

Introduction paintings
but he realizes that
they do



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Introduction

The stories, the fall of the House of Usher and The Cask of the Amontillado by Edgar Allan Poe are good examples of gothic stories. A gothic tale is a horror kind of a story that portrays a fight flanked by motive and fallacy or light and darkness. Gothic stories arouse fear in the reader or viewer of the story.

Their setting is imaginary in an old, scary, and absurd environment that probably has never existed. As the narration progresses, fear builds in the reader or viewer and finally something horrific happens. The similarities of the two stories outweigh their differences.

The fall of the House of Usher

The story commences with the narrator's visit to his childhood friend, Roderick Usher after an invitation via a letter to visit him since he has been ill for a while and needs the narrator's help. When the narrator arrives, he notices a scary look of the building and the lake around the house that gives an equally scary image.

The narrator notices change in Roderick's appearance probably due to his failing health. He also learns that his twin sister, Madeline Usher is also very ill with a terminal disease. He also notices paintings on the walls and an improvised guitar.

In attempt to cheer up his friend, the narrator starts reading loudly the writings on the paintings but he realizes that they do not cheer him up and so he tries listening to the recordings in the guitar when he hears him

humming some word like “ the haunted palace” (Poe, “ The fall of the House of Usher” 4). He does not understand all these. Later, Roderick informs the narrator of his sister’s death and his plans to first place her in the family vault for two weeks before her final burial. The narrator helps him to place her in the coffin and take her to the vault. The days that follow are full of fear and agitation for both, for no apparent reasons.

At the end of one week since the death of Madeline, the narrator is so disturbed at night until he wakes up and dresses. Soon, Roderick knocks on the narrator’s room, also so scared. They open the window but the storm is so strong that it almost sways Roderick. To comfort him, the narrator starts to read a “ romance story, The Mad Trist” to Roderick. He listens keenly until it gets to the part that “ Ethelred, the hero breaks into the dwelling of a hermit by driving his spiked war club through the door. The sound of the cracking, splintering wood reverberates through the forest” (Cummings 6). At the same time, the narrator hears a similar voice far in the house.

He reads on, how Ethelred kills the dragon and he hears a wild scream again in the mansion. As the narrator continues how Ethelred “ walks up to the shield but before he can reach for it, it falls” (Poe, “ The fall of the House of Usher” 14), he hears a similar sound in the mansion. Soon, the door flies open with Madeline standing there with her burial garments filled with blood. She falls on his brother and they both fall down dead. The narrator runs away out of the mansion but a red moon light on the house makes him to turn behind and look, then he sees the house sinking and the lake around it covering it completely.

The setting of the story is on an autumn day in the evening, in the olden days. The first sight of the mansion is horrific view itself, Cummings says, “The place is a forbidding mansion in a forlorn countryside” (7). The house is enclosed by fungus, and surrounded by a little lake, tarn.

The fact that the house is covered by fungus shows desperation, hopelessness, and terror. The small lake that looks like a moat makes the house look isolated and mysterious. One small bridge connecting to the mansion over the tarn adds even more fear, especially should someone think of escaping. The narrator, who is a friend to the master of the house, faces terrifying experiences during his visit. The master, Roderick Usher experiences a miserable depression portrayed by odd conduct. Madeline Usher, the twin sister to Roderick also experiences a weird illness, which leads to her death. Surprisingly, she rises from her coffin, does many strange things culminating into the killing of her own brother. The physicians are also very important characters in the story since as Roderick depicts it, they intend to unbury his sister should he bury him outside, because they want to research on her disease since it is a unique one (McAlier 34).

The Cask of Amontillado

The story starts in an evening in a yearly festivity in an Italian town. The people are jubilant with celebrations, but one of them, Montresor, is quiet unlike others. He remembers of the night when he murdered his friend Fortunato because of an unspecified insult. In a flashback, he entices his friend with some wine, which he calls Amontillado from Spain, which he further reports he is not sure of the quality (Rust 18). Fortunato agrees to go with him to taste the wine. On arrival to Montresor’s place, they walk deeper

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into the vaults where he keeps the wine. As they walk in the tombs, Fortunato coughs severally and Montresor pretends to be so much concerned of his health that he suggests that they should go back, but Fortunato insists on going on saying that the cough is a small thing and will not kill him (Poe, "The cask of Amontillado" 23). Montresor first gives him a brand called Medoc and then DeGrave.

Fortunato becomes joyous of drunkenness, and looks forward to Amontillado, where Montresor chains him on the walls of the vault and buries him alive. It is now fifty years since the narrator buried his friend. The setting of the story is in an evening in an Italian city filled with jubilation and celebration during an annual festival. The characters in the story are mainly two, Montresor and Fortunato.

Montresor seeks to revenge of whatever Fortunato had done to him, including the last recent insult. He thus decides to bury him alive in a horrifying manner.

Similarity and differences in the two stories

They two stories have some traits in common. Both are horrific and terrifying, and the setting is in the olden days, many years ago. In addition, the two are narrated in first person narration, only that the narrator in The Fall of the House of Usher is unnamed while in the Cask of Amontillado is named Montresor. The setting of both stories is during dusk, though the set-up of the two areas differs. The fall of the House of Usher is in a weird place in the countryside but the Cask of Amontillado is in the city. Another

difference is in the environment of the stories; *The Fall of the House of Usher* is in a gloomy setting while *The Cask of Amontillado* is a jubilant setting.

In the two stories, there are incidences of people buried alive, but Madeline in the first story rises and goes forth to carry out her revenge mission while Fortunato in the second story still lies within the walls of the vault. The two stories portray revenge, where Madeline kills his brother for burying her alive while Montresor buries Fortunato alive in revenge of the many wrongs he has done to him including the insult.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the similarities of the two stories outweigh the differences. The characters and the setting of the stories evoke horror in the audience with sudden deaths underlining the scenes.

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