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**EDGAR ALLAN POE AS THE PROGENITOR OF THE MODERN
DETECTIVE TALE**

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Annotation:

This thesis focuses on detective stories by Edgar Allan Poe featuring the detective Dupin. It first delineates the development of the genre from early epics to contemporary authors, then takes a closer look at the key features of a detective story as they appear in the short stories 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' and 'The Purloined Letter'. It also compares these short stories with the works of some later authors of detective fiction. Finally, it presents a novel by Friedrich Dürrenmatt as a critical response to certain features of the genre.

Anotace:

Tato práce se soustředí na detektivní povídky Edgara Allana Poea, v nichž vystupuje postava detektiva Dupina. Nejprve nastiňuje vývoj žánru od nejstarších dob po současnost, poté se blíže zabývá klíčovými rysy detektivního příběhu tak, jak se objevují v povídkách 'Vraždy v ulici Morgue', 'Záhada Marie Rogêtové' a 'Odcizený dopis'. K tomu využívá i srovnání s některými pozdějšími autory detektivní literatury. Následně krátce představuje román Friedricha Dürrenmatta coby kritickou reakci na některé rysy žánru.

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1. Introduction: A Brief History of Crime Fiction

1.1. From the first hints to the Golden Ages of Detection

The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory ("Crime fiction" 192-193) sees one of the key paradigms of crime fiction in "the commission and detection of crime, with the motives, actions, arraignment, judgement, and punishment of a criminal."

First hints of crime fiction can be observed in works dating back to ancient times and earliest epics. Nevertheless, the modern crime fiction began much later. Life details of criminals sentenced to death in the Newgate Prison were collected in the *Newgate Calendar* in the 18th century, while prose focused on financial crimes, rape, prostitution and family law. 19th century novels were less explicit, but began to explore the criminal underworld, and also some works of poetry focused on criminal violence, for example Tennyson's *Maud* (1855) and Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868).

The study of 19th and 20th century crime fiction sees a number of founding fathers: William Godwin, Eugène-François Vidocq, E.A. Poe, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Émile Gaboriau, J.S. Le Fanu and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is often regarded and cited as the greatest crime fiction. Crime fiction matured with Arthur Conan Doyle's stories about Sherlock Holmes and became popular thanks to his short stories. Together with G. K. Chesterton, he stood at the beginning of the first "Golden Age of Detection" focusing on short stories. This age lasted till 1914, although short story writing did not cease. The second Golden Age of Detection focusing on the novel began in the late 1920s and lasted until 1939. Characteristic of the second Golden Age was female presence in crime writing, the three 'Queens of Crime' – Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Margery Allingham. During this period the detective fiction grew in other countries, mainly America ("Crime fiction" 193).

1.2 Hard-boiled school in America

This school is connected with three main authors – Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, and Raymond Chandler. Hard-boiled fiction defines itself against the classic

Golden Age novels for their limitations: isolated (often a country house) setting, discovery of a body, a number of suspects, and announcement of the “whodunit”. These authors criticised the amateur status of the detectives and the lack of forensic or proper police investigations. That is why their hard-boiled fiction depicts graphic violence in urban settings, its typical protagonists are lone professional investigators and policemen, and it blurs the moral boundary between the criminals and the investigators. Hard-boiled novels come close to the brutality of ballads and the *Newgate Calendar* mentioned above. They are sometimes regarded as “an uncivilized, and largely American, reaction against the perfected detective story” (“Crime fiction” 194).

Authors like Mickey Spillane took the ideas of hard-boiled fiction even further with even more emphasis on sex and violence, creating what is often referred to as “guts-gore-and-gals school”.

1.3 Since 1945

Crime fiction became one of the leading genres in the world of literature. While it has received increased academic attention in the US, serious study in the UK marks it as inferior and unliterary (“Crime fiction” 194).

Given the extraordinary richness and quality of post-war crime fiction no potted history is possible, but among the strands that deserve mention are the development of 'police procedural', novels giving extensive details of the official investigative methodology, and most recently of the computerized and profiling techniques necessary to apprehend serial killers (“Crime fiction” 194-195).

Sexuality and sexual crimes are also typical of the post-war crime fiction, even more with the introduction of gay and lesbian protagonists. The writing of female authors remains successful and very popular is also the group of historical and medieval detectives (“Crime fiction” 195).

2. Poe and Detective Story

This thesis seeks to introduce the American writer Edgar Allan Poe as the progenitor of the modern detective tale. Detective fiction itself is classified as a branch or sub-genre of crime fiction, centered around the character of an amateur or

professional detective who investigates a crime – very often a murder. It was Edgar Allan Poe who introduced the first great detective in the world of literature, C. Auguste Dupin, with many typical characteristics of a modern detective, and in the same stories also a variety of aspects which helped shape the whole genre. That is why the main focus of this thesis is on the three stories which feature this particular character. The Dupin trilogy consists of the stories 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Roget' and 'The Purloined Letter'.

The critical approach to Poe's detective stories varies significantly, which becomes evident right from the very basic question – how many detective stories did Poe write. This issue can be seen in all the key sources referred to in this thesis. Peter Thoms, for example, focuses on examining the power of detection in the Dupin series. Tony Magistrale, who also focuses mainly on the three Dupin stories, included – and he admits that readers might consider it odd – an analysis of “The Pit and the Pendulum” in the chapter about the detective fiction of Edgar Allan Poe. Josef Škvorecký, however, talks about five detective stories written by Poe, which are included in the Czech translation to which he wrote the afterword. Unlike Magistrale, he does not mention 'The Pit and the Pendulum' at all, but discusses 'The Gold-Bug' and 'Thou Art the Man' instead. Benjamin F. Fisher offers a possible sixth story, 'The Man of the Crowd'. This illustrates that there are up to seven – perhaps other authors would add even more – stories that could be considered works of Poe's detective fiction. Nevertheless, what all above-mentioned authors have in common is a closer look at the Dupin series as the beginning and the core of Poe's detective fiction.

In the core of this thesis, first each story from the Dupin trilogy is shortly introduced. That is followed by an interpretative part discussing the key elements of each of the stories, also in relation to the other two stories. Each chapter then concludes with a short summary of the key points. The sixth chapter then comments on the trilogy in general and compares it with other famous works of detective fiction – mainly the books by Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle. Then follows an examination of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's detective novel that can be interpreted as a critical response to Edgar Allan Poe's detective fiction and also to detective fiction in

general. The final conclusion comes at the end of this thesis and sums up the key points discussed in it.

