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## Main Purpose Of The Cask Of Amontillado

This paper argues that the main purpose of the short story "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe is to mystify the reader, encourage them to think and speculate on what actually takes place in the short story. To achieve his goal, the author employs numerous devices, including hidden controversies and mysterious circumstances revealed in the lines of the characters depicted in the short story. This paper aims to look at the evidence provided in the text of the short story itself as well as the analysis found in secondary sources to support this claim.

Many stereotypically consider Edgar Allan Poe as the author of horror and detective stories. However, just like any other simplification, this is very far from the truth. By simplifying things, readers and critics avoid discussing the subject in depth. A simplification is, first of all, an attempt to state one opinion in a situation when one has no desire to do so or is unsure as to what to say. This is precisely the case with Edgar Allan Poe. His stories are very peculiar, and it is hard to relate them to any generalized genre formula, such as a detective or horror story. In many respects, this failure to meet any standards is intentional. It seems that Poe did not want to be subject to classification because it is against his personal preferences as a writer. This is why he intends to deceive his audience by going beyond the limits of norms and standards. This strategy is aimed at the educated audience, literary critics in particular. These readers willingly invent various classifications and simplifications to prove that literature and art can and should be measured and systematized like objects of the material world.

An example of this protest is noticeable in the famous story "The Cask of Amontillado," first published in 1846. This short piece has been the focus of the attention of both literary critics and regular readers alike. Traditionally, it is labeled as horror fiction. Indeed, if a reader with vivid imagination tries to imagine themselves in Fortunato's situation, they will feel nothing but horror. Also, Poe's tempo of storytelling is very slow in this piece, and it does not get any more dynamic even when approaching the culmination of the plot. He allows the reader to taste every word; he makes them feel the shiver down Fortunato's spine.

The choice of the character's name accounts for additional ironic detail. The word "Fortunato" means "the lucky ones," and the character is indeed a rich and privileged man. Nevertheless, his fortune and luck are useless in the dungeon-turned-grave where he is destined to find his slow and horrifying death. This choice of a name for a character who dies in such a gruesome way is one of the major mysteries of this puzzling story. Does it apply to the man's high social standing, or is it the ironic reference to his horrible fate? The audience can answer this question as it pleases.

Although Poe does not make explicit judgments of the characters' actions, he continues hinting at some mysterious and unexplained circumstances that serve as a driving force of Fortunato's dreadful actions throughout the text. What was it that Fortunato did to him to deserve such a punishment? Is Montresor a mentally disturbed person who finds insult in whatever other people say to him? It is the only explanation of how Fortunado could have managed to cause him "a thousand injuries" (Poe 1)? The passage in which Fortunato provides the rationale behind his actions leaves more questions than it provides answers. Obviously, it was intentionally designed so by the author. Poe purposefully keeps the reader in ignorance regarding what had happened

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between Montresor and Fortunato.

Judging from the behavior of the latter, it is evident that he is aware of the unpleasant feelings he must have caused to Fortunato. However, he seems to see them as unworthy of being mentioned. Fortunato behaves as if those were merely friendly jokes, too eccentric, perhaps, but hardly more than that. Judging from the personality of the Fortunato, this could very well be the case. The tendency to overreact seems to fit his character organically. Here is one of the most revealing passages in the entire story, in which Montresor justifies his actions. Although these actions have not been told to the reader yet, it is noticeable that Fortunato has been processing them in his mind for a long time:

A thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled --but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. 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 1)

In this passage, it is essential to pay particular attention to what Fortunato states about his character—it is typical of him to show no sign of his intentions. He enjoys the idea of revenge. Nevertheless, the numerous reasons he uses to justify his actions can be false. They likely were invented by his imagination to rationalize the violence that he planned to commit.

While this is nothing but conjecture, it is clear that Montresor hates Fortunato. He detests this character for being who he is. Fortunato is more successful and rich, and he seems to be getting everything at no cost. It is likely that Montresor's opinion on Fortunato is based on emotions exclusively. It is merely envy and bitterness for whatever he had achieved.

Still, there are some mysteries related to the character of Fortunato as depicted in the text. It would be unreasonable to take into consideration only the emotional outbursts of Montresor as he draws the moral portrait of this character. The text contains a few more facts that may attract the attention of a thoughtful reader. Some of these details, and particularly the ones associated with Fortunato's assumed expertise in wine tasting, are discussed in the article by Cecil. The first detail pointed out by the author of the publication is the way Fortunato characterizes another wine expert, whom Fortunato pretends to have considered the primary choice for tasting his assumed Amontillado (Cecil 41). As Cecil notes, Fortunato makes fun of the expertise of the man and states that he is in no position to tell Amontillado from Sherry (41). Further, Cecil emphasizes that Amontillado is, in fact, a particular type of Sherry (41).

What is the meaning of this passage? Could this be a mistake placed by Poe intentionally to test the reader's attention? Is he aiming for displaying his knowledge of fine wines by making such a peculiar joke, or is it just a sign of his ignorance in the matter? The most plausible explanation is that Fortunato is actually right, and Montresor does not deserve the fame of the wine expertise he boasts of. Another sign of his incompetence is the way he drinks De Grave. This expensive sort of wine deserves a lot of attention from the taster, and a true expert would not be gulping it down like Fortunato does (Cecil 41). In general, it would be strange for a person who claims to know anything about wine to drink it without taking the time to enjoy and savor the details of the wine. This detail reveals that this character is an alcoholic (Cecil 41).

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Another evidence in support of such a characterization is the fact that the man agrees to taste Amontillado while being heavily drunk, which is unacceptable for a wine expert (Cecil 41). So who is Fortunato, and what is his story with wine? Why is he considered a wine expert? Poe leaves these questions unanswered, leaving them for the reader's consideration.

The article by Stepp focuses on the dual nature of certain explanations and motives of Montresor. He points at some circumstances that may mean that Fortunato himself is unaware of his reasons to kill Fortunado (Stepp 447). As Stepp explains, this story may be read and understood either in the way that Fortunado deserves the punishment he receives or that he loses his life for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, just like when he stepped on a snake in the grass (447). Even when Montresor is almost done building up the wall in front of Fortunato, he does not use this last opportunity to explain the reason behind his action. It is unclear whether he chooses to do so because Fortunato is aware of what he had done or is it because Montresor has nothing to say. The latter sounds like a more plausible explanation. Fortunato only mocks his victim without enjoying the additional pleasure of hearing Fortunado's futile remorse. Why does he do so? Poe intentionally makes an emphasis on this action but never explains it.

In her analysis of the story, Baraban also notes that although it is frequently classified as a detective story, "The Cask of Amontillado" goes beyond the limits of the genre (47-48). There is no investigation of the crime, although the murder does take place in the story, and the reader is left to play the role of a detective and solve this puzzle by themselves (Baraban 48). As Baraban states, many critics believe Fortunato to be insane, but she disagrees with them because this notion contradicts Poe's manner of writing and storytelling (Baraban 47).

To conclude, the analysis of the primary source, as well as the evidence gained from the secondary sources, indicate that Poe's intention was mainly to mystify the reader with the multiple contradictions and questions left without answers. The author's primary focus is not on the crime itself or the motives of Montresor. The idea that he is insane is only one of the two possible versions of what actually happens. This story can be seen as the revenge of an honest man deeply insulted by a lucky rich rival who does not deserve his fame and wealth as well as the crime committed by a mentally ill murderer who looks only for an excuse for his actions. From a certain viewpoint, these behaviors can appear to be very similar. Our judgment depends on the perspective from which we see the events and the minor details revealed to us by Fortunato. Since Edgar Allan Poe intentionally left many of the details out of the text, this artistic choice works as the primary tool of mystifying the audience.