

Edgar Allan Poe and True Crime: Origins of Two Character Types in Crime Fiction

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Abstract: Known as the inventor of detective fiction and the father of the American short story, Edgar Allan Poe is highly regarded for his contributions to the world of literature. His fascination with crime is very intriguing and he is seen as a significant influence on later fiction, particularly in Horror and the Gothic. Stories like “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” are excellent examples of Poe’s major contribution to the crime genre along with his creation of the “whodunit” detective, which in turn paved the way for future writers to follow the same basic structure in their crime novels and short stories. The “true crime” theme is a main focus for some of his best works. By exploring several of his literary works, we are able to view Edgar Allan Poe’s unique use of crime. We are also able tease-out the true origin of the Poesque confessional character and the distinctively Poesque detective character.

KEYWORDS: “True crime,” Gothic, detective fiction, whodunit, confessional character.

Known as the inventor of detective fiction and the father of the American short story, Edgar Allan Poe is highly regarded for his contributions to the world of literature. His fascination with crime is intriguing and even often looked over because of his association with the typical short stories with which he is credited. Stories like “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” are excellent examples of these popular short stories, along with Poe’s creation of the “whodunit” detective, which in turn paved the way for future writers to follow the same basic structure in their crime novels and short stories. This “true crime” subject is a main focus for some of his best works, which contributed to his career. Through the exploration of several of his short stories, Edgar Allan Poe’s unique use of crime is able to be seen, which in turn paved the way for many respected authors today; as well as crime drama as a whole. We are also able tease out the true origin of the Poesque confessional character and the distinctively Poesque detective character/gifted amateur detective.

Poe is recognized as the father of the American short story, as previously stated, and the inventor of the detective story. He has certainly impacted the world of literature. While artists before him wrote about crime in their works, it is clear among the literary world that Poe seems to have perfected the art of crime stories. In 1841 with the creation of his short story, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, Poe set a new genre of literature on fire. In short stories like “The Mystery of Marie Roget”, “The Purloined Letter”, “The Black Cat”, “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Imp of the Perverse”, Poe continues his crime masterpieces, with the incorporation of his artistic abilities. His framework for the “true crime” story models so many works after him including products from authors such as Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle (Priestman 2013, vii–xi).

In “The Murders in the Morgue,” the detective qualities of Poe’s writing became visible. The qualities of mystery and suspense in Poe’s work also played a large role in this short story along with the detective features, mainly because they provided a new sort of “fresh” outlook on the short story all together. “The Murders in the Morgue” can be interpreted as one of the first short stories to incorporate the detective character. It is mysterious and portrays those evident detective qualities right from the beginning.

Because a friend is accused of murdering Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter, Camille, C. Auguste Dupin, the story’s main character, begins to investigate the case. By noticing a series of clues that the police overlooked because of the violent nature of the crime, Dupin suggests the murderer to be an animal instead of a human as the police believed. With certainty, Dupin seeks out the animal, knowing it must belong to a sailor because of how a ribbon was tied at the crime scene. Sure enough, the sailor comes forward and the animal is found, setting Dupin’s friend free of the charges of murder (Poe 2009, 117).

When Poe wrote “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” the idea of its effect on crime was more than likely not a central focus. This story, however, is where the origin of the Poesque detective/gifted amateur detective began. This detective story can be viewed as one of the first detective stories ever written, which in term gave Poe the nickname. “The Father of the Detective Story.” In this short story, we are introduced to two key elements of the classic detective story. First, the “whodunit” detective is the character who is cunning, likable, and pays close attention to the smallest detail (Ross 2004, 2782). According to Dale Ross, “Monsieur Dupin is the prototype of the gifted amateur detective. Arrogant, at home in the world of books and facts, he triumphs over evil doers whose machinations have stumped the best police minds” (Ross 2004, 2782). Dupin is the classic example of the crime story detective which has carried over from Poe’s short story into many authors’ works:

Not only are there two kinds of human mind according to Dupin, but there also appear to be two kinds of criminal cases: the obvious kind that the police are pretty good at, and the difficult kind that they can’t seem to solve. It’s exactly the *irrationality* of these murders that make Dupin so particularly suited to them (Ross 2004, 2782).

