

# Deviance in zaroff and montresor

Literature



Deviance in Zaroff and Montresor Both Zaroff in "The Most Dangerous Game", and Montresor in "The Cask of Amontillado" are characters who suffer from clearly deviant psychological behavior. It is actually difficult to decide which character is the more insane. After all, while Zaroff hunts for sport with a gun, showing little passion or care for who or how many people he murders and Montresor only kills one, there is a certain abnormality to the method by which Montresor kills. One certainly cannot say he is dispassionate, but the quiet competency that he brings to creating the wall of bricks is downright eerie.

There is no question that Zaroff is a particularly cruel type; the hunter who kills purely for sport and not because he has to eat or even really cares about showing off his game. Just bringing down a vicious animal would be enough and the memory would suffice as well as a mounted head. Although he speaks about the ridiculousness of romanticizing human life, it seems like a false facade. No one becomes that horrific without sliding into absolute lunacy unless they've suffered tremendous emotional trauma.

That is an exact description of Montresor. Although his eventual method of killing off his enemy is even more gruesome than Zaroff's hunting them for game on a certain level, his enmity is understandable. This is a story of revenge, after all, and who cannot find sympathy with someone who feels they have been slighted. On the other hand, as the recent events at Virginia Tech prove, very often the slights that drive one to such extreme acts are not nearly as terrifying as the revenge itself. Still, there is a human element to Montresor that simply doesn't exist with Zaroff.

Zaroff, like many men who hide behind guns and order people around, is also revealed to be a cowardly type. He coerces his assistant Ivan into the grunt  
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work that he seems to be unprepared and even incapable of doing. At one point he admits he had to resort to the use of the dogs to win his hunt. That's dirty pool plain and simple and it reveals Zaroff to be both a coward and a cheat. His utter lack of trustworthiness is also revealed when he forces Rainsfords to fight him even after Rainsfords has actually been the victor. Although Montresor is hardly a prize himself, he is in many ways preferable to Zaroff. After all, like many killers he has charm and a sense of humor. And by the end it's almost easy to feel sorry for the irony that befalls him when his victim falls dead to a cough rather than to his carefully concocted plan. The use of irony is probably more effective at making Montresor a figure a sympathetic figure than the empathy he engenders because he is on mission of revenge.

Both of these stories present men who are clearly deranged. Despite the fact both commit cold-blooded murder however, it is the presentation of their characters that separate them. Zaroff is entirely disturbing and unpleasant; his cocky quality is smarmy and distancing. By contrast, Poe imbues Montresor with an earthiness that, if it doesn't necessarily make his murder plan understandable, it at least doesn't come across as vicious and cruel. What is perhaps most interesting is that even though both Zaroff and Montresor are decidedly unhinged, the way the stories are approached make one of these insane killers nearly as sympathetic as his victim.