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Тип работы: Реферат

Предмет: Английский

- I. Imprint
- II. Ideological and thematic basis of the work
- III. The main characters, their portraits and characters
- IV. Specificity of the plot
- V. Author's position in the work
- VI. Genre, artistic method and style
- VII. Stylistic analysis of the text.
- VIII. My perception of the work

"The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" is a short story written by the American writer Edgar Allan Poe in 1845. The main theme of the story revolves around mesmerism. It is narrated in the first person and follows the author's experiment on his acquaintance, Mr. Valdemar, who is dying from consumption. The author induces him into a "mesmeric state" to explore the process of dying in this condition. Subsequently, the author describes the consequences of his experiment.

The narrative of the story blends suspense and horror elements, initially published without clarification on its fictional nature, leading many to perceive it as a documentary piece about a real mesmerism experiment. Poe later revealed the "hoax" in his "Marginalia."

The theory of "animal magnetism," sometimes referred to as mesmerism after its proponent Friedrich Mesmer, gained immense popularity in Europe in the latter half of the 18th century. It garnered particular attention, with special commissions formed to investigate it, comprising prominent scientists of the time. By 1840, however, these commissions concluded that there was no such thing as "animal magnetism," as experimental results were inconsistent, and attempts to identify its carriers, the so-called "fluids," proved futile. Nevertheless, the theory retained numerous adherents as it transitioned from scientific discourse into the public sphere.

In 1829, the publication of the book by Austrian poet, physician, and spiritualist Justinus Andreas Kerner caused a sensation. Kerner described his experiences with mesmerism therapy on a patient he treated between 1826 and 1829. An English edition was released in 1845, advertised notably in the August issue of The Broadway Journal, edited by Edgar Poe at the time. Kerner's book contains episodes reminiscent of certain fragments of Poe's future narrative, including descriptions of magnetic passes. Kerner wrote that initially, these passes seemed to revive the dying woman, but she eventually passed away, leaving behind a completely unrecognizable form.

Additionally, Poe published a letter from New York physicist Dr. A. Sidney Doane in his journal, describing a surgical operation during which the patient was placed in a "magnetic sleep." This letter likely inspired Poe to write his own story.

Edgar Allan Poe received a letter from a reader named Archibald Ramsay from Scotland, who described himself as a "believer in Mesmerism," as he recommended. The reader thirsted for confirmation of the authenticity of the story, stating, "It speaks... of the greatest discovery." Ramsay demanded a personal response from Edgar Allan Poe, "in the name of Science and truth." Poe replied, "Forgery - that is the most fitting word. There are people who believe in it - but I do not believe in it - and neither should you."

Such letters were received by the author frequently. In a response letter to a friend, Poe confined himself to a brief postscript: "P.S. 'The Case of M. Valdemar' is a fake, of course." Horace Greeley, editor of the Daily Tribune, wrote in one of the issues that "several respectable, sensible citizens" were misled, but "anyone who took this story at face value must have an enormous lump of Faith."

The publication of the story prompted a response from Elizabeth Browning, who wrote to Poe, stating that he possessed the gift of "making terrifying improbability seem close and recognizable."

"The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" was almost simultaneously published in two journals: The Broadway Journal (December 20, 1845 issue) and the December issue of American Review: A Whig Journal, titled "The Facts in M. Valdemar's Case." In England, the story was initially released as a pamphlet titled "Mesmerism in Articulo Mortis," later retitled as "The Last Days of M. Valdemar."

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