



Manuscript Found in a Bottle

Edgar Allan Poe

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MS. Found in a Bottle is a short story classic written by Edgar Allan Poe and first published in 1833. The plot follows an unnamed narrator at sea who finds himself in a series of harrowing circumstances. As he nears his own disastrous death while his ship drives ever southward, he writes an "MS." or manuscript telling of his adventures which he casts into the sea. Some critics believe the story was meant as a satire of typical sea tales.

Manuscript Found in a Bottle Details

Date : Published 1986 (first published October 19th 1833)

ISBN :

Author : Edgar Allan Poe

Format : 14 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Classics, Horror, Fiction, Mystery, Literature, 19th Century



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Claudia says

“A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul.”

Oscar Torrado says

Poe y el holandés errante. Clásico.

David Doyle says

A manuscript, a.k.a. a letter, found in a bottle in the ocean. The writer of which survived one doomed ship and manages to get aboard another. Unfortunately for him, it's not any ordinary ship which rescues him.

Matthew Coleman says

I have always been drawn to Poe's elaborate psychological tales of consternation, awe, and fear. "Manuscript Found in a Bottle" is an early example of this type of story - not quite effusive dread but more inner fear. Set on the fickle seas, Poe's unnamed narrator is on a ship that is hit and capsized by a Simoom (combination of sand storm and hurricane). The whole of the crew (except for an old Swede) is swept overboard. Eventually, the ship is struck by a gigantic black ship, and the unnamed narrator is able to scramble onboard where he finds outdated maps and useless tools. Perhaps the most eldritch part of this experience is that no one on the ship recognizes his existence. The boat is manned by elderly crewmen who pay no attention to him and reach only some level of hope as the ship drives forward into Antarctica where it hits a whirlpool and begins to sink into the sea.

Some scholars believe the story to be a parody of common sea stories, but I believe the story can be also taken as a terrifying realization of impending death. The narrator takes an active role on a nonstop, nature-guided journey to the maelstrom that ends the story (and presumably the narrator's life). While he does attempt to notify individuals of the constant storms that seem to follow him, the individuals he encounters ignore his apprehension. He is fated to hit the black hole at the end of the tale, and, perhaps unconsciously, his actions move him closer and closer to the end.

Eddie Watkins says

Something tossed-off about this tale, something inept and hurried (especially in regard to logic of plotting), something sneering and aggressive and nose-thumbing (a kind of fuck you to critical calls for literary propriety), but then also something utterly powerful and raw too, as if Poe's apparent don't care attitude

unleashed an animal of surging storming descriptive powers.

So the plotting makes no sense, as it begins as a personal narrative, as a proper literary tale told in a relatively leisurely way, but then shifts into an urgent journalistic narrative of the present moment, necessarily fragmented and impressionistic, and ends (spoiler alert! as if...) with the very narrative we have just read stoppered into a bottle and tossed to safety from the destructive depths of a maelstrom, drawing, presumably, the author to his death. It's all so technically ludicrous...

But overlooking that, and concentrating on the narrative of storm and shipwreck, the tale has an eerie power; and with a little effort, such as tweaking the narrative into a semblance of sense, the tale can acquire a devastating existential effect: a final cry carrying knowledge from the pits of a living hell.

Poe lets out all the stops in his description of a stormy surging sea, with sentence piled on sentence in an accumulation of pell-mell force that gives the impression of a hulking edifice *and* a torrential inundation of erosive force, an oceanic mountain range of words, with hyperbolic exaggerations adding either a touch of the ridiculous or a key to the insane terror of the recording mind.

And the Ship of Death, on which the narrator finds himself after his ship is crushed by it, with its senescent ghost-like crew blind to the narrator's very being, is viscerally haunting, and ranks up there with the best of Poe's work.

Too bad the over-arching narrative conceit brings the tale down, but then, really, what more do we need, at times, than potent imagery written well, damn the illogicality of the context? This tale sticks in my craw.

Rozalia says

Ε?μαστε ,αναμφ?βολα, καταδικασμ?νοι να ζυγιαζ?μαστε α?ναα στο χε?λος της αιωνι?τητας,χωρ?ς να κ?νουμε ποτ? την τελειωτικ? βουτι? στην ?βυσσο.

Brenda Suarez says

¡Ay Allan Poe! Los océanos y mares son de mis mayores temores, e inminentemente tu vienes a reforzar mis miedos por ellos...

Dicen que este cuento no es de sus mejores trabajos, pero yo no quiero desaprobar la oportunidad de saborear y enriquecerme con la cantidad de palabras con textura decadente que el autor utiliza en esta obra.

Ademas la ambientación llena de olas furiosas, tinieblas misteriosas y la desesperación al saber que la esperanza es poca, crearon una tempestad perfecta de leer.

«*Si temble? ante el huraca?n que nos ha perseguido hasta ahora, ¿co?mo no quedar transido de horror frente al asalto de un viento y un oce?ano para los cuales las palabras tornado y tempestad resultan triviales e ineficaces?*»

Nanou Nawel says

Je donne la note de 3,5 à cette nouvelle car je ne l'ai pas trouvé aussi captivante que celle du Chat Noir.

Ce que j'ai remarqué dans les écrits d'Allan Poe c'est qu'il y a toujours le thème de l'état d'âme troublée et de l'angoisse.

ESRAA MOHAMED says

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Γι?τα Παπαδημακοπο?λου says

Ουσιαστικ? πρ?κειται για μ?α απ? τις ιστορ?ες εκε?νες του Poe που ε?ναι κ?πως πιο... ρομαντικ?ς και ταξιδι?ρικες, μ?σα απ? ?να π?πλο φανταστικ?ς αφ?γησης. Προσωπικ?, δεν ε?ναι απ? τα αγαπημ?να μου -ο?τε ως ιστορ?α αλλ? ο?τε και ως ε?δος-, ωστ?σο δεν μπορ? να μην δω την δεξιοτεχν?α με την οπο?α ?χει χειριστε? την διαφορετικ? αυτ? λογοτεχνικ? αφ?γηση, που σ?γουρα στα μ?τια των αναγνωστ?ν της ε?ναι μοναδικ?.

Claus Niemi says

Vuelve a ser un 3,5. Porque aunque algunos relatos de Poe me encantan, este la verdad me ha dejado

bastante indiferente. No sabría decir el motivo, pero me he quedado con demasiadas dudas en el tintero cuando terminó la narración, y no soy persona de soprotar las dudas.

Exina says

After asserting his own reliability, insisting he is practical rather than imaginative, an unnamed narrator tells the story of his shipwreck. His vessel gets into a storm then is crashed by another ship. At the moment of the impact he winds over to the board of the enormous, weird, mysterious ship. **First he is hiding, but soon realizes that no one notices his presence, even if he is standing in front of them.**

Incomprehensible men! Wrapped up in meditations of a kind which I cannot divine, they pass me by unnoticed. Concealment is utter folly on my part, for the people will not see. It was but just now that I passed directly before the eyes of the mate --it was no long while ago that I ventured into the captain's own private cabin, and took thence the materials with which I write, and have written.

The writing style is captivating, sprinkled with humor, but the story is finished abruptly. You don't find out anything about the mysterious ship and its creepy, weird crew before they meet their inevitable end.

It appears to me a miracle of miracles that our enormous bulk is not swallowed up at once and forever. We are surely doomed to hover continually upon the brink of Eternity, without taking a final plunge into the abyss.

You are engaged in the story, your interest is piqued, then you are left unsatisfied... What a pity...

Some scholars suggest that *MS. Found in a Bottle* was meant to be a satire of sea stories in general, especially in light of the absurdity of the plot and the fact that the narrator unrealistically keeps a diary through it all. (wikipedia)

But come on, is any of Poe's writings realistic? Far from it. Maybe he just wanted to ride the trend of sea tales and wrote his own spooky version.

Originally posted on my blog on June 21, 2014.

Kat In The Hat says

aka the flying Dutchman

Lisa James says

More in the line of Poe's classic dark tales, this tale of a shipboard voyage to Hell is a page turner from beginning to end. His descriptions are lurid & have a nightmarish quality about them.

Michael Sorbello says

Another extremely underrated tale of the macabre by Poe. The way the ocean is described in this story is filled with gloomy, supernatural horror, yet it is so oddly beautiful and captivating that it makes the tragic finale of the tale leave you all the more speechless.

Gothic horror blending with my deep fear of the sea made this a melancholy and exciting experience for me.

Bookdragon Sean says

Poe starts this one by making it absolutely clear that his narrator has no imagination; he is rational, stable, and perhaps even a little bit dull. So that means he is sane or, at the very least, he thinks he is. And there's the rub. Why would he take such efforts to tell us this? Does he want you to believe this strange story?

I think so. He wants you to give his words credence. Then, when the impossible happens, you don't doubt it. Robert Louis Stevenson did a very similar thing in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. A perfectly normal man narrates the story (Utterson) so when the world turns upside down you don't doubt the character's sanity or the plausibility of the events. However, with Poe it's never that simple. When he turns the realism off, there is always more to the occurrence. There is always something darker in his character's mind.

The sea goes black and a strange ship hovers above the narrator's own:

All around was horror, and thick gloom, and a black sweltering desert of ebony. Superstitious terror crept by degrees into the spirit of the old Swede, and my own soul was wrapped up in silent wonder.

And then the reality sets in. We can never fully trust one of Poe's narrator's despite what he says about himself. There is always something persecuting them or something troubling their mind. That's just how Poe writes. It's not clear what this one's problem is, but he's definitely haunted by something. The story is a progression of fragmented narrative sequences in the form of a journal. Each is written when the narrator is under a different degree of mental strain. As the story develops, the strain becomes heavier. The writing is more erratic, passionate and nonsensical. It becomes much darker towards the end; it's like he isn't even there on the ship, a silent observer of the new crew: a spectre.

To conceive the horror of my sensations is, I presume, utterly impossible — yet a curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of these awful regions predominates even over my despair, and will reconcile me to the most hideous aspect of death.

He is almost separate from all others. Are they ghosts? Or has he completely lost it? It's hard to tell. There is a high degree of distance within the narrative. The narrator shares the fate of the crew, their "destiny," though he never really felt part of it. The story is dense and complex. I'd argue that the narrator changed as he wrote it. Something altered him resulting in this strange account, which is tenuous at best. I'm not entirely sure he was even in on a ghost ship at the end. He may have imagined it all. Why else would he tell you he had no imagination? He wants you to believe his words. I smell an unreliable narrator. This is a wonderfully dark tale, complex and undefinable.

Andrei Tama? says

În incipitul scriserii, Poe insistă asupra relației dintre fizic și metafizic (își asupra înclinației oamenilor de a explica pe ce-a de-a două cu ajutorul principiilor celei dintâi), urmând ca apoi să înfățișeze o lume în care metafizica (corelată cu divinitatea) să se arate că ceva ce nu poate fi explicat, dar care cere să fie sămătărit...

Chris Pedroza says

Poe back at it with science-fiction from the 1830's. I find it peculiar that Poe makes the "mysterious", "divine", or "supernatural" be in agreement with science. I felt what he was trying to show was that everything we can't explain is just what we don't know yet. For example, if we encounter another form of life which is thousands of years ahead of us in science, then we can expect their technologies, or anything that results from it, will be like magic to us. So, what is the unexplainable, is what has not been analyzed in a scientific sense.

Gayatri says

Sometimes you read title of a particular story and find it interesting but when you actually read the story, it turns out, well, not-that-interesting! Reading this short story was that kind of experience for me.

I went into this story expecting something totally different, but bubble of my expectations was bursted and I was left disappointed. :|
