to accept it. Now he is lonely remembering his Annabel Lee. The poet is melancholic and too sad but he is also helpless. So the main theme is loss of a lover. This theme is supported by other themes such as death , loneliness , suffering , memory and melancholy . Some people in his environment especially his close friends think these about Poe s real life. The images of his beautiful and young mother supped by consumption seems in deed to have dominated his whole life and probably explains why he could marry only a child wife in the person of his cousin Virginia. It is obvious too that his ethereal heroines Berenice, Morella, Madeline, Usher, Eleonora are more reflections of that beloved mother too soon taken from him. These lucid and translucid women, lucid like himself and translucid like his mother inspires his heroes with intellectual rather than sensual passion, with passionate a friendship rather than desire. Everything happens as if Poe had forever exhausted although possibilities of love in his relation with his mother and he or his heroes could only love sick or dying women like his own mother. Love and that are in dissoluble merged both in his works and his life.

Figures of Speech:

Symbolism: Annabel Lee is a symbolic poem and it uses symbols to explain a dream experiences. Annabel Lee Symbolizes ideal love (line 4). A wind blew out of a cloud chilling symbolizes death (line 15) The cold wind caused Annabel Lee to die. Her highborn kinsman on line 17 is another symbol which stands for Annabel Lee s noble family. It can also symbolizes death because death comes and takes her away from the poet. On line 20, sepulchre is a tomb which symbolizes again death when Annabel Lee sleeps forever. Angels on line 21 are symbols of Annabel Lee s innocence. But there is also irony here because angels are not as pure as Annabel Lee. The Kingdom by the sea is a symbol of the kingdom of death. In this kingdom, death is the king and everybody has to obey him. The moon on line 34 symbolizes Edgar Allan Poe s condition of loneliness. When there is moon, his loneliness rises. The stars on line 36 symbolizes the brightness of Annabel Lee s eyes. The stars symbolize life and they suggest that Annabel Lee still lives.

Metaphors: The poem is the metaphor of life and death. Life begins in childhood. Therefore childhood is a metaphor of innocence. (Line 11) Winged seraphs of heaven are metaphors of angels who come and take Annabel Lee away. The clouds on line 15-25 are metaphors for the poet s psychology. Because it is not sunny, the clouds represents his sadness. The night tide is a metaphor of his soul because like the sea in the tide his soul rises.

Simile: There are no similes in the poem.

Personification: Angels on line 21 are personified because they are jealous of the poet and his lover, the wind lines 15 and 25 are personification because it kills Annabel Lee. Wind is personified as a killer.

Reputations: The name Annabel Lee is repeated ,many times because the poet can not think anybody except for her. In his subconscious, there is always Annabel Lee. In a kingdom by the sea is also a reputation because it suggest death. When Annabel Lee and death are together, the theme is the death of Annabel Lee.

Rhyme: The poem does not fallow a regular rhyme pattern but the second fourth and sixth lines are always rhyming with each other. There are five stanzas with six lines. In these five stanzas rhyming words are sea , Lee , Me . But the sixth stanza is in seven lines, and the seventh stanza is in eight lines. This shows that I and Annabel are united as we. Also first and fourth lines of the seventh stanza are rhyming: love and above . In the last stanza besides Lee and sea, there are two words, side and bride are rhyming words. This shows that the poet considers Annabel Lee as his bride. He does not accept that she is dead. She is by his side always.

Meter: There is no regular metric system in the poem. The meter changes in each line for ex:

It was many and many a year ago (11 syllables)

In a kingdom by the sea (7 syllables)

That a maiden there lived whom you may know (10 syllables)

By the name of Annabel Lee; (8 syllables)

This maiden she lived with no other thought (11 syllables)

Then to love and be loved by me. (8 syllables)

As it can be seen, there is no regular meter but 8 and 11 syllables are used more. Especially Poe uses one syllable words such as, it, was, sea ,know etc.

Tone of the poem: The tone is sad, unhappy and melancholic. It is given by death and sepulchre and the moon.

Atmosphere: Dark and gloomy. It is given by the night.

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