3. The Murders in the Rue Morgue (1841)

The introduction to *Selected Tales by Edgar Allan Poe* (Penguin Popular Classics 1994 edition) mentions:

Although he saw himself a poet, Poe's gothic tales of grotesque and dark side of life have also been the subject of immense critical scrutiny; some critics have claimed him as the originator of the detective story, others as an early forerunner of the science fiction genre (Penguin Popular Classics 'Selected Tales by Edgar Allan Poe').

The back cover of the same edition comments on this short story as follows: “[W]ith 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' and his fictional detective M. Dupin [Poe] invented the detective story [...]”. This claim is true, but it would be unjust to forget that similar motifs were – at least in hints – already used before Poe was even born, as was mentioned in the previous chapter. The widely-known tragedy *Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark* by William Shakespeare's may include certain hints of a detective story. “Hamlet begins by investigating the murder of a king and ends by killing one, having been directly or indirectly responsible for at least four other deaths in the process” (“Crime Fiction” 192). Hamlet's effort to prove his uncle guilty of murdering the king, as well as the famous play-within-a-play about the murder, comes very close to modern methods of criminal investigation as we know them from detective stories. It is true that the literary tradition with hints of crime fiction combined with Poe's mastery of short story writing helped shape the whole genre significantly.

Tony Magistrale suggests that the first idea to write this sort of story may have come to Poe in 1838 when *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* published a series of articles about the French minister of police Vidocq. Moreover, he mentions the exhibition of an orangutan (ourang-outang) in Philadelphia in 1839 during Poe's stay in the city (Magistrale 106). Magistrale's claim is definitely not far-fetched as the following sentence in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' illustrates: “Vidocq, for example, was a good guesser, and a persevering man” (132).

It is therefore highly probable that these events inspired Poe, a master of the short story at that time, to write this story in his masterful way and shape these sources of inspiration into a short story which has had an immense impact on crime fiction.

3.1 Key elements in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'

'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', being the first short story by Poe to feature the brilliant detective C. Auguste Dupin, introduced many elements that became characteristic of this genre.

3.1.1 Analytical thinking

Poe prefaced this short story with a rather extensive introductory part dealing with the topic of analytical thinking in opposition to mere calculation and ingenuity. It is written as an essay and could stand on its own as the definition of a person that has the right predispositions to eventually become successful in solving crimes.

The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis [...]. Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater, indeed, than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous (120).

Poe chose the games of chess and draughts to illustrate the difference between a calculative or ingenuous mind and the real analysis, but it is the game of whist that serves as the best example of a game that requires analytical thinking to be played professionally, as the text argues. The decisive element, in Poe's view, consists in the quality of observation and knowing what exactly needs to be observed in order to achieve success.

Another inherent aspect of analytical thinking is the need to exercise. "As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*" (118). This part leads us to the conclusion that an analytical thinker must also exercise his mental powers in the same way a sportsman must in order to stay in perfect condition. This becomes the essential driving power of 'The Murders in the

Rue Morgue'. Dupin's primary motivation to investigate the mysterious murders may not be an urgent need to solve the crime and convict the murderer, or being asked to do so. It is likely that it is the very nature of analytical thinking – as described above – what leads Dupin to examine the mysterious case. Therefore, this essayistic introduction anticipates the narrative part which follows right after, as Poe himself admits: “The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced” (121).

3.1.2 The nameless narrator

Since the story is narrated from the first-person perspective, it may lead the reader to false assumptions that it is in fact the author, who enters the story to narrate it. However, there is no evidence of a link between the narrator and Poe in the text. It would therefore be wrong to see the narrator as an impersonation of Poe.

In spite of the fact that it is the first short story in the Dupin series, and is therefore supposed to be introductory, we are given very little information about this person. In fact, all we are told is that it is someone who shares Dupin's interest for books and admires Paris.

It is also important to notice that the text itself offers little, or very vague, evidence to what gender the narrator is. It is a question whether anyone doubts that the narrator is a man, although it could be a subject of gender studies. The overall impression is that it probably is a man, yet textual references to gender are scarce and Dupin mostly addresses the narrator “my friend”. This gender issue is not as problematic for the interpretation of the text as it is for its translation. For his translation into Czech in 1964, Josef Schwarz chose the narrator to be a man, which is probably the right decision in perception of the majority of readers. Another issue connected with translation is the level of formality in dialogues between Dupin and the nameless narrator. Josef Schwarz picked the higher level of formality, as we know it from Czech translations of works by Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and others.

At the very beginning of the narrative part, which follows the aforementioned introduction, we learn how the narrator became acquainted with Dupin in Paris while

searching for the same book. It is probably the only situation in which the narrator says something about himself.

The narrator himself has three main functions in this short story. Firstly, he narrates the events from his own perspective, as he perceives them:

Dupin seemed singularly interested in the progress of this affair – at least so I judged from his manner, for he made no comments. It was only after the announcement that Le Bon had been imprisoned, that he asked me my opinion respecting the murders (132).

This could lead to questioning the narrator's reliability. Words like 'seemed' and 'judged' indeed suggest a certainty level of uncertainty about what is happening, however, there is no real reason to doubt the truthfulness of what he says.

Secondly, he becomes Dupin's companion and assistant in investigation. However, he does not directly help with solving the crime, and this role is not very prominent.

And finally, with the help of the previous two roles, he gives the readers someone with whom they can identify. He asks Dupin the same questions that any reader would ask and is always as astonished by the output of Dupin's mental powers as the reader is. It becomes clear that he does not possess as brilliant a mind as Dupin does, but his remarks can prove useful.

3.1.3 C. Auguste Dupin

In the character of C. Auguste Dupin Poe precisely materialized his idea of what an analytical thinker should be like, as expressed in the introduction. It is not mentioned whether Dupin uses or practices his skills in games draughts or whist, but the narrative proves that he really exercises his skills in everyday situations. As the narrator remarks:

[Dupin] boasted to me, with a low chuckling laugh, that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertion by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge of my own (123).

The fact that he is well aware of them makes him demonstrate them ostentatiously at times. Right in the first dialogue that follows the previous excerpt from this short

story, Dupin astonishes the narrator by tracing back his complete train of thoughts. It becomes clear in this dialogue, that Dupin really is an analytical thinker and not a mere charlatan, as the narrator claims.

There was not a particle of *charlatanerie* about Dupin. 'I will explain,' he said, 'and that you may comprehend it all clearly, we will first retrace the course of your meditations, from the moment in which I spoke to you until that of the *recontre* with the fruiterer in the question. The larger links of the chain run thus – Chantilly, Orion, Dr Nichols, Epicurus, Stereotomy, the street stones, the fruiterer' (124).

Unlike with the narrator, Poe does give us some basic information about Dupin's background, but says very little about his present life.

This young gentleman was of an excellent, indeed of an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes (121).

