Client’s name

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A rose for Emily and The cask of Amontillado

The aim of this assignment is to compare and contrast both the stories “A rose for Emily” and “The cask of Amontillado”. A rose for Emily is a short story that creates a portrait of a very eccentric woman who lives with the corpse of the man she “loved” and may have killed. The narrator writes about the unfortunate and miserable life Emily led as a spinster. Her family status and title as the last member of the aristocratic prevented her all her life from fulfilling her wishes. Some critics have regarded the story as a horror story of love where protagonist’s acts were defended by a single strand of her grey hair by the side of corpse of Northern day laborer called Homer Barron. H.P. Lovecraft wrote of horror, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." Horror stories evoke an emotional, physical or psychological response from readers causing them to react with fear.

The other story “The cask of Amontillado” in the same manner can be regarded as a horror story where the protagonist defended his acts of sheer violence and murder of someone. However, the acts were defended by the narrator himself, while in “A rose for Emily” the protagonist never defended her acts.

Another contrasting difference in two stories is the underlying reasons behind the murderous attempts of both protagonists. The main theme in the “A rose for Emily” was Emily’s need to be affiliated to someone and societal pressures which kept her devoid of finding love. When she finally did manage to escape the shackles put on her by her father, she was put under the trap of her aristocratic Grierson family and hereditary status by the society and couldn’t stay long with the love of her life. Hence, under immense social pressure when Homer Barron did finally try to leave she resorted to buying a poison to put his life to an end so to make him stay in her life forever.

On the contrary, the reason behind murderous attempt of protagonist in “The cask of Amontillado” is of revenge. Though we were never told way, Fortunato insulted the narrator at some time previous to the story. This insult was apparently unforgivable. That is why the narrator walled Fortunato up in his wine cellar. The main clue was the narrator’s motto: NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT. Latin for “No one may attack me without penalty”. In the very first lines of the story the narrator (Montressor) states that Fortunato had insulted him a thousand times. Although he hadn't actually done him wrong that many times, he exaggerated so he can be justified in his acts of revenge.

As others have pointed out, the narrator of “A Rose for Emily” is a first-person narrator whose point of view is referred to as scenic, that is, the ability to describe the events as if through the lens of a video camera. And even though the narrator collectively, the town of Jefferson itself is reliable, it is not a neutral observer of events. We have no idea what is going on inside Miss Emily because the narrator is not omniscient it can record Miss Emily’s behavior but cannot discern her thoughts or motives. The town-as-narrator becomes a character when it decides, for example, to consider Emily as a “fallen monument;” when it initially approves of Emily’s relationship with Homer Barron but then recoils at the idea of a southern aristocratic woman in a relationship with a day laborer and, worse, a northerner; when it calls in Emily’s cousins to intervene in the Emily-Homer relationship and then rejoices when the cousins fail because the town feels that the cousins are just a bit too aristocratic for the town, which is now more democratic than it was when Emily was young. In other words, the town is both narrator and an important character one can even argue that, if Emily is the protagonist, the town becomes at times her antagonist.

Thus, while we may assume the tale in "A Rose for Emily" is being related by one of the longtime residents of Jefferson, it is told in the person of the entire town, and the community nature of the narrative is emphasized by allowing the narrator to remain anonymous. This device takes us back to an earlier era when residents of small towns often recounted their local legends in such a fashion. The rationale was straightforward i.e. no individual had been privy to the entire story at the outset, and over the years, as residents repeated it one to another, adding parts known to or heard by them from others, a community legend would develop. Faulkner, therefore, elected to tell the tale in this manner as though the entire town had assembled to relate it to a newcomer, or perhaps to an aspiring writer seeking local history.

On the contrary the story “The cask of Amontillado” makes no such historical insinuations. In fact, the story had no such societal implications or any other characters besides Montresor and Fortunato. Both stories also vary on the account of style of murder where Emily killed her love of life by giving him poison while Montresor killed Fortunato ruthlessly by building a wall around him while he was alive and screamed for help in desperation. While Emily killed the love of her life to keep him close, Montresor killed his close friend to finally keep him apart from himself.

Both characters however relate to each other on same level that they resorted to killing to achieve their means. When Fortunato says, “I shall not die of a cough” Then Montressor responds, “True.” Montressor knows he’s about to wall Fortunato up alive, and that his death will be agonizing and slow. Fortunato just assumes that Montressor is agreeing that his cough isn’t severe enough to cause his demise. Both protagonists differ drastically on account that Emily doesn’t murder Homer Barron ruthlessly or hear him screaming for help before ending his life like Montresor dealt with Fortunato. She also did take advantage of his drunk situation or offer Homer Barron a barrel of Amontillado to lure him in her trap like Montresor. Nonetheless, she kept his corpse confined in her bridal suite as long as she passed away and while his corpse rotted and smelled, she refused to let him get away. The narrator also mentions a foul smell where neighbors complain consistently and try to end it by sprinkling lime over her lawn, but even then Emily refuses to leave her home or to leave the corpse of her lover. An essential difference in both stories her is where Emily murdered someone out of stress from sheer social pressures and a life of unfulfilled wishes, Montresor purely murdered Fortunato out of spite and vengeance.

To conclude, both protagonists of the story relate to each other on numerous levels as they both resort to murder to achieve their means. However, the stories also present a sharp contrast as one kills to seek vengeance while the other kills in the name of love.

Works Cited

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