Second, the classic plot line to the crime story is evident from Poe’s work. The story begins with the discovery of a crime. Following the discovery, our lovable and cunning “whodunit” detective visits the crime scene. He discovers the clues that the investigators and police overlooked. The detective interprets the clues and develops an idea of who the real culprit is. Lastly, the detective discovers and meets the culprit face to face. The story line that is outlined and created by Edgar Allan Poe is one that is so familiar with anyone who has read a crime story. It is so hard to believe that this modern day plot outline was created so many years ago.

C. Auguste Dupin makes his appearance in a second work authored by Poe in “The Mystery of Marie Roget”. This particular work of detective fiction makes its readers once again fall in love with the detective character created and perfected by Edgar Allan Poe. Although this particular story is perhaps considered the least successful of the Dupin trilogy, Poe does reveal the genius detective skills once again that are possessed by the leading character. Based upon a real murder that took place in New York City, “The Mystery of Marie Roget” brings out a lot of interesting points for discussion concerning Poe’s development of detective fiction and in particular the development of the leading detective character:

When, in an article entitled, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, I endeavored, 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. This depicting of character constituted my design; and this design was thoroughly fulfilled in the wild train of circumstances brought to instance Dupin's idiosyncrasy. I might have adduced other examples, but I should have proven no more. Late events, however, in their surprising development, have startled me into some further details, which will carry with them the air of extorted confession. Hearing what I have lately heard, it would be indeed strange should I remain silent in regard to what I both heard and saw long ago (Poe 2009, 141).

Here, Poe explains to the reader how his intention was not to revive Dupin as a character. Yet, when the murder of the real Mary Rogers occurred in New York City, he was inspired to develop the character further.

The story line of this story begins with a description of Marie Roget. Readers learn of her occupation, her past, and her current situation. When she goes missing for the second time, her friends and family are alarmed. The unknown narrator then shares some news with the reader:

The atrocity of this murder (for it was at once evident that murder had been committed), the youth and beauty of the victim, and, above all, her previous notoriety, conspired to produce intense excitement in the minds of the sensitive Parisians. I can call to mind no similar occurrence producing so general and intense an effect. For several weeks, in the discussion of this one absorbing theme, even the momentous political topics of the day were forgotten. The Prefect made unusual exertions; and the powers of the whole Parisian police were, of course, tasked to the utmost extent (Poe 2009, 141).

The narrator explains the trendiness of this death. By stating that the powers of the entire Parisian police were being utilized indicates that the mystery of her death was the talk of the town. So many individuals were interested in exactly what occurred and what caused her mysterious death. The newspaper published the accounts of her death after the police "solved" it successfully. What is interesting in this story but also quite uneventful is that Dupin offers a different solution to the crime than that of the police. By merely reading the newspaper article, the genius detective is able to solve the crime that the police thought they had already. There is not plot line available here whereby Dupin gathers evidence, interprets the evidence, and is even called in to assist the police. He offers his solution by merely reading the paper and the accounts that are in it. It is clear to the reader that his accounts and solutions are accurate, putting the work of trained policemen to shame. While this short story may seem boring and uneventful to some readers, it is actually able to stress the genius behind the detective more so than another detective work of Poe's does (Crisman 1995, 215).

It is evident by reading through the two stories thus far that involve Dupin as the detective, that his professionalism is evolving. He is interested in the case involved in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" because a friend of his is accused. His interest evolves into his involvement and then resolution of the murders. In "The Mystery of Marie Roget", Dupin does not insert himself in the investigation. When the police bring the newspaper article to his attention, he offers his opinion of it, solving the crime. It is clear that Dupin's character is evolving and changing and become more professional as the series continues (Crisman 1995, 215).

In 1844, Poe authored the third of a three-story series which featured the fictional detective, C. Auguste Dupin with his work “The Purloined Letter”. This short story exposes the true wit and cunning nature of the detective perhaps more so than the previous works did. In this work of literature, an unknown narrator explains a story where Dupin once again solves what appears to be an unsolvable crime. Dupin is approached by a prefect or leader of the Paris police to assist with a letter that has gone missing from a woman’s bedroom. The prefect, referred to by the narrator as G—, is certain that the person who has stolen the letter is Minister D—. G— requests the assistance of Dupin to find the original copy of this letter. The two masterminds of detection search D—’s hotel from top to bottom, searching behind wallpaper and under carpets. They use tools to help them in their search such as magnifying glasses, leaving no stone unturned. When they come up short, the two part ways. After a month passes, the prefect returns to Dupin, begging for his help in the case again and offers him money in exchange for his services this time. Dupin tells the prefect to give him the money and he will give him the letter. When the prefect writes his check to Dupin, Dupin hands the letter over to them. Knowing it is indeed the original letter, the prefect rushes off to deliver to the victim. Later, the unknown narrator asks Dupin how he had the letter. At this point, Dupin’s gifted solving abilities really shine through to the reader. Dupin explains that the prefect and other police would assume the letter was hidden in a very secretive spot and for that reason, D— actually hid it in plain sight:

But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D—; upon the fact that the document must always have been at hand, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all (Poe 2009, 185).

Dupin found it in plain sight in his hotel room and left something behind so that he could plan an elaborate scheme to confiscate it. The next day, he returned for his left behind item and a gunshot went off. The gunshot was a big distraction for D— which allowed Dupin to switch out the original letter for a fake (Poe 2009, 190). Dupin was able to slip out from the hotel with no suspicion at all from D—:

So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clew. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words — “—Un dessein si funeste, S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste” (Poe 2009, 197).

At the end of “The Purloined Letter,” Dupin leaves the fake letter stating how D— is nothing but a thief.

It is clear that one of Poe’s main goals in this story is to display the unique characteristics of the detective, C. Auguste Dupin. Poe’s writing reveals the persona of this character flawlessly. There are multiple ways in which Poe does this in this particular writing. First, it is interesting to note that Dupin had the letter in his possession shortly after their first search of D—’s hotel. While the prefect thought the search had come up short, Dupin hid his discovery. He held onto the letter for about a month before offering to turn it over to the prefect. Second, the only way Dupin would agree to give it to the prefect is in exchange for money. He was smart enough to understand the bargaining chip he had in his possession. He used it wisely. Third, his elaborate scheme to take the original letter from D—’s hotel room was the work of a mastermind. Quickly thinking on his feet to leave something behind was the first act in his scheme. Second, the use of

the gunshot to distract the thief was absolutely brilliant. Working quickly in the midst of the distraction, Dupin was even able to leave some cunning remarks for the thief in his fake letter he used to replace the original. These obvious acts by Dupin to show how truly intelligent and resourceful he is are what make Poe a master in the detective fiction genre (Kinugawa 2016, 5–11).

Although the Poesque detective character was visible in many of his short stories, the Poesque confessional character was as well. The Poesque confessional character is seen in great deal in short stories like “The Black Cat.” Written in 1843 and told from the perspective of an unknown and unreliable narrator, “The Black Cat” is a story that leaves a lingering sense of suspense. The narrator begins by explaining his sanity and his love for animals. He marries a lovely young lady, sharing his love for all animals with her. Among all of their animals, they take in their favorite pet, a black cat named Pluto. Through bouts of alcoholism and losing his sanity, the narrator begins to lash out on his animals, sparing the life of Pluto. Eventually his alcoholism escalates and his sanity is lost even more. Through these events, he becomes angry with Pluto and hangs him. The next day, his house catches on fire, losing all of his earthly possessions. In the ashes, there remains one wall and a large cat hung from a limb is displayed on the wall, leaving the neighbors and the narrator in astonishment. One night in a fit of drunken rage, the narrator stumbles upon another black cat who looks like Pluto but has a patch of white fur on him where Pluto did not. After some time passes, the white patch of fur on the cat begins to look like gallows, the vessel used to administer a hanging. Angering the narrator, he starts to lash out on the cat with an axe, hitting his wife instead and murdering her. After many different thoughts of how to dispose of her body, the narrator decides to hide her behind a wall in the basement. After doing so, he looks for the cat, but he has gone missing. After a few days, the police show up unexpectedly at this apartment. He shows them around and taps on the wall of the basement where his wife is buried commenting on the solidity of the building. When he does so, there is a loud cry from the wall and the police then discover his wife’s body. On top of her head, sits the black cat with a white patch of fur.

The troubled story of homicide that is told in “The Black Cat” leaves the reader with a grotesque feeling. Equally as grotesque, the murder performed by the narrator seems to have no clear motive. Poe makes it clear, however, that the narrator has self-destructing impulses, a trait that seems to occur more than once among Poe’s characters. Initially, the narrator refers to his own sanity though the tale he is conveying is anything but sane. It is clear that he blames his actions on the alcoholism and some outside force controlling him. However, Poe suggests through his use of language that it is merely the mind of the narrator which causes such heinous events to occur (Stark 2004, 255):

Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the common-place—some intellect, more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects (Poe 2009, 203).

In this quote, Poe uses the narrator to show that his actions are coming from his own mind. The perverseness that is suggested by Poe carries over into the conclusion of the story as well. When the narrator ultimately confesses to the police by tapping on the wall where the body is hidden, the reader again sees the concept of self-destructing impulses. While part of him may not have

meant to confess, another part of clearly meant for it to occur. On some level, the narrator turned himself over to the authorities (Stark 2004, 256).

“The Black Cat” brings out another trait of Poe’s signature works: the confessional character. We see the character of the narrator and how dramatic the confessional character is firsthand. The reader is left wanting to know more about his personality, his motive, and his actions throughout the short story. Poe, however, leaves a lot of these to the imagination of the reader. The question is left to determine if the urge for the confession is there for that confessional character, or if the “I could've gotten away with it” aspect is more vivid. One can even imagine that perhaps the narrator himself never lost his sanity. It was his motive all along to kill his wife. Perhaps, the narrator himself is lying regarding many of the events we read about in the story (Amper 1992, 475). Susan Amper writes regarding “The Black Cat”, “Indeed, it is surely Poe’s best detective story, with the ideal detective story solution: one that is simplicity itself in explaining all the facts, yet so elusive it has taken a century and half to be discovered” (Amper 1992, 475).

In the story of “The Fall of the House of Usher”, readers are introduced to an unknown narrator, similar to that of “The Black Cat”. The narrator, much more reliable than the one from “The Black Cat”, is visiting his old friend Roderick upon Roderick’s request. Being sick and in a fragile state, Roderick desires the company of his friend. The story begins with vivid imagery of the estate of Usher. The reader is given a picture taken from the pages of a clearly gothic style. Pictures of a dreary landscape, haunted home, and spooky scenery are painted clearly by Poe:

...And at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.... I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime (Poe 2009, 171).

This quote suggests the possibility of depression regarding the attitude of the narrator. The use of gloomy, dreary imagery depicts the mindset of the narrator as well. The mention of opium stands out, making it a suggestion that the narrator has possibly used the drug before. This supporting quote shows the initial perspective from the narrator.

Upon visiting with Roderick, our narrator tries to fill his days with happier feelings. He discovers that Roderick’s sister, Madeline, is sick and that doctors are not sure exactly what ails her. There is clearly a great deal of care, concern, and love between Roderick and his sister. Not long after this conversation is held between Roderick and the narrator, Madeline dies and Roderick wants to bury her in the tombs under the house. The narrator assists Roderick with the task during which time he discovers that Roderick and Madeline are in fact twins. Strange things begin to happen at the house and Roderick fears that he has buried Madeline alive. This does

indeed turn out to be true and Madeline comes to Roderick's room after clawing her way out of the tomb. She does die and collapses onto Roderick who also dies of fear from the situation. The narrator flees as the house collapses behind him:

While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "House of Usher" (Poe 2009, 184).

Through this tale of a dying dynasty, Poe brings in all the horror and suspense that he typically brings in his works of literature. Like in the story "The Black Cat," we see the confessional character in "The Fall of the House of Usher". Roderick confesses his fears of burying his sister Madeline alive and ultimately dies from those fears when he realizes they are true (Thompson 2018, 255). Poe does bring in a more in this story than in the others discussed: the love between Madeline and Roderick. The love between these two characters is obviously incest. Even though the love between them is strong, the circumstances of that love bring in those distinct, creepy Poe characteristics used in his short stories. At the conclusion of the story, they die at the exact same moment together, as if in the womb. This moment is symbolic of the relationship that existed between Roderick and Madeline (Thompson 2018, 267). This short story is one of the origins for the Poesque confessional character. Although a confession to a crime is not directly blurted out, Roderick confesses his worries and terrors regarding Madeline and even himself. This confessional element is evident throughout this story and is seen in many of Poe's following works.

A main component in "The Fall of the House of Usher" relating to "true crime" is the idea of Madeline being buried alive. There is even an evil atmosphere portrayed; especially of the description of the house. Poe was one of the first authors to write about this type of morbid and grotesque event. Written in 1839, "The Fall of the House of Usher" was one of the most important stories written regarding this particular concept. Poe was one of the first to write about such a horrific event (Cook 2012, 3).

Another interesting component of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is the mysterious attitude of the narrator. As he sees the house for the first time, as previously discussed, it seems as if the narrator falls into some sort of depression and is even overwhelmed by the sight of it. The details the narrator puts into his depiction of the house and his experiences in all make the question of his sanity appear. It almost seems as if maybe the narrator could be the most insane out of everyone. These characteristics the narrator depicts shows first-hand the deranged attitude he had throughout the story.

Although Poe's stories, characters, and themes relate to one another through dark and creepy imagery and crime, they relate in an aristocratic manner as well. "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue's" main character Auguste Dupin relate through an aristocratic standpoint. In "The Fall of the House of Usher," it is known that Roderick and Madeline come from a very wealthy and noble family; however a turn of events change this for them. This is also the case for Dupin. He was born into a wealthy family but a turn of events

changed this for him as well. This is an important fact in my opinion, mainly because Poe's works and characters all connected in some type of fascinating way; even if that way was simple.

Written in 1845, "The Imp of the Perverse" is the perfect story of self-sabotage. Beginning as an essay, the story itself is a bit delayed. The reader questions why the expose at the beginning is even present. Once the plot actually begins, the reader becomes interested and enthralled in what Poe's story has to offer. The unknown narrator boasts of committing the perfect murder. In a tiny apartment, the narrator poisons someone with a candle. There is no trace, no clue, and no evidence left behind. The narrator inherits money from the deceased. He boasts of how great it is carry out this plan with success. Then, he confesses, revealing his terrible plan. He writes to us as he sits in prison, headed to be hanged. Upon reading this portion, the beginning essay now makes sense for the reader (Poe 2009, 211).

The title uses the word "Imp" which is a nickname for a small demon signifies the mind of the narrator, telling him to confess to the murder even though it's the "wrong" thing to do. The word "perverse" in the title signifies the wrongdoing of the narrator. Poe implies through his writing that the narrator could have gotten away with the perfect murder had he not turned himself in and confessed because of the voice in his head telling him to do so (Brown 1994, 197):

Through its promptings we act without comprehensible object; or, if this shall be understood as a contradiction in terms, we may so far modify the proposition as to say, that through its promptings we act, for the reason that we should not. In theory, no reason can be more unreasonable; but, in fact, there is none more strong. With certain minds, under certain conditions it becomes absolutely irresistible. I am not more certain that I breathe, than that the assurance of the wrong or error of any action is often the one unconquerable force which impels us, and alone impels us to its prosecution" (Poe 2009, 211).

Poe implies that the wrong outcome of the narrator landing in prison and being hanged to death was inevitable because of himself. Poe writes the short story of self-sabotage. The narrator has essentially caused three deaths: the murder he discusses, his own hanging, and death of his writing. In this "tale of a telling" Poe makes the reader question the murderer's actions and analyzes the human psyche in a way that no other author has done before (Brown 1994, 198).

This work, "The Imp of the Perverse," shows just how remarkable human nature is. Sometimes, when the opportunity arises to commit a crime or even just a small wrongdoing it is often hard not to do; even though it is wrong. This comes from the natural urge to do those wrong things, or even take those risky chances. This also connects with Poe's works. In "The Fall of the House of Usher," the incestuous relationship between Roderick and Madeline is obviously wrong, but that urge for that relationship was present. According to Chris Cairney, It seems likely, given the development of the two character types in Poe's later works, that the confessional character and detective character are both "incubated if not born outright" in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (Cairney 2018). This statement also supports the two short stories correlation. This can also relate to "The Black Cat" in the manor of sanity. It is often easy to feel that urge to just "snap" because of stress or other contributing factors. This "crazy" or "can't help it" feeling is often viewed to be a part of human nature. Poe emphasizes this through examples with his "true

crime” short stories. Through these examples, the essence of human nature is presented and able to be viewed in a dramatic standpoint.

Poe dubbed his works as tales of “ratiocination”. Though this term never caught on in our literary world, his use of it was accurate. Now termed mysteries, we can continue to see his influence among its development. Works since 1831 have been influenced particularly by the Poesque confessional character as from “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “the whodunit detective as seen in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and the classic story line read in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” We can see his influence in the works of many authors including but certainly not limited to Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle (Priestman 2013, 2).

In Agatha Christie’s work, the “whodunit” detective takes the role of Hercule Poirot. This character parallels with Dupin from “Murders in the Rue Morgue” (Priestman 2013, 21). We see similar themes unfold in her numerous works including the popular novel “Murder on the Orient Express”. One difference among these storylines is how the detective becomes involved. Poirot in Christie’s work is well known and is called in to investigate where as Dupin inserts himself in the investigation. After this difference however, the themes and overall “scheme,” per say remain almost identical. Poirot investigates the scene. Poirot presents a more plausible solution. Poirot confronts the perpetrators. Written almost 100 years after Poe’s creation of “Murders in the Rue Morgue”, it is uncanny how the story lines are so similar (Christie 2011).

In the work of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, readers are introduced to perhaps the most famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. Written in 1891, fifty years after “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” the parallels that exist between Sherlock Holmes and Dupin are obvious:

Dupin, in solving this his first crime, sets up a distinct methodology and philosophy of crime detection which became famous and is still used today in crime fiction. In fact, most of the principles of Dupin's method were lifted outright by Conan Doyle and immortalized in his creation of Sherlock Holmes (Eco and Seobeck 1988, 193).

Conan Doyle authored 56 short stories about the clever Sherlock Holmes. His stories seem to follow the same plot line as that of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.”

With stating all of this, each of Poe’s works seem to relate in some sort of style or fashion; specifically, the ones I have previously discussed. These works truly portray the elements of “true crime” and tease out the origin of the Poesque detective, seen in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Mystery of Marie Roget”, and “The Purloined Letter” and the origin of the Poesque confessional character, seen in “The Fall of the House of Usher”. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Black Cat”, and “The Fall of the House of Usher”, each have those “true crime” elements as well as the human nature elements depicted in Poe’s work; “The Imp of the Perverse”. Each of these works relate in the sense of the depiction of detective and confessional characters, which in turn provide such a “wow factor” when reading and discovering the similarities. Poe’s ability to write “true crime” short stories and relate them to one another using different elements, and also relate different characters to others, is truly remarkable and a reason as to why he is remembered as such a unique writer.

Most readers do not associate Poe with the “invention” of the detective story or realize his contribution to the detective genre that we still see today. He as a writer created so much, short stories, etc., that is of utmost importance in the field of detective fiction. He also created a great deal in the field of “true crime” as well. He created the template for future writers to follow in regards to plotline and the classic “whodunit” detective. Without Poe and his influential works, writers today might not have had such influence to begin their own creations. He has inspired many authors and the world of literature has been changed through his unique use of crime and detective fiction.

Edgar Allan Poe said, “Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing, doubting, and dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.” Poe was a mysterious man to say the least. But, from his works, we can learn more about him. It is more than likely true that Poe never knew the impact he would make on the literary world. The reality of what his works accomplished was probably more than he could have dreamed to accomplish. His creation and the evolution of the “true crime” story is truly remarkable. His influence still affects novelists today. His influence continues to live on.

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