This can be translated as 'a young gentleman, who had financial trouble which led him to living in seclusion'. For some reason, many film adaptations of stories about Dupin ignore the first part of the excerpt above, however minor detail it may seem, and show us a rather elderly detective who solves crimes. The movie *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* from 1986 tries to stay true to the original story, but still presents an elderly retired detective who is to prove that his daughter's fiancé is not a murderer. It is a question whether our time is somewhat “corrupt” in imagining what a typical detective looks like. We could blame the other stories in detective fiction for this, although some recent films attempt to break this stereotype. A good example of this approach is the BBC's series *Sherlock* broadcast since 2010.

More importantly, by not simply giving away all the information, Dupin provokes the narrator's – and reader's – mind to thinking, revealing step by step what led him to particular conclusions. Peter Thoms in “Poe's Dupin and the power of detection” defends a thesis that Dupin uses his analytical powers to manipulate people.

Dupin's ability to read the city's inhabitants, to occupy their minds and perspectives, reflects not only his brilliance as a detective but also a threat to other's independence.

[...] By luring the sailor to his chamber, locking the door, and arming himself with a pistol, Dupin takes physical possession of the sailor; but by extorting his confession, his secret story, the authorial Dupin also assumes proprietorship of this individual, who now functions as his character (Thoms 138).

This is a most valid and keen observation about Dupin. It may not be evident at first sight, but, after some consideration, it perfectly depicts Dupin's behaviour in the whole series.

Tony Magistrale, on the other hand, sees Dupin's mental powers in more positive terms and comments on Dupin as follows:

Dupin exhibits the sharpest mental faculties – the rational powers that Poe himself called ratiocination – that permit him to stay in control of himself and the situation. The operative word in the detective tale is balance: Dupin employs the attributes of ratiocination to maintain a fixed level of control amid the chaos of a violent and bloody moment (Magistrale 105).

This excerpt shows that the perception of Dupin is complex and should not be narrowed to mere “Dupin is a great detective”. We can see Dupin's mind as a tool, that can be used both for good – to maintain control amid the chaos – and for bad – to manipulate people and possess them.

As well as in the stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and other famous writers, Poe's detective does not seem to be very popular among the police. This is well shown after the Prefect of Police is presented with Dupin's conclusions at the very end of the story: “[The Prefect of Police] was fain to indulge in a sarcasm or two about the propriety of every person minding his own business.” To which Dupin replied: “Let him talk [...] I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle” (153).

3.1.4 The police

This points to another important, yet not very conspicuous, element and that is the police. The role of the police in 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' is clearly given. The police are there to conduct an investigation that inevitably leads to false conclusions. Here the down-to-earth methods of the police are at fault, and it is the swiftness and

rashness of police investigation that raises a suspicion in Dupin's mind and provokes his analytical spirit to examine the case.

Naturally, the reader is then led by the story to sympathize with the great detective instead. There is a hidden manipulation in this attitude to police. It is the detective who is important for the story, not the police. We are led to admire the greatness of Dupin's mind and shake our heads at the superficial failing investigation of the police and forget that this institution has to adhere to all laws and rules and is put under pressure by general public. It is one of the key elements that are necessary to make the brilliance of Dupin's thinking and observations more prominent in this short story. It would be false though to conclude that the police is not important for Dupin at all. He delineates his theories in confrontation with their investigation and his investigation is first of all based on the testimonies that were obtained by the police and subsequently published by the newspaper.

Josef Škvorecký points out that this motive “resulted over years in a romantic scheme of a fight of the great detective on two front-lines – against the criminal and at the same time against the incompetent and biased police” (Poe, *Vraždy v ulici Morgue* 168, translation Oldřich Žižka).

3.1.5 Newspaper

A most important, yet highly questionable, element in this short story. It is the newspaper *Gazette des Tribunaux* that brings the mysterious case to Dupin's attention and provokes his analytical mind. Nevertheless, it is not done without a flaw. There are several problematic features of the newspaper excerpts in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' appearing on pages 126 to 132. The main issue is the depth of information presented in the article about the murders. It is not very likely that any journalist would have access to this sort of details of an ongoing police investigation, moreover, including elicited testimonies of all witnesses. What is also questionable is the importance of the aforementioned testimonies for the text, because they constitute a large part of the text. It seems that Poe wanted to give reader the same amount of information as Dupin got, so that the reader himself could try to investigate on his own even though he is naturally and necessarily bound to fail and wait till the detective reveals the right solution to the crime. Providing the reader

with the same amount of information is a common device used in the detective fiction and shows the author's intention to work with the reader, involve him in the investigation. However, these lengthy testimonies can seem rather irritating for the reader as they simply break the flow of the story and contain too much information to be of much interest until Dupin points out the important points in them.

However, another role of the newspaper becomes clear towards the end of the short story as Dupin places an ad in there to find the Orang-Outan's owner. Thus the newspaper also becomes a tool of Dupin's manipulation as shown above.

3.1.6 The crime and the criminal

It is not surprising that Poe chose a violent crime for his first detective story. Violence is a common feature of his stories. In this case it was a twofold murder. Strangely though, the title suggests that there was a series of murders, whereas there is only one – but double – murder. It is a question whether Poe chose this rather misleading title deliberately – he might have considered the crime two murders – even though both the police and Dupin investigate it as a single crime. Nevertheless, the murder was depicted as a most brutal deed. Madame L'Espanaye's head was nearly cut off with a razor and her corpse was thrown out of the window, whereas her daughter was throttled to death and then pushed up the chimney with extraordinary force.

A murderer is one of the main characters in most stories about crimes, be it before or after Poe. The murderer in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' is by far the most surprising feature of this detective story. Both the reader and the police naturally assume that the murderer must have been a really strong man – to be able to force the body up the chimney – but, first of all, a human being. It was only thanks to Dupin's thinking outside the box and attention to detail that the real murderer was discovered. An animal as the murderer also allows the author to work with features that humans lack. That is why all are puzzled by the incredible strength of the criminal even though it is common in animal realm and characteristic of this particular species.

However, the role of Dupin is twofold here since he does not only have to discover the murderer. He also has to prove Le Bon, the man wrongly imprisoned for the crime, innocent. Le Bon did him a favour once and that becomes another part of Dupin's motivation. This element of a wrong suspect being arrested also became crucial for detective tales that deal with a crime.

