"The Cask of Amontillado" is a horror short story by Edgar Allan Poe which narrates about a person name Montresors who struggles to revenge against Fortunato, his friend who he believes had wronged through insults. This essay gives an analysis of the story. The story starts with one of the main characters pledging to take revenge on another character, Fortunato who he claims had insulted him. Montresors plans to execute the revenge on Fortunato carefully without letting him have a clue of his intentions. He pretends to be friendly and secretly arranges on how he will have Fortunato dead.

The writer of this story applies the theme of gothic horror element in various instances to make the ideas clear to the reader. The setting in this story begins in the early evening at dusk. The author uses this setting to present an explanation of as to why the two men in the story wore costumes. This setting also depicts the reason as to why Fortunato is drunk. The story’s beginning at dusk carries the relevance in that it ends at midnight and this allows the reader to estimate the duration of the story, and the gothic element of darkness is achieved, (Poe, 2008)

Montresors plans to lure Fortunato to accompany him to the catacombs so that he can revenge on him by killing him there. He selects catacombs for his intended actions since the place is secluded and remote, "most remote end of the crypt"(247) and "inmost recesses"(246) of the "extensive"(246) catacombs where no one would notice if he kills Fortunato there.

Irony is evident in the story when especially when Fortunato coughs on their way to the
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catacombs and Montresors mockingly suggests that they go back. In his response, Fortunato replies, “I will not die of a cough” meaning that his cough could not contribute to his death. This is ironical in that in deed Fortunato is not to be killed by his cough but rather by Montresors at the catacomb where they are headed at the time of the these comments, (Poe, 2004).

There is a theme of naivety in this story particularly portrayed in Fortunato. Fortunato follows Montresors to the catacombs without questioning the real motive behind the journey. He knows that the catacombs are a remote place where any evil could happen, yet he fails to have someone else accompany him in his trip with Montresors. He naively puts full trust in Montresors yet he knows that he had once insulted him and so the trip might be snare to have him revenged upon.

When Montresors suggests that they take a drink, Fortunato foolishly accepts without putting into considerations the potential dangers that would face him at the catacombs, being drunk and in a remote place. Montresors mocks him by saying, “I will drink to your health” while in deed he knew the plans he had behind the drinking and the trip. This is an example of verbal irony the writer uses to achieve the mood of the story in the reader’s mind. There is also dramatic irony in Poe’s work in that the reader is aware of what is going to happen to Fortunato while he himself does not have any idea. The reader understands the motive behind the trip to the catacombs and the drink but Fortunato has not the slightest idea.

The climax of the story is at the catacomb. Montresors traps unsuspecting Fortunato behind the brick wall and leaves him to die there. No one is present to rescue Fortunato and he screams in vain as the only sound that responds to his cries is his own echo. Here, the prophesy of Fortunato that he will not die of a cough comes true since he dies a very painful death instead, (Landon, 2008). Another trait portrayed by Poe in his book is pride.
Fortunato is depicted as being very proud. He “prided himself in his connoisseurship in wine” and boasted that he could distinguish different wines by just having a sip. He is quoted as saying “Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry”.

Fortunato’s loyalty to Montresors is seen his endurance in the damp, cold and the smell of niter, and in his persistence to continue with the trip to catacombs despite of his disturbing cough. His weakness was the excessive desire for wine, and his greed for the uncommon Amontillado and made him drink uncontrollably at the carnival. This weakness in the addiction of alcohol gave His enemy-turned friend an opportunity to take revenge against him by killing him at the catacombs.

Montresors was crafty as he managed to lure Fortunato by pretending that he was going to sample Amontillado, but instead had him die in the vault. In a different angle, Montresors was a person of no conscience. He kills his friend without even attempting to tell his friend Fortunato of his inner feelings and have the issue diplomatically solved. He just had the desire to have Fortunato dead even if the offence was not worth a death penalty. Fortunato cried “For the love of God, Montresors” hoping to revive some mercy and conscience in Montresors but to no avail.

Montresors is seen to have patient since he says that he had endured many injuries from Fortunato. When he is insulted by Fortunato, he does not take any revenge though this does not end here. Here vows that he will surely take revenge on Fortunato no matter how long it will take be he executes his revenge, “The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge.” This is accomplished at the end of the story when he gets Fortunato trapped in the vault where he dies painfully.
Montresors understood that Fortunato was a respected man but this did not stop from devising his plans against him. This is probably the reason as to why he could not revenge in public in fear of the reactions from the people who honored Fortunato. Though Fortunato was rich, he knew Fortunato's greed for wine would not make him escape the trap of getting him drunk so that he could realize his vow without any threats or hindrances. The theme of betrayal is seen in the story in the sense that Montresors did not expect his friend Fortunato to insult him, but he did it, and in that Fortunato could not expect that Montresors would kill him based on the fact that he was his close friend and very loyal to him, (Herman & Bart, 2005).

In conclusion, "The Cask of Amontillado" by Poe is story which brings about different themes, with the main theme being revenge where Montresors vows to revenge against Fortunato for insulting him, which he does at the end of the story by killing Fortunato at the catacombs.

References:


