

Tell tale heart and cask of amontillado



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The renowned literary author, Edgar Allan Poe, has written several classics including two short stories which share similar central themes. In the “ Tell Tale Heart” and “ Cask of Amontillado”, Edgar Allan Poe writes about two murders committed by two seemingly madmen. The story of the “ Cask of Amontillado” revolves around a man called Montressor who tells how he murdered a man named Fortunato who had insulted his good name many years earlier. The other tale, “ Tell Tale Heart”, tells how one man came to be obsessed with the Old Man who lived in the old house.

The main focus of this analysis paper is to take a closer look at these two short stories and see certain similarities and differences between them, if any. This paper will try to show the motives behind the murder, how it was committed, and the consequences of the murder to each of the madman involved. In the “ Tell Tale Heart” short story, we will see that the murderer narrated the manner by which he committed the crime and the reason behind his decision to kill a man. From the story, the murderer noted that it was the eyes of the victim that prompted the former to kill the latter. The killer noted that the old man had the “ eye of a vulture –a pale blue eye, with a film over it.

” The story begins with the killer indignantly asking how anyone can refer to him as a madman. He then relates the story of how he came to be obsessed with the Old Man who lived in the old house. Although the Old Man never harmed him nor did him wrong, he became tortured by his existence — especially by his eye, the milky white film of which the Narrator soon imagined stared at him everywhere. A close study of this story by Edgar

Allan Poe will show that the crime was pre-meditated in the sense that he first makes sure that the Old Man will suspect nothing by gaining his trust.

After waiting and watching with intense patience, he finally kills him late one night and disposes of the body by burying it beneath the floor and carefully replacing the floorboards. In the “ Cask of Amontillado”, the reason behind the murder committed was more profound in the sense that it was not merely because the murderer hated something physically in the victim. It appears from the first sentence of the story that the murderer had been wronged quite a number of times by the victim Fortunato: “ the thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge” (4) It is also note-worthy that in this particular murder, the narrator-murderer employed some deception tactics in order to execute his plan – in contrast to the element of surprise used by the other murderer in the “ Tell Tale Heart”. He tricked Fortunato to go his palazzo to check out the authenticity of a wine or a pipe known as Amontillado. The wine was supposed to be Amontillado, but he claims to be in doubt about this and would like another opinion.

Fortunato, who fancies himself an expert on wine, insists that he be taken to the cask in question to determine if it is indeed Amontillado. As noted by the author in the text: “ He had a weak point –this Fortunato –although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. (4) And just like the first story, “ Cask of Amontillado” presupposes that the murder was well-planned as can be gleaned from the writings of the author: “ There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time.

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” (5) The murderer led the victim to the cask of amontillado where he had planned to commit the murder. And once in the darkness, the murderer –like the one in the first story- surprised his victim by chaining him to the wall: “ Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess. ” (7) After chaining Fortunato to the wall, the murderer slowly built a wall between them –practically burying Fortunato alive in the tunnel. This particular story has a very different ending from the “ Tell Tale Heart” in the sense that the murderer was not caught –or at least no mention of it was made in the text.

On the contrary, the text showed that the murderer was successful in keeping his secret: “ I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. ” (8) On the other hand, the ending of the “ Tell Tale Heart” shows the murderer admitting his crime to authorities.

Police, having been alerted by a neighbor who heard the Old Man’s screams, arrive but see nothing amiss. The Narrator initially remains cool and calm and the police suspect nothing, but during their presence, the killer suddenly hears the Old Man’s heart beating louder and louder. Eventually, certain that the police hear it as well and are just toying with him, he screams out his confession of guilt “ I admit the deed! –tear up the planks! here, here! –It is the beating of his hideous heart! ” (4) These were the major differences and similarities that can be gleaned from the text of the two stories. Indeed, both

stories run on parallel worlds in the sense that they are similar and different in many aspects -most of which were identified in this analysis paper.