Most remarkably, the 'owner' of the Orang-Outan is not punished at all. It is a work of fiction of course, but it is hard to believe that the police would accept the conclusion that the crime was in fact just an unlucky coincidence and the owner did not have a share in it. The Orang-Outan acted in accordance with his natural instincts and imitative nature, but that does not justify the murder(s). If we ponder the similarity of the bars of a prison cell and bars of a zoo, we can conclude that the Orang-Outan was – to some extent – imprisoned for the crime as the following extract suggests: “[The Orang-Outan] was subsequently caught by the owner himself, who obtained for it a large sum at the *Jardin des Plantes* (153)”. As Peter Thoms points out in "Poe's Dupin and the power of detection", the owner not only is not punished, but he even generates profit - as the excerpt shows, he sold the Orang-Outan to a zoo for a large sum.

3.1.7 A locked room

This feature became a traditional device used in many detective stories. The mystery of a locked room is something that provokes the imagination of both the reader and the writer. Corpse(s) found in a room with only one door that was locked from the inside before the crime was discovered - How can this sort of mystery be solved? The variety of solutions throughout literature is astonishing. From suicides that are unlikely, through simple two-key solutions, to complex ones featuring secret passages. In the end, it is the least likely option that turns out to be true, and that is true of this particular short story as well. Witnesses confirmed that the door was locked with the key inside and had to be broken open, the chimneys of all the rooms were too narrow for a human being to pass through and all the windows were fastened from within.

This is the classical setting for a crime in a locked room, since all possible options seem to be impossible, yet we know one of them must have been used.

3.2 Conclusion

Besides being the first detective short story, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' also introduced certain key elements which influenced the whole genre. First of all, a great detective who is capable of analytical thinking which is a predisposition to solving crimes successfully. He has a patient companion who narrates the story, helps with the investigation and serves as a mediator between the detective and the reader throughout the whole story. The detective also draws on the simplistic police investigation, but proves it wrong and comes to his own, and right, conclusions. He does not hesitate to employ the media, namely newspaper, as both a source of information and a tool in his investigation. This tale also proved that a murderer does not necessarily have to be a human and yet remain free of supernatural powers. The superficial police investigation typically leads to the imprisonment of a wrong suspect and the detective has to prove the suspect innocent. Importantly, Poe decided to set the scene of crime into a room locked from the inside, a phenomenon which became a device commonly used throughout the detective fiction as one of the primary sources of mystery. All these helped him to become an important author in the body of detective fiction.

4. The Mystery of Marie Rogêt (1842)

The second short story in the series about Dupin. It was first published in three parts in *Snowden's Ladies Companion* in the November and December 1842 issue and in February 1843 issue and being significantly longer than the previous tale, it should rather be considered a novella, as Magistrale pointed out (110).

Right in the subtitle, Poe makes it clear that it is "A Sequel to 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'" (199) and the text itself includes references to his previous short story.

When in an article entitled *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, I endeavoured, about a year ago, to depict some very remarkable features in the mental character of my friend, the Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin, it did not occur to me that I should ever resume the subject (200).

It is a question whether or not this excerpt is only the narrator's confession that he didn't expect more cases being investigated by Dupin. It might as well be Poe's own confession that he did not expect his first detective short story to be successful and did not – at least at first – intend to continue writing in this genre.

The tale itself is openly based upon the unsolved murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers near New York in 1841. Poe transferred it to Paris and let Dupin investigate it. Therefore he had to translate all the facts to match the setting, that is why the names of all characters as well as places appearing in the tale were adapted to the French setting.

It the longest tale in the trilogy and so the whole plot develops rather slowly compared to the other two tales.

4.1. Key elements

4.1.1 Theory of coincidence

Similarly as in his first detective short story, Poe prefaced 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' with an essayistic introduction. This time it is much shorter and examines the topic of probability and coincidence, as probability – an abstract phenomenon – employs the most exact scientific discipline – mathematics. He admits that details of the events will create “a series of scarcely intelligible *coincidences*”(200). Again he applied his own theory on the story as in the previous case. The very ending of the story draws on this introductory part, even though it is more like Poe's final comment on the theory.

4.1.2 Approach to newspapers

The approach to newspapers is both similar to and different from 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'. Newspaper articles remain an important source of information for Dupin's investigation of the case, but they do not initially bring it to his attention. In fact, in the beginning Dupin and the nameless narrator do not pay attention to newspapers at all. Nevertheless, once he starts examining the case, Dupin's investigation is primarily based on examination of newspaper articles. Considering the intention of journalists – which is mainly to create some sensation, to increase the

sales, and to convince the readers that only their version of the course of events is true – he in fact delineates his theories against their articles.

This story points out an inherent aspect of newspaper, that is the power to manipulate the public. Dupin notices this and shatters their effort in his investigation, he in fact shows that he is immune to their manipulation because of his analytical mind and broad scope of knowledge. That is why the journalists fail to convince him that the body which was found is not Marie, or that Marie was murdered by the same gang that raped another woman.

Remarkably, the use of newspaper articles actually depicts Poe's own writing process here. Dupin studies articles and seeks the important details that help him construct a story of the murder, and Poe, in fact, does exactly the same with the case that served him as a source of inspiration for 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt'. Through the character of Dupin he shows us, how he himself approached the newspaper articles about the murder of Mary Rogers and used them in his writing of this tale.

4.1.3 Dupin's investigation

Importantly, there is a major shift in what brought Dupin to investigating the crime as suggested above. Whereas in the previous story Dupin decided to correct the police investigation after reading articles about their wrong conclusions, in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' he does not start to investigate the case, and does not even know about it until the prefect of the police comes to him to ask for help. Living their reclusive life, Dupin and the narrator ignore the outer world for nearly a month and focus on their own business instead – at least that is what the narrator claims, however improbable it may seem to the reader.

[T]he third week from the discovery of the body had passed [...] before even a rumour of the events which had so agitated the public mind reached the ears of Dupin and myself. Engaged in researches which had absorbed our whole attention, it had been nearly a month since either of us had gone abroad, or received a visitor, or more than glanced at the leading political articles in one of the daily papers (203).

The driving power of this story are the monologues of Dupin with an occasional hint of a dialogue – that mostly occurs when the narrator asks a question. In his speeches,

he explains the narrator his conclusions in a very illustrative way instead of keeping the details to himself and sharing only the result. This thinking aloud eliminates readers' traditional and inevitable question about how he came to such conclusion. It leaves the reader glad that he is told everything, but at the same time it leaves significantly less space for the reader's imagination. This issue is very interesting in relation to other authors of detective stories. Agatha Christie, for instance, uses a clever method of concealing certain details from the reader. This prevents the readers from solving the case on their own but maintains their attention with a certain thrill. That is why Hercule Poirot often keeps so many details and his thoughts to himself – for example the painting by Vermeer in *After the Funeral* and its key role for the case.

In comparison to the previous story, Dupin received another powerful device to help him in investigation and astonishing the narrator and readers. It is a feature much better known to be possessed by other great detectives, famously Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, and that is an immensely broad scope of knowledge. As Tony Magistrale points out, Dupin never leaves his library in this tale, which is a major difference from his active involvement on the crime scene in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (Magistrale 112). We can only assume what researches they had been conducting for the month before prefect G- came to ask for help, but it probably had much to do with studies of books and acquiring knowledge in this way. Nevertheless, Dupin demonstrates his knowledge of various disciplines and presents it as something as natural for him as his analytical mind. Not only he has the knowledge, he in fact gives the narrator lectures on various topics, be it the behaviour of human body in water, or the biological processes in a dead body.

The result of decomposition is the generation of gas, distending the cellular tissues and all the cavities, and giving the puffed appearance which is so horrible. When this distension has so far progressed that the bulk of the corpse is materially increased without a corresponding increase of mass or weight, its specific gravity becomes less than that of the water displaced, and it forthwith makes its appearance at the surface (219).

He does not even try to explain these rather technical passages to the narrator, although they do require either a simplification or at least some sort of translation.

This style in which he demonstrates his knowledge most probably serves to show Dupin as a superhuman character that is capable of absorbing immense amounts of facts.

Remaining ostentatious, he clearly enjoys proving the journalists and police agents wrong in his talks. Surprisingly for both the reader and the observant narrator, Dupin seems to easily tell the important and true facts from the unimportant or invented ideas of the journalists even though the amount of articles he has to process is immense.

A very powerful method which Dupin uses in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' is the method of identification with the murderer. Assuming what the murderer felt while he was murdering Marie and what mental processes were happening in his mind when he had to get rid of the body, Dupin reconstructs the whole series of events in this crime. It shows that apart from good imagination and analytical mind, he also possesses a brilliant knowledge of human psyche.

Poe seems to be very well aware of the possible impact of this story and that is why he added a conclusion that suggests that the authorities should not even try to apply the same approach. 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' is a work of fiction and should not be used as a manual for investigators.

4.1.4 The nameless narrator

The nameless narrator remains the same and he still is still a devoted companion of Dupin. However, in this case, the assisting role of the narrator for Dupin becomes more prominent, although generally much less prominent than the role of Dupin, and he seems to almost disappear completely in some parts of the tale.

This time he participates in the investigation more actively and Dupin even gives him tasks to do. He lets him do the initial research of newspaper articles and later asks him to examine the alibi of Saint-Eustache. However, the articles which the narrator considers important are soon dismissed by Dupin for their unreliability and he decides to conduct a research of his own. Ironically, the narrator's research shows that he is not fully reliable for Dupin, because his approach is not right.

Other than that, the narrator serves Dupin as a sort of audience that has to bear his lecturing, listen to him and wonder, occasionally asking him a question.

4.1.5 The murder

Once again Dupin investigates a violent crime and again there is a young woman brutally murdered. After a proper examination of all evidence and information he shows that there was a sole murderer, not a gang. It also becomes clear that the murder was not planned at all and the murderer himself was horrified by his deed. That is why he does not return to the scene of crime to destroy all evidence of the crime and why he has to improvise when he is getting rid of the corpse. At the same time he is able to act rationally to some extent – when he sends the boat down the river to confuse the police or when he – and also fairly practically – when he is trying to find a way how he could carry the body more easily, eventually he ends up dragging the corpse.

A striking similarity with 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' is the presence of the character of a sailor. While in the first case, the sailor was not the murderer, only the Orang-Outan's owner, who should still have been found guilty somehow, in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' the sailor is the real murderer of Marie. It is a tough question to judge what led Poe to using the character of a sailor in both cases. One explanation could be seen in the nature of the sailor's job. Sailors come and go, and stay away for long periods of time. This makes them good potential criminals who can leave before their crime is discovered.

4.1.6 The reward

A remarkable feature that was not directly present in the previous tale, at least the narrator does not mention whether Dupin received some reward for solving the crime. There are in fact three rewards in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' that deserve to be commented on.

First reward is the reward offered by the police for any information that would lead to solving the crime. Only after a week from the discovery of the corpse, the police offered the first reward – a mere thousand francs. Since this did not help to gain more information, the reward was doubled on the tenth day. Two weeks after

the corpse was found, the prefect increased the reward to twenty thousand to which a committee of citizens added another ten thousand. This slow increase instead of a high initial reward turned out to have been a major mistake on part of the police which led to losing (and wasting) too much precious time as well as some possibly important tracks and evidence.

The second kind of reward is the money offered by the prefect of police to Dupin for solving the crime. This marks a major shift in his attitude to Dupin from 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', where he almost mocked the detective and remarked that he should mind his own business. However, Dupin became renowned after solving the first case and so the prefect had to put up with his qualities, that is why he eventually came for help to Dupin. As a matter of fact, Dupin gladly accepts this reward – this could be because his financial situation is not very good, as stated in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'.

The third kind of reward is related to Dupin himself. Naturally, by successfully solving mysteries he becomes renowned and earns a great deal of respect of both the police and the public. This abstract sort of reward seems to be as important for Dupin as the monetary and the same appears in works of other authors.

4.1.7 Urban setting

As the story is set in Paris, it allows Poe to work with the environment which he knew well. This can be seen when Dupin examines the article about items discovered at the probable scene of crime. The article claims that the items were lying there for three or four weeks. Dupin criticizes the journalist for his limited knowledge of Paris and its surroundings. He makes it clear that it is impossible to find peace in the vicinity of the city during the week and even worse in the weekends and it is thus impossible to believe that the items would remain there so long without somebody noticing them.

In another attack on a newspaper article he points out that it is possible that nobody noticed Marie – and could therefore not remember seeing her – simply because she was not as widely-known as important people who moreover move in a

fairly limited part of the city. To common citizens she would have been a common young woman which they meet in the streets every day.

4.2 Conclusion

Poe began the story with another essayistic introduction, in which he describes the theory of coincidence and probability and employs it in the story. Newspaper articles become even more important in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', even though they do not initially bring the case to his attention this time. Dupin gains much information about the crime from them and filters them through his analytical mind, showing how the media corrupt facts. Knowledge is one of the most important weapons of Poe's detective. This is true of his successors as well. Dupin has knowledge of various disciplines and ostentatiously demonstrates it in the "lectures" he gives to the narrator. His motivation to solve the crime is again related to his analytical mind, however, two more driving powers are present in this story. The police offered a monetary reward for any information that would help them solve the crime and the prefect offers money to Dupin too. By solving the crime, he gains money, but also more prestige and respect. Importantly, Dupin employed a very effective method of identifying oneself with the criminal, which is one of the key means to solving crimes.

