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ENG 101

The Cask of Amontillado – Final Paper Outline

1. Introduction
   1. Brief Plot summary
   2. Poe masterfully blends a variety of literary elements to create a rich story that holds true to the horror genre that he made famous.
2. Montresor
   1. Man-versus-man Conflict: Montresor vs. Fortunato
      1. The obvious external conflict between Montresor and Fortunato that fuels the events in the story.
         1. “’The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge” (Poe 411).
         2. In "The Cask" Poe has Montresor meet Fortunato "as if by chance" when it is clear that Montresor had foreknowledge of Fortunato's attendance. (Benton).
      2. Resolution occurs
   2. Man-versus-self: Montresor vs himself
      1. A very subtle and brief reconsideration of Montresor’s actions.
         1. “But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. Fortunato!” (Poe 417).
      2. Resolution occurs
   3. Symbolism in clothing: Black mask
      1. The black mask he dons is used to conceal his face. Symbolically it is hiding his true motive for taking Fortunato underground.
         1. “I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of him immolation” (Poe 411)
         2. Fortunato has donned the costume of the fool while Montresor assumes not only the guise of friend but subsequently “a mask of black silk” (Sweet).
   4. Situational & Dramtic Irony in Fortunato’s death
      1. Montresor goes to great lengths to plan the murder. He makes sure that his staff aren’t home when he arrives with Fortunato, ideally to prevent any witnesses. He takes him deep into the catacombs and prepares to take his revenge by burying him alive specifically, yet he dies prematurely. Dramatic irony because Montresor isn’t aware that his plan is going to fail. In a way, he hasn’t killed him because he’s still on his mind.
         1. “He dies without fully comprehending Montresor’s motives. Fortunato’s silence is due to his death, which occurs long before his tormentor desires.” (Jacoby).
         2. Fifty years later Montresor the Catholic appears to be confusing the whole story on his deathbed to a priest, “You, who so well know the nature of my soul” (Sweet)
3. Fortunato
   1. Man-versus-nature Conflict: Fortunato vs. Death
      1. Fortunato’s brief resistance to die.
         1. “’For the love of God, Montresor!’” (Poe 417).
      2. Resolution occurs
   2. Symbolism & Irony in clothing: Jester’s costume
      1. Fortunato’s Costume is clown-like in the story. Symbolically represents that he is a fool. Evidence in how he is fooled to come down to inspect the Amontillado.
         1. “’Come, let us go. To your vaults’” (Poe 412).
      2. His clothing is also ironic because for someone with his wealth and stature, he dressed like a fool.
         1. Fortunato’s dress is ironic for a man with his stature in society. (Hess)
   3. Situational Irony in his name
      1. Fortunato’s name means “good fortune”, yet he has anything but that as he is tricked and murdered by Montresor.
         1. “In other regards, he was a man to be respected and even feared” (Poe 411).
   4. Situational Irony in his death.
      1. While Montresor is acting his part and trying to convince him to turn back, Fortunato replies that he won’t die of a cough, even though that is what eventually kills him. Additionally. Montresor fails in some regards to bury Fortunato alive. Instead of a slow, agonizing death, he dies rather quickly due to his cough.
         1. “’Enough, the cough is a mere nothing. It will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough’” (Poe 413).
   5. Dramatic Irony in his affection for wine
      1. It appears that Fortunato isn’t a conneseuir of wine, but an alcoholic instead. This is evident when he explicitly states that its silly someone could confuse Amontillado with Sherry, even though Amontillado is a type of sherry.
         1. “’As for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Amontillado from Sherry’” (Poe 412).
         2. “’He had accosted my with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much” (Poe 411)
4. Montresor’s Family Crest & Motto
   1. Symbolism
      1. Montresor’s description of his family crest and motto represents how he intends to crush Fortunato for his misdeeds. Ties into the symbolism of his costume as he still remains oblivious.
         1. “’A huge human foot d’or, in a field of azure; the foot crushed a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel’” (Poe 414).
         2. “’Nemo me impune lacessit’” (Poe 414). Translates to “No one attacks me with impunity”.
   2. Man-versus-man conflict
      1. Ties into the conflict between Montresor and Fortunato.
   3. Verbal Irony in the motto
      1. Montresor states early on that he wants to exact his revenge on Fortunato with impunity, despite his family motto saying that no one should be allowed to attack him with impunity. This becomes a double-standard.
         1. “I must not only punish, but punish with impunity” (Poe 411).
5. Various Settings
   1. Symbolism in the nitre
      1. The nitre in the catacombs represents the trap that Montresor has successfully laid and lured Fortunato into.
         1. “’but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls’” (Poe 413).
   2. Symbolism in the Carnival season
      1. The events take place during the Carnival season, a period of celebration and feasting before Lent. Symbolically the setting represents Montresor’s madness. He is clearly a deranged man due to the lengths he will go to get revenge.
         1. “It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season” (Poe 411).
6. Conclusion
   1. Summary/Recap
   2. Restating thesis and projection