

Analyze the short story

Literature



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Critical analysis of The Black Cat

It is not often that a writer tells a story with such simplicity and panache and yet captures the deepest desires and nature of human beings with such perfection that the reader cannot help but admire the art of storytelling.

Edgar Allen Poe is amongst one of those fine writers who could use words and plot stories that can capture a reader's attention and The Black Cat is one of his fine creations. The Black Cat tells the story of the desires that consume human, about the bad effects of alcohol and how it consumes the individual and the person loses sense of what's right and what's wrong and if it's not alcohol, then it's anger, anything that does not allow a person to have self-control and to forget about being human, this story gives a narration of how a human becomes an animal. Like an animal the protagonist has no concern about other beings, his comfort is much more important to him than anybody else. It is further emphasized through him how one bad deed leads to another and how the person loses his conscience during the journey. This paper attempts to bring forward the main theme of the story and then come to a conclusion about the story.

The protagonist noted for his " docility" and " humanity" turns into a murderer, how a person so humble can become a killer. Was it because of alcohol that he lost his control? Or was it the curse of the black cat that her wife told him about? Or was it his free will? The story does not provide a direct answer instead all seem to have an effect. Since it is basically a narrative of a man who wants to unburden his soul before his execution, he

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narrates the story of his life in the most simple and honest manner. So, it is up to the readers to pick up the themes and clues to what lead to his increasingly violent behaviour.

The first trigger seems to be the alcohol, “ for what disease is like Alcohol!” As true as it is, but the writer also points out to the human nature of perverseness. The main theme of the story, perverseness, a nature that is innate to human nature for nobody wants to follow the rules and as far as we deviate from following the basic rules the further we deviate from the social behaviour, thus loosing complete control over ourselves, doing things that lead to dangerous consequences. “ Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart ...Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such?... It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself - to offer violence to its own nature - to do wrong for the wrongs sake only...”

Besides the feeling of perverseness, the protagonist is haunted by his cruelty towards Pluto, a pet who loved him and never despised him. The more he thought about this the deeper he entered into the path to self-destruction. Though he tries to write it off saying he didn't really care but the fear and guilt implanted on him as the feline phantasm and deepened his anxiety and in order to move from that guilt perverseness deepened its grip on him. It was an escape for him from the guilt, rather than choosing to speak about it, he tried to escape it and the more he tried to escape it the more he felt threatened. The anxiety that built inside him forced him to take actions that

would free him from the threat and in disposing off the cause of threat he had to dispose of anything else that came in his way. And he became a murderer. Yet this only leads to more guilt, even though he refused to accept that he felt burdened his behavior shows he was nervous. It was because of his anxiety that built up because of his guilt that he got caught.

It can be concluded that Poe through this story shows the basic nature of human to escape situations, his guilt and the pressure that builds up leads to anxiety and the more the person tries to escape it, the more he gets embroiled in the confusion. Perverseness is basic to human nature but it occurs only when the person allows it to take control of him. It is the will of the person that decides his actions, and a weak willed person like the protagonist can falter easily.