5. The Purloined Letter (1844)

As Tony Magistrale points out, it was first published in the annual *The Gift A Christmas, New Year, and Birthday Present, MDCCCXLV* and an abridgement appeared in *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* for November 30, 1844 (116).

It is the third and the last tale in the Dupin series. With some nineteen pages it is also the shortest of the three tales. Again it gives hints to the previous stories as the narrator himself says at the very beginning:

For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed mater for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Roget. (337)

It features major changes both in terms of plot and the structure that certainly deserve to be commented upon.

5.1. Key elements

5.1.1 The crime

After two stories of brutal murders, it came to a major shift in the main theme, that is, in the crime. A purloined letter would seemingly not be the right choice for a thrilling detective tale, had Edgar Allan Poe not used it. Poe was a too good writer to pick this kind of crime without being sure that he can make it into a great short story.

The royal family and their apartments, the Minister and his Hotel, this setting suggests that this case will be something special right from the beginning. A letter purloined among the common citizens could hardly be of the same importance and Poe makes sure that we notice this – the prefect uses a too diplomatic language when he is introducing the case to Dupin. At the same time this allows Poe to work with different issues and criminal motives in this particular setting. Power and influence play an important role here and it is only because of this, that a letter can be worth stealing in this environment.

Another major difference in comparison to the previous two stories is that the perpetrator of the crime is known. This seemingly spoils the basic idea of detective fiction as the usual pattern would be: an unknown perpetrator and a crime to solve versus a brilliant detective mind. However, thanks to the setting and the character of the Minister D–, this becomes a major source of tension and thrill.

As common in detective fiction, the perpetrator eventually makes a mistake that turns out to be fatal. In this particular short story it is the way in which he hides the letter that leads to his loss of the letter and the power it has. From Dupin's perception it seems that the Minister could not hide the letter anywhere else due to his own nature: “I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to simplicity, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice (351).” Another reason why he could not hide it anywhere else is that the Minister is mainly a mathematician, whereas Dupin is both a mathematician and a poet. Being a poet is here an extra quality that gives Dupin a significant advantage over the Minister.

5.1.2 The letter(s)

There are in fact three different letters in this story, each having a different role and different level importance in the plot.

The first one is the letter purloined by the Minister D–, the letter on which the whole story is based. The letter itself is most mysterious and interesting. We do not learn anything about its contents – all we know is that it could serve to discredit the lady from the royal family if misused by a particular person. Its appearance is described in detail, but it does not give many hints to its contents. In relation to the royal lady, it is probably some affair that should be kept secret. Interestingly though, Dupin does not mention whether he read the letter after he obtained it. The reader only sees the prefect, who reads the letter when Dupin gave it to him.

[The prefect] grasped [the letter] in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the cheque (346).

The second letter is the purloined letter masked as an ordinary unimportant letter that is not examined by police. It was so ostentatiously displayed that it did not catch the attention of neither the prefect nor the police, who focused on finding a hidden letter that would match the description and did not think about examining any other letters. As Dupin says, the letter is too different from the purloined one and this fact assures Dupin that this is the letter which he is looking for.

And finally, the third letter is the *fac-simile*, the copy used by Dupin to replace the letter in Minister's card-rack. However, its role is more complex. Indeed it replaces the purloined letter due to its looks and Dupin's skillfulness, but at the same time it is to become the Minister's doom whenever he would attempt to misuse it. And there is also a symbolic act of revenge on part of Dupin in this letter.

[I]t did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank – that would have been insulting. D–, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humouredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue (356).

This shows that Dupin is a witty person and does not forget. It seems that the content of the *fac-simile* is thus a sort of parting shot in this case.

Peter Thoms points out that in their similarity, both Dupin and the Minister steal the letter.

[T]hey both purloin the letter, an action which promises profit and allows us to see more clearly how detection becomes a kind of thievery as the investigator assumes possession of the hidden story and of the characters contained within it (Thoms 142).

This example shows the thin border between a crime and its solution, for the first act of thievery is a crime that is to be punished, and the second one is the solution to the crime and is rewarded in the end. This tension and a rather grey part of detection often remains unnoticed.

5.1.3 Police method

Of course the police have to be wrong again for Dupin to triumph, but of all the stories in the Dupin series, 'The Purloined Letter' is the most remarkable in depicting the police investigation. The story is particularly visual in the descriptions it contains. The prefect describes all the methods and tools they used in their investigation. Thus we can visualize the policemen with needles, microscopes and other devices, closely examining every single bit of the Minister's Hotel and its surroundings.

The cushions we probed with fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops. [...] [W]e examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope (342).

Their image of the Minister's way of thinking stems from their experience with common criminals and people in general and not from the Minister's character as such, as Dupin does not forget to point out. It is not easy to decide whether Poe mocks the police in this, or not. Dupin himself understands the police and points out why they are wrong in a way that cannot be considered mocking. However, also thanks to the visual nature of the description of the police searching the Hotel, it

seems humorous in many parts of the text and can be perceived as a satire – also in relation to the character of the prefect G–.

5.1.4 C. Auguste Dupin

We learn slightly more details about Poe's great detective in this short story. One of the features that became characteristic of many other detectives is smoking. Although Dupin's puffs are not very prominent except when he is talking to the prefect, a fair number of his successors took over this habit – the most famous of them being Sherlock Holmes.

Unlike in the previous tales, we are told the exact address of the flat in which Dupin and the narrator live – No. 33 Rue Dunot, Faubourg Saint-Germain. If we think of the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, they both also live at a given address.

Since there is a royal lady in trouble, it would be reasonable to expect a knightly hero that would rush in to help her and defeat the foe. However, neither Dupin, nor the prefect seem to match this type. Instead of primarily protecting the honour of the lady, only in one place he attempts to be seen as acting chivalrously – when the narrator asks whether Dupin could not seize the letter openly during his first visit:

Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might have never left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned (355).

Here he presents himself as “a partisan of the lady”, even though his behaviour suggests a complete opposite. He does not return the letter to the lady as soon as possible, he rather waits the whole month till the prefect comes to visit him again. If he really were so chivalrous, he would not do wait at all and would either give the letter back to the lady or he would give it to the prefect.

At the same time, he also proves his lust for a theatrical effect. In 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', he deliberately created a situation that shattered his target, the Orang-Outan's owner, completely. In 'The Purloined Letter' he does the same to the prefect. Instead of simply offering him the letter, he first ask him about the police

search for it. When the prefect offers him fifty thousand francs, he purposely stuns him by promptly asking him to fill up a cheque in return for the letter. This shocks the prefect – creates the desired dramatic affect – and shatters him when Dupin produces the letter. A similar level of theatricality is characteristic of Dupin's successors as well.

While Prefect's primary concern is maintaining his prestige and gaining the promised reward, Dupin gets his share of the reward – fifty thousand francs – and in addition also a revenge, to some extent (as mentioned above). It apparently brings Dupin pleasure to – finally – confront himself with a worthy opponent, because the Minister, who easily outsmarts the police, possesses a mind of a fairly similar mental power as Dupin.

Tony Magistrale introduces another interesting claim about a link between the characters of Dupin and the Minister D– in terms of intellect, and he also points out the significance of the letter 'D' in this connection (118). This connection to some extent resembles Arthur Conan Doyle's characters of Sherlock Holmes and his main enemy Professor James Moriarty. This connection, however, is not related only to their mental powers. In fact they both use almost the same way of obtaining the letter, that is swapping it for a completely unimportant letter of their own.

5.1.5 Dupin's Method

One more time, Poe continues the development of Dupin's analytical powers. In contrast to the police, his investigation is primarily based on his knowledge of the Minister D– and the way he thinks. He gives an account of a school-boy whom he encountered. Thus he introduces the method of “the identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent (347)” The police fail at this because they work with the wrong premises and are being too down-to-earth, that is why they are incapable of judging the Minister's qualities properly. Interestingly though, Dupin points out that the method used by the police is the best one of its kind and they even improved it, but at the same time says that it was not appropriate for this particular case and person.

Even though we are not given a theoretical introduction as in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', Dupin makes up for this when he gives the narrator a lecture on both the identification with opponent's mind and the distinction between mathematics and reasoning.

5.2 Conclusion

This short story proved that even a non-violent crime can serve as a matter for a great detective tale, however banal the topic may seem at first. His analytical detective Dupin faced a new kind of opponent this time. The Minister D— who purloined the letter was an almost equal adversary to him, but Dupin's mind prevailed. A worthy opponent became another common feature of detective fiction, a perfect example being the character of Professor Moriarty in Doyle's stories about Sherlock Holmes. 'The Purloined Letter' shows a certain tension between the behaviour and methods used by the perpetrator and the detective. This illustrates that even the great detective cannot always remain purely "white", but is rather a "grey" character who can resort to less noble methods when needed. This is his advantage over the police whose methods have to adhere to laws and are typically insufficient, no matter how sophisticated they try to be in their investigation. Dupin's success helps him get the reward – fifty thousand francs – but at the same time he gets his revenge.

6. The trilogy in relation to works of other authors

A careful examination and filtering out the unnecessary details could turn Dupin's monologues into a step-by-step guidebook to solving a crime properly and successfully, especially when accompanied by Poe's essayistic introductions. One source would be the theoretical introductions he gives, other most valuable sources would be Dupin's methods as such. Had Poe lived longer, he might have written this kind of guide himself. It is clear that Poe stood at the beginning of a new tradition and a whole genre of popular literature. He introduced elements that we, as readers, perceive as something completely natural in the body of detective fiction nowadays.

It is therefore not surprising at all that Poe's detective fiction inspired a great number of authors, his successors in writing detective tales. Some of the immediate

followers include Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, who are universally – and deservedly – perceived as the king and the queen of detective fiction. For some reason, Poe is not as renowned as the royal pair of the detective fiction. This could be for various reasons. As was mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the detective fiction of Poe consists of seven stories at the most. Since Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie were much more productive, they naturally gained more attention and became widely popular – also because there is a higher probability that all of their works will find a reader who will like at least some of them.

We got used, for instance, to reading about the adventures of a pair of investigators – a detective who possesses a genius mind and his companion, a rather clumsy assistant whose fortunate remarks help solve the case. With a mild irony, we can say that these characters traditionally come in pairs – famously Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, or Hercule Poirot and Captain Hastings. It is no wonder that “Watson” is generally used to refer to this sort of companion, because Dupin's own “Watson” is completely nameless and therefore this first “Watson” could not give a name to his kind. Another reason is the fame of Sherlock Holmes compared to Dupin. Again “Sherlock” and not “Dupin” became a term describing – mainly ironically nowadays – a person who “discovered” something that is already known.

Most of the detectives who are similar to Dupin do not get on too well with the police. The relation is not hostile, but the detective always stands above the police. It is sometimes depicted as a sort of competition between the great detective and a representative of the police – be it the police prefect against Dupin, famous Scotland Yard Inspector Japp against Hercule Poirot, or any of the variety of police inspectors against Sherlock Holmes. The detective typically mocks the police representative, especially his down-to-earth methods, and the police representative in return mocks the detective and his conclusions, which seem to be utterly far-fetched in his eyes. Importantly, it is always the detective who wins this competition.

Each of these detectives also has a sort of base from which they eventually set out to investigate, although they sometimes do not leave it at all. C. Auguste Dupin and his friend, the narrator, live at No. 33 Rue Dunot, Faubourg Saint-Germain, Hercule Poirot lives in a flat in Whitehaven Mansions in London, and Sherlock

Holmes, famously, in a house at 221B Baker Street in London. Much as the detectives themselves, these places also become legendary and are places of interest for all fans of detective fiction.

The basic pattern of crimes does not vary much, and, in fact, even cannot. There is always a perpetrator who commits a crime and has to be punished. Also there is always some mistake on his part that leads to his discovery in the end. It is mainly the environment and circumstances that make the difference between each of them. Some cases are even directly transferred from one author to another with a varying amount of changes. This can be witnessed, for example, in Agatha Christie's *The Veiled Lady* which uses 'The Purloined Letter' in much of its plot: young lady being blackmailed over a letter she once wrote, Poirot seeking to get the letter back, and – much like Dupin – he eventually "purloins" the letter back.

Their investigative methods are also typically the same. All of them use their genius mind for solving crimes. That is why most of their work consists in keen observation and study of evidence. For example Dupin's investigation based on newspaper articles in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' is indeed similar to Poirot's investigation from a letter in *Dumb Witness*. In 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' Dupin examines testimonies in newspaper while in *Five Little Pigs* Poirot questions the people involved and reconstructs the whole course of events based on their testimonies. Their investigation stems from a professional use of reason and ignores emotions, except for one part and that is the problem of identification with the perpetrator to understand his character. Depending on the case, they employ other means, tools and tricks to solve the crime and convict the perpetrator.

Why is it that these stories are still popular? Aren't their methods antiquated in the 21st century world? The society certainly developed significantly since then, and new technologies took over an immense part of our lives. A contemporary detective can google up all required information. The police have even more advantages over private detectives nowadays, mainly DNA analysis, sophisticated laboratories and IT experts. This works in favour of the hard-boiled fiction, also because action heroes are more popular nowadays. In spite of all this, patient analytical thinkers still manage to maintain a certain level of popularity.

