

Poe's Tale Some Words with a Mummy: a Satire

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to show Poe's tale "Some Words with a Mummy" as a satire. Edgar Allan Poe was best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre. He was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story, and is generally considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre. He spent several years working for literary journals and periodicals. He became known for his own style of literary criticism. He influenced literature in the United States and around the world as well, particularly in specialised fields such as cosmology and cryptography. Further, he is credited with contributing to the emerging genre of science fiction.

Keywords: Satire, egyptomania, mummies, science and knowledge, metaphysics and transcendentalism.

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1. Introduction:

Beyond horror tales Edgar Allan Poe also wrote satires, humour tales and hoaxes. "Some Words with a Mummy" is a short story by him. It was first published in *American Review: A Whig Journal* in 1845. "In January 1845, *Columbian Magazine* listed "Some Words with a Mummy" as scheduled for publication; Poe likely pulled the article when he was offered more money for it elsewhere" (Thomas, 484). "It was ultimately published in the April 1845 edition of the *American Review*, (Sova, 224), which also included Poe's revised poems "The Valley of Unrest" and "The City in the Sea" (Thomas, 522). The story was republished without changes shortly after in the November 1, 1845, issue of the *Broadway Journal* (Thomas, 484). The tale is a satire of the two things. Firstly, the popular interest in Egyptology and Mummies during the time that the story was written. Secondly, the prevailing thought that in the west humanity had reached the height of civilization and knowledge due to the scientific and industrial revolutions. In this story Poe deals with the ancient civilization.

2. A Satire

2.1. A Satire of Egyptomania:

It is very clear that Poe is poking fun at Egyptomania in the tale "Some Words with a Mummy." In the story a group of people gather to examine a mummy for the sake of "scientific discovery" in the middle of the night. During the course of the examination they act like a group of children that just got a new toy. This group of men poke and prod the mummy just to see what happens. It is evident when the men decide to use electricity. It is a fact that this examination is going on at the private residence of the doctor and it is attended by his friends only who do not have any kind of medical expertise denotes this fact. It is again a fact that Poe is ridiculing the serious scientific examination of the group of people to conduct in a party like atmosphere which was commonly done at the time. Poe also ridicules the mummy in the story right down to its name, Allamistakeo. The mummy is not scary, and the characters do not react to it as such in this story unlike serious mummy horror stories. It is another

devise that Poe uses to censure the readers. The mummy chastises the men for their abuse of himself and mummies in general.

2.2 Satire of Science and Knowledge:

The men, in their discussions with Allamistakeo, attempt to exalt their time as one of unprecedented knowledge and technology. Allamistakeo is able to prove that the technology in that time was superior to the modern equivalents. At first the narrator is presented as an intelligent and educated man, later he is revealed to be completely ignorant. He asks Allamistakeo a series of questions with an invention to prove that modern technology is superior. When one of the men tries to stop him and suggests that he consults historical texts before asking his questions, he continues. In the end, the only reason the men can consider themselves the victors of the debate comes down to cough drops.

3. Conclusion:

Through the analysis of the story it can be ascertained that toward the end of his life Poe was intensely preoccupied with complex problems such as metaphysics and transcendentalism. His philosophical inquiries on scientific matters were only a means to solve the mysteries of existence and the universe.

4. References:

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