

Cast of Amontillado analysis

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Basically this is just an analysis and an opinion paper on Edgar Allen Poe's "Cast of Amontillado" reason I did write about this from my English Composition class is because I enjoy reading Poe. Criticism is always wanted.

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The story I choose from this week's reading assignments was "The Cask of Amontillado." This short story is written by personally one of my favorite Authors. I enjoy Poe's psychological terrors of a story and his haunting poems. It intrigues me that his own death is a mystery that still lives up to a tale to this day. I've read his stories many a time, mostly for fun and some of the times for classwork such as this. In my opinion Edgar Allen Poe is a brilliant author.

The setting of this gothic tale is that of Italy, where the roman catacombs that is said to be the largest known catacombs (3 miles of extensive tunnels of the dead), sometime during the Carnival season. It seems that it's during a time of freedom or confinement depending on whose side of the story you are on. If you are Montresor, then you are on the freedom side, however it seems that he is still down in the hole with Fortunato, who is not as fortunate as he is chained up and bricked in a man-sized crypt. It seems that Montresor can't leave that crypt without telling us this cryptic tale. The tale moves away from the Carnival (freedom) and into a crypt of lesser quality (confinement). Which ends in two men being confined to their fates. One left to die and the other left with the haunting truth of what happened.

The two important characters are Montresor and Fortunato. Starting with Montresor, he is the villain of this story a ruthless and cold killer that seems to take a fancy to killing and deems it necessary. He is deemed an unreliable narrator, but a narrator none the less. Why you might ask? Well he did plaster Fortunato to wall. However, he can be looked at as less than a flesh and blood character, but rather human nature. Jealousy epitomized. There of course isn't proof of this just what I thought about when I read this tale. This can be taken a step forward and be spun as that Montresor as loathsome as it may sound, gives us an understanding of what it's truly meant to be human. He is also an unsympathetic character. I'm not meaning that he has no sympathy, but rather he's a character that not many can relate to. He is the part of human nature that not many of us venture down. Revenge and going fully through with the plot, but is his also a character given to us for self-reflection as well. Lastly my only question that I am left with this character is this tale's; this tale of murder is it him bragging or is it a confession of the death of Fortunato?

Fortunato, as the story goes on is the victim of losing his freedom to confinement physically. To me he is the classical tragedy character. A character with a fatal flaw. I was able to develop this observation after re-reading this tale. His fatal flaw is his addiction to wine. More so to the Amontillado. It's his single thought up until the end. However, something else strikes me. Is this character truly a victim? There has to be something other than Montresor's quote of "A little bit to conceit of his knowledge of wine." Did Fortunato do something that should be punishable by death or was he just a helpless victim. Or is he just human nature personified? The weak points all of us have and how if exploited can end in death or something just as worse? To me his weak points are noticeable. Such as greed, trust, addiction, and insensitivity.

However there is a minor character that does a major action, he drives the plot it seems. Luchesi, he is Fortunato's wine rival. However, it seems he is a catalyst of human nature. The drive to outdo someone. He is only seen up on the surface in the Carnival, but rather his name is used to keep Fortunato distracted, but it's not needed since Fortunato is already drunk out of his mind. Montresor uses him to exploit the weak spots of Fortunato.

The plot goes as such. The Carnival, Italy's celebration of freedom. Two characters meet Fortunato and Montresor. Montresor offers up a fabricated tale of a wine called Amontillado. Which peeks Fortunato's interest since he is a wine lover. The two travel down into the catacombs where Montresor

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keeps Fortunato's interests peaked. He travels lower into the catacombs to get to a fabled wine that isn't down there where in the end tethers Fortunato to wall and proceeds to brick him in. Leaving him no air to breathe and just too slowly die. Where in the end the narrator that was unnamed was Montresor, who did this fifty years ago and still no one has found out about it. So it leaves you thinking if it really happened or not.

The Symbolism in this story is everywhere. Every detail seems to be a code for an image. The character Montresor alone is the name of a famous Italian family that has catacombs under their house which the character Montresor says "It's where all the members of the Montresor family are buried" which to me seeing as how Montresor kills Fortunato so unsympathetically makes me think did he murder his family? Doing a little bit of research into the Montresor family the crest of their family intrigues me the most. It's of a snake biting a golden foot. I believe that the snake is Fortunato and the Golden foot is Montresor. Fortunato bit Montresor in an unknown manner which in turn in which Montresor gets revenge. Hence the motto "nemo me impune lacessit" (which having Google translate helps understand this "no one strikes me with impunity" ironically the motto of Scotland.)

This setting is important to the theme of Freedom and Confinement. If it was changed then it would have been the same tale, but spun in a different way which could have been different in the end speaking about self-reflection. The meanings wouldn't have carried over as easily as they did with this setting. The setting is also important because the Carnival helped develop the story since it's essentially a big wine party. If it didn't happen than Fortunato wouldn't be there and Montresor wouldn't have killed him, or maybe in the end it was all just a tall tale?

The theme that is prevalent in this tale is Freedom and Confinement, but there are numerous other themes in this tale as well. Freedom and Confinement, however take the most noticeable stand. One character must die so that the other can be free. Or is he really free and not just confined to the knowledge of his crimes so that he must confess it fifty years later. It could be told in his hours before death. Who knows? It all could be just a made up tall tale, but the theme itself makes us the readers think about what it's really like to be trapped.

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References:

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