7. Requiem for the Detective Novel

In relation to Poe's detective fiction and even the detective fiction as a whole, there was another most remarkable author who took over Poe's structure of a detective story as a materialization of a detective theory, but, unlike the other authors, he turned it into a major piece of criticism of detective fiction as a literary genre. It was the Swiss playwright and novelist Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990), who is mainly famous for his plays. His novel *Das Versprechen: Requiem auf den Kriminalroman* (The Pledge: Requiem for the Detective Novel), published in 1958, is very similar to the Dupin series and at the same time very different in its view of a detective tale.

7.1 Plot Overview

It features a frame story of a dialogue between Dürrenmatt's first-person character – who is to lecture about the detective fiction – and Dr. H. (there may be an intended similarity to Poe in terms of character names), a former police chief who tells him the story of the detective Matthäi.

On his last day in the police, Matthäi investigates the murder of a young girl, that seems to be a part of a series of murders. He swore to the girl's mother that he would find the murderer. Soon a suspect is arrested and after a too long interrogation he breaks down and confesses murdering the girl and later commits a suicide in his prison cell. The police closed the case, but Matthäi feels that the real murderer was not caught and so he continues investigating on his own – mainly because of his pledge to the girl's mother. Since the murderer had to befriend the girl and convince her he's a magician, Matthäi starts to decipher her painting of the probable murderer and decides to set a trap. He buys a gas station at the road that links the serial murders and hires a housekeeper who has a daughter of nearly the same looks as the murdered one. One day the girl says she'll be meeting a magician in the forest and Matthäi call his former colleagues to catch the murderer. They wait in the forest day after day, but always only the girl comes. The murderer never arrives and this failure shatters Matthäi. The housekeeper leaves him when she discovers that he used the girl as bait and Matthäi becomes a broken man and alcoholic – also because of the unfulfilled pledge.

Some years later the police chief is asked to come and visit a dying old woman who happens to be the murderer's mother. She reveals to him that her son died in a car accident apparently when he was going to see his next victim. Thus the case is concluded but without any hope for Matthäi, who is ruined already.

7.2 Explanation and relation to Poe

The main idea which Dürrenmatt communicates in this story is that in detective fiction the criminal is always caught and the investigation is therefore very similar to a mathematical equation, no matter how complex it is. More importantly, detective fiction does not work with coincidence. This makes detective fiction too different from the real life for Dürrenmatt. As he shows in Matthäi's story, even a great detective, who would normally be bound to solve any crime, can be completely ruined by a simple twist of fate.

This is important in relation to Poe's detective trilogy. For example in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', Dupin places an ad in the newspaper to lure the Orang-Outan's owner. What if this eventually failed, and the owner would not come to Dupin, because he would be sailing on a ship far away? What if the Minister had the letter in his pocket or really hidden at the time when Dupin came to visit him? Many other examples could illustrate that even the brilliant Dupin might have failed and be forgotten by both the police and the public – just like Matthäi in Dürrenmatt's novel – if Poe had not omitted the role of fate in the stories of his cases.

It is the very nature of detective fiction that forces it to feature a good ending because it is supposed to serve as a sort of “fairy-tale” for the adults. The power of the readers is immense and they would hardly put up with bad endings of the stories. Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is a perfect example here. Originally, Doyle wanted to conclude the whole series about his great detective with the short story 'The Final Problem', where Holmes was to die in the Reichenbach falls after a confrontation with Professor Moriarty. However, due to an immense pressure from the readers, Doyle had to revive him – or rather keep him alive – so that the series could continue. It is thus dangerous to attempt to deprive the readers of their hero or keep the case unsolved.

Dürrenmatt's point is perfectly valid in terms of realistic aspects of detective tales, but is not very likely to be accepted by neither the authors of such stories, nor by the readers. The good endings – that is, the victory of justice and punishment of crime – sought in the detective tales help us put up with the struggles in the real world or at least escape from them to a fictional world where they are solved much to our delight.

8. Final conclusion

This thesis has brought together some key elements which were introduced to detective fiction by Edgar Allan Poe in his detective tales. It presented the Dupin trilogy as a beginning of the modern detective fiction with a variety of elements that became an inherent part of this genre.

Poe great detective and his not-so-brilliant companion, who narrates the stories, became a paragon for detectives in many great stories after Poe. He also brought in other characters that became characteristic of this genre, most famously the police prefect whose methods stand in direct opposition to the methods used by the detective. Poe also proved that detective fiction can work with a large variety of themes. As 'The Purloined Letter' shows a detective tale does not necessarily have to feature only violent crimes to be successful and thrilling.

His detective's main tool – and weapon – is his genius mind capable of analytical thinking and keen observation. Depending on interpretation, he either uses his powers to maintain order in the utter chaos of the crime (as Tony Magistrale suggests), or to manipulate and control people (in Peter Thoms's interpretation) to his liking. He also openly admits that he solves the crimes for a reward which does not necessarily have to be monetary. The character of Dupin is primarily designed to astonish the reader. His analytical mind draws on in-depth knowledge of various disciplines as well as of human psyche – and not only human, as 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' proved. The other characters in Poe's detective tales correspond to his effort to make Dupin's character really prominent.

To give the reader someone with whom they could identify, Poe uses the character of a nameless – and even genderless – narrator to represent the reader to

some extent. His narrator cannot be fully trusted, in spite of his effort to appear objective, because he is a part of the story, Dupin's friend and narrates the events as he perceives them. Throughout the stories, he mainly asks Dupin questions that match the questions everyone would ask in that particular situation, therefore he is, in literary terms, a sort of "Everyman" – a figure with whom all readers can easily identify. The narrator thus becomes a means used by Poe to communicate with the reader.

A crucial element is the character of the detective's opponent. The police representative typically is not a real opponent of the detective, rather a mere rival that is destined to fail in his investigation right from the very beginning. The real opponent is thus the criminal, be it a murderer or a thief. Importantly, it does not have to be a human as Poe proved in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', where the crime was committed by an Orang-Outan. In the first two tales from the Dupin trilogy, Poe also uses the motive of a wrong suspect who is arrested and the detective has to prove that he is innocent. This became a traditional device used in detective tales.

The use of the media in these stories is an evidence of Poe's intention to be as actual as possible. That is why his stories use newspaper in different ways. Depending on situation they serve in his stories either as a means of obtaining information crucial for solving a particular case, or a tool of manipulation, as for example the newspaper ad in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'. Newspaper also serves Poe as a means of relating the tales to the real world, especially in 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' that is openly based on the real case of Mary Rogers as it appeared in newspapers at that time.

Even though Poe stood at the beginning of the modern detective story, he was inevitably overshadowed by his successors. In spite of that, he deserves to be praised for all he brought in to this genre.

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