

# Narration analysis of "the cask of amontillado" essay



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The first-person narration style of "The Cask of Amontillado" is essential in creating the original quality of the story. The reason this is so important in this particular story, is because when a sane killer, Montresor, is allowed to tell the story from his point of view, the reader gets a unique, disturbing look into the calmness of his mind. The audience can more clearly see how he thinks and feels, which the audience does not normally get in mainstream, commercial literature.

The reason the narration style is so important to the tone of the story, is because it lets the reader become personally acquainted with the thoughts and intentions of the main character, and since the reader somewhat knows the outcome from the beginning, it allows certain ironies to make sense to the reader. Furthermore, were it told from a different perspective, I do not believe the story would have been as psychologically powerful. First person narration "can evoke a stronger emotional attachment with readers; from the first instance, the reader connects with the main protagonist. It is his/her voice, thoughts and feelings being portrayed, therefore, this is the person the reader is most likely to bond with" (Wright).

This first-person style of narration establishes a more personal connection between the reader and the narrator, who in this case is also the main character. In "The Cask of Amontillado" the narrator often talks to the audience in a very familiar tone, as if he knows the reader: "You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat" (Poe, 617-618). This is one of the first lines of the story, but it is spoken as if the narrator were good friends with the reader. This proverbially allows the narrator to open up right away and tell his story

fully and in detail. This immediate familiarity helps the reader to see inside the calculating mind of Montresor, whom we later learn is a killer.

When talking about the past insults of Fortunato, he takes on a cold, determined tone: " At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled [...] I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong" (Poe, 618). With this he tells the reader clearly and concisely his intentions, and why he intends to do so, which in his mind is just. When he describes the actual killing, he seems to take pleasure in savoring the suffering of his victim, Fortunato: " I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might harken to it with more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones" (622).

As Fortunato's suffering continues, Montresor savors the killing even more, mocking his yells in a kind of frenzied, joyful release: " A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form [...] I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength" (622-623). Had the narration style been in third-person, we would not so intimately know what he was thinking and feeling at the time of the murder. We would not know that he was savoring Fortunato's screams, when he paused to sit on the bones. A killer is portrayed as the enemy in the vast majority of literature. However since the killer is the narrator and main character in " The Cask of Amontillado," we get his side of the story.

Rather than the narrator immediately demonizing the killing, the audience gets the reasons from the source, and are allowed to decide for themselves how to judge the murderer. Since Montresor personally tells the reader in the very beginning that he is going to punish Fortunato in some way, we can observe the cool, collected way in which Montresor flawlessly lures his victim to the depths of his wine cellar, careful not to give him any sign of alarm. Ironically, Montresor suggests several times that they turn back from their journey to the depths of the catacombs because of Fortunato's cough: "'How long have you had that cough?' [...] 'Come,' I said, with decision, 'we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed'" (Poe, 619-620). Not only does he act concerned for his health, he also praises him, this further kills any suspicion Fortunato may have had about foul play on Montresor's part.

Since the audience knows that Montresor's intends to harm Fortunato from the beginning, certain remarks made by Montresor become humorously ironic, such as when Fortunato toasts when drinking the Medoc: "'I drink' he said, 'to the buried that repose around us. ' 'And I to your long life'" (620). This is also ironic because the audience finds out at the beginning of the story that Fortunato had gravely insulted the Montresor family, but when he is around him, he toasts to them. Also when Montresor has finished entombing Fortunato alive he says, as the last line of the story: "In pace requiescat!" translated as "May he rest in peace!" (Arp and Johnson, 623). An ironic symbol that appears in the story, is the exchange the two have about the Montresor coat of arms: "'A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure;

the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel. ' ' And the motto? ' ' Nemo me impune lacessit.

' ' Good! ' he said" (Poe, 620). The motto is translated as " no one can provoke me and get away with it" (Arp and Johnson, 620). This coat of arms is representational of Montresor, the snake, getting revenge on the crushing foot of Fortunato, with a bite. It is made even more ironic when in response to the description, Fortunato says " good! not realizing how bad the interpretation of the coat of arms is for him. Poe's first-person narration style in " The Cask of Amontillado" allows the reader to experience a different type of story, from an unusual perspective.

By making a killer the narrator, and by making him familiar with the audience, we can see the situation in different darker light. Rather than focusing on the actual physicality and action that takes place in the story, Poe focuses on the thoughts and emotions of the main character, thus making for a more intimately disturbing story for the reader. Bibliography  
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