



Comprehending the Genius Edgar Allan Poe as the Father of Detective Fiction

Kevin Joel C^{1*}, Dr. M. John Suganya²

Department of English

^{1*,2} PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.

^{1*} ckj230500@gmail.com

² suganyajohn@gmail.com +91 9994924381

Abstract:

This paper tries to trace the origin and the establishment of the genre; Detective fiction with a complete focus on the author Edgar Allan Poe. This paper will also focus on how Edgar Allan Poe pioneered the genre of detective fiction and the major reasons for his success. A detailed analysis of the writing style, the plot structure and other paradigm of Poe will be explored. Every detail pertaining to the construction of the crime, the aftermath of crime and the problem solving techniques will be dissected and explained. Poe's emotional and psychological influence of pessimism will be observed to understand how it has moved the audience and has impacted them with the construction of the mood and the setting of the play. Today's detective fiction has undergone various seasoning through different trends and time period but what is coherent about all the detective fiction in history is its core resemblance to Poe's techniques, proving how Poe has established the basic structure of detective literature. This paper will analyze some of the major works that resemble Poe's structure and pattern to prove Poe as the pioneer and the father of Detective Fiction.

Keywords:

Paradigm, Pioneer, Crime, Pessimism, Psychology.

Introduction:

The genre of detective fiction is one of the most popular and widely read genre of literature, and to learn about Edgar Allan Poe's impeccable abilities to popularize this fantastic genre has served me as the inspiration to take this topic for the Research Methodology project. Edgar Allen Poe was born on January 19, 1809, and died on October 7, 1849. Poe was educated in Scotland where he was given classical knowledge. He continued his higher studies in the University of Virginia. His adult life was filled with pain and poverty which is reflected in his core theme of Pessimism. Every single word in the novel has been constructed with great attention to detail and vision to make the art of solving puzzle a great treat for the readers. Poe's deduction expertise is learnt only when we learn his psychoanalytic approach in deducing clues from thin air, making his perspectives of obvious matters as unique from general perspectives. At the end of this article, we would also understand why Poe's works must be considered as classical works.

The core intention of this article is to analyze the pattern and the plot construction of detective fiction and to compare it with the works of Poe to understand how Poe's works have been serving as dictionary to all the aspiring writer in the genre of detective fiction. The author is not only a great novelist but also the great poet who gave us the poem *The Raven*. Some of his most notable works are *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Black Cat*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, etc. *The Gold Bug*, *The Murders at the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, and *The Purloined Letter* are the short stories shortlisted to explore the detective world of Poe. The stated works

are of high professionalism when dealing with crime solving, staging of the crime and innovation in the sphere of detection and clues.

Poe's works: Encyclopedias for detective fiction

The Murders in Rue Morgue is the short story that has been widely accepted as the first exclusive detective story. Being the earliest of its kind Poe was no amateur in his craft, he devised the process of analysis, detection and acumen of the most plausible methods. Writers even today learn and acquire knowledge from the treasure that Poe has left behind to create their own legacy in the genre of detective fiction. The most noted qualities of Poe that are found predominantly in contemporary and other famous works are as follows:

1. Second person narrative: Poe has used the second person narrative technique because it gives the reader the complete account of what the activities of the detective is, the second person who is in most of the case an assistant of the detective is also the narrator of the story is made the eye and the personal imagination of the reader. Poe constructs the narrator or the assistant partially perplexed till the revelation of the detection, this technique helps the writer to keep his reader curious and interested to learn the solving of the crime in high adrenaline. This is always in case of Arthur Cannon Doyle where Sherlock's assistant is kept in shadows along with the reader to keep guessing the murderer just like the unanimous narrator in the story of *The Gold Bug*.

2. Twist: A detective writer is set to be accomplished if he can defeat the prediction abilities of the reader before the engineer of the crime and his methods are revealed. To win this battle of quest between the writer and the reader, the writer often employs the technique of twist like how Poe in his masterpiece introduces the Ourang Outang as the murderer in the *The murders at the Rue Morgue* taking the readers completely by surprise. This has been one of the commandments of detective fiction famously laid by Poe, since then it has been the "cherry on top" for every detective fiction.

3. Pessimism: Pessimism is the most famous mood setting of Poe which brought him wide success, Poe has not only attributed the pessimistic setting only to his detective genre but to his most of the works hence making Poe the ambassador of Pessimistic works. In popular culture Director Cristopher Nolan admitted that he drew inspiration from Poe's works to balance the character of Batman with Pessimism. Poe had broken the convention of the tragic hero remaining in the losing side and make a character that could be successful in life and still be pessimistic. The character of Sherlock Holmes is also woven loosely around pessimism, except he falls in love, a very unlike characteristic of Poe.

4. Wit and humor: Despite all of Poe's works being highly pessimistic, dull, dark and melancholic, Poe never misses opportunity to impress his reader by the humor sense of the detective, be it Auguste Dupin or William Legrand all of Poe's detective are rich in humor, which has been loyally mimicked into Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Pirot and Jane Marple. The short story of *The Black cat* is the epitome of humor in which the narrator loses to cover his trials only due to his excessive staging of innocence to the police.

5. Coincidence vs the theory of Probability: One another golden rule of Edgar Allen Poe is that nothing should be accounted for coincidence. Every detail pertaining to the scene of crime has something to engineer with the construction of the crime. Poe is known for his artistry to construct a plot with intricate amount of details. He deliberately portrays certain salient details with trivial depictions so that the readers don't take notice of it, but the detective observes every detail closely, and upon this skill the detective solves the whole crime. This is the Golden rule to abide for every detective because this is a vital in depiction of the mental characterization of the detective, this technique has been faithfully mimicked in the stories Sherlock Holmes

6. Ciphers: Ciphers are a very ancient technique of communicating in concealment. Poe has Ciphers in *The Gold Bug* to construct the mystery of the plot regarding the location of the treasure, with this technique Poe laid the platform for the adventure genre of treasure quest and inspired writers for ages.

Snapshots of the short stories.

The Murders in the Rue Morgue being the first ever properly acknowledged detective fiction, introduces the character of Dupin and his friend who is unanimous and the narrator of the story. This story is a perfect example where we can see Poe introducing his second person narrative technique making the narrator as the reader's eye. The murder takes place in a locale named Rue Morgue. Mademoiselle Camille L'Españaye lives in her double storey residence a quite isolated life with her daughter Madame L'Españaye. One early morning the neighbors of the residence hear hysteric screams and rush to the house only to find both the mother and daughter murdered. The brutality is such that the daughter was strangled to death and shoved up into a chimney with the head down while the mother suffered from deep slits in throat and tossed down the window, the cuts were so deep that when the body was moved the neck rolled away from the body. The Parisian police were baffled and stood at a dead end with no clue leading to the assassin as the evidence stated every entry including the windows were fastened from inside except for the only clue was that the people rushing inside the house at the sound of the screams heard a French man and weird other foreign language sound, Dupin takes special interest to solve the mystery at the permission of MR.G the prefecture of the Parisian police force, later after collecting the evidence of the distance of the windows to the ground, the enormous power to shove the body into chimney, to slaughter a neck with a mere razor and the mysterious grey hair, Dupin is convinced that it's an animal that has performed the murder and further zeros down to the mammal of Ourang Outang with the help of the grey hair found at the scene of the occurrence. Later through an advertisement in the newspaper which Dupin posts declaring a Ourang Outang has been found and owners are requested to approach for recovery, Dupin draws the owner of the mammal falling comfortably into the trap laid out by himself. The owner of the mammal who is also a sailor is forced by Dupin to reveal the actual incidents pertaining to the mammal and the murder. Dupin learns that, late in night that the mammal escapes from its cage with the sailor's razor and accidentally enters the residence of the mother and the daughter. Soon havoc breaks in the house as the mother and daughter start to cry out in terror the Ourang Outang kills the couple in panic and escapes through the window in a hustle. The sheer power of the mammal in handling the windows, fastens the bolts from within on it's with pressure from the banging of the shutters. The element of twist is cleverly portrayed by Poe in this story when he reveals that the shutters has been fastened not from inside but, technically outside.

Similarly, Dupin and his friend who is the unanimous narrator is featured in the second the second installment, known as the *Mystery of Marie Roget*. Marie Roget, a young and attractive woman lives with her widowed mother in Paris, Marie also is employed in a perfumery run by Mr. Le Blanc. It is also understood Marie Roget is betrothed to St.Eustache. One day, she suddenly disappears and returns two days later mysteriously. A week later her body is seen floating in the river Siene which flows through the city of Paris. The police take control of the body to further the investigation. After analyzing the event the Police again are trapped in a tangled knot as they find it difficult to uncover the truth. Mr. G the Prefecture of the Parisian police seeks help from the famous Dupin to solve the mystery and find the assassin. Dupin understands the interest of the press to cover this event to make the maximum profit only to mislead the readers, hence Dupin goes on to read all article and tries to deduce what was it that never happened. Dupin goes on to find the theory of bodies floating after violence to that of the time Marie has been missing. Dupin does not come with perfect conclusion but tