

Poes rhetoric



Amber Johnson ENGL 2031 Patricia Roger Essay 1 Due: February 25, 2010 Poe??

™'s Rhetoric Poe has captivated readers with his terrifying, tragic stories, but few have questioned his skills. Every student has read Poe??™'s ??? The Tell-Tale Heart??? at some point in their schooling history. Students interpret that tale as the narrator??™'s original confession, but the narrator confesses in the ending of the story.

The narrator is obviously recounting the events for someone. This is the point where the few begin to question Poe??™'s rhetoric skills. Some believe that Poe was just a bad rhetorician while others, like Brett Zimmerman essayist of ??? Frantic Forensic Oratory: Poe??™'s ??? The Tell-Tale Heart???, believe that it was Poe??™'s intentions to let his character fail, to sound psychotic and is a great rhetorician. I believe the latter. Poe is a writer of tragedies; he would want his character to sound incompetent in explaining himself to someone else or a jury, so he could fail at sounding sane and justified.

Zimmerman realizes this characteristic of Poe??™'s short stories and writes an informative essay of how Poe must have known the techniques of rhetoric oratory. Zimmerman starts his essay by negating Ezra Pounds opinion that Poe is ??? A dam??™'d bad rhetorician half the time.??? He gives a brief summary of the story in the opening paragraph. He then organizes it into Poe??™'s education in rhetoric, where he looks at the time period of when Poe grew up and what he most likely studied, and the frantic forensic oratory, where he looks more to the story and applies what Poe must have learned in rhetoric to the character??™'s own knowledge.

Then he ends with a few closing remarks and notes, which he notes as peroratio (the ending of classical rhetoric). Throughout the entire essay he keeps his thesis alive, which is Poe was indeed a master of rhetoric. In the first part of his essay, Zimmerman reminds readers that Poe was indeed a great rhetorician and should have due to his education.

Rhetoric was saturated in American culture during the time and was in the school curriculum says Kenneth Cmiel, a source of Zimmerman's (2). Poe constantly had great orators of his time, like Jefferson, and of the past presented to him. In school he studied Latin, a necessity in learning ancient rhetoric (3, Zimmerman). In college Poe later joined the debate team, and according to Zimmerman, there is no better forum for the practice of rhetoric (3). His teachings in rhetoric are evident in other works, such as "Some words with a Mummy" notes Zimmerman. Poe's character in "The Tell-Tale Heart" seems to be aware of the same things about rhetoric oratory that Poe does and is putting up a defense rather than just a flat out confession. In the second part of his essay, Zimmerman focuses back to the Poe's story.

He gives a brief analysis of the narrator. He states the narrator is a paranoid schizophrenic who is so worried about being deemed as a madman that he in fact makes himself look mad by being preoccupied with disproving that he is indeed insane rather than proving his innocence (5). Zimmerman continues writing to explain how the narrator goes about creating his defense against the accusation of insanity. The madman uses several parts of classical speech, something Poe would be aware of. He uses the introduction with its appeal to emotion or ethos, then moves on to the

confirmatio and confutatio, where reason is taken up, but fails to keep his composure in the ending. He uses praeparatio in his speech, which is preparing the audience to a story and tries to make things seem better than what they are with the story.

This is called a paradiastole (6-8, Zimmerman) Poe ends his story just like every other one he wrote- with tragedy. He watches as his character fails. It is not that Poe is incompetent at making a case using rhetoric oratory; however, it is his fascination with tragedy. He wants his character to fail. What would be a better ending for a murderous madman who thinks he is sane? I agree with Zimmerman's thesis that Poe is indeed a master of rhetoric. Given the background of Poe's history it is hard to believe that he would not have mastered it or at least had been well oriented with it. He studied Latin and Horace and Cicero's orations. A young man does not leave without a little bit of understanding after reading those.

I would know after three years of Latin. Even as a child, Poe would give speeches to visitors when urged by his adoptive parents (2, Zimmerman). A former acquaintance of Poe's, Col. Thomas H. Ellis, said, "Talent for declamation was one of his gifts. I well remember a public exhibition at the close of a course of instruction in elocution which he had attended [..

.] and my delight when, in presence of a large and distinguished company, he bore off the prize in competition" (2, Zimmerman). How does a young boy with such a talent for orations not carry it into his writing? People tend to write their speeches beforehand, so Poe must have become well rehearsed

in writing rhetorically. Poe shows his intelligence of this in ??? The Tell-Tale Heart.

??? He uses devices found in rhetoric oration in the character??? s speech. Poe obviously knew rhetoric well. Critics begin to doubt Poe??™ s skills because of how the narrator fails in his speech. Poe must have known how to critique rhetoric skills in way to make them fail. As I said before, Poe is a writer of tragedy. As Zimmerman says, ??? Poe??|gives in to the impulses of Dark Romanticism??? (10). Poe, in the end of just about every story, allows his characters to be seen as unstable. Poe did not want to neglect his rhetoric skills but wanted to see the disassembling of his paranoid schizophrenic madman, just like every other one of his characters.

Poe was a true master of rhetoric. He wrote his skill away as he configured his insane character. He watched, like his readers, his character fumble over words and reason. Zimmerman makes a point that Poe ??? shows himself to be a master of rhetorician, despite the rhetorical failings that he deliberately (and brilliantly) gives his narrators??? (10). Poe must have known rhetoric so well that he could make it fail.

It takes a full and true comprehension of something to make it fail as gracefully as Edgar Allen Poe did. Works Cite Brett Zimmerman. ??? Frantic Forensic Oratory: Poe??™ s ??? The Tell Tale Heart??? - Critical Essay.??? Style. Find Articles.

com 27 January 2010. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2342/is_1_35/ai_97074170/pg_13/tag=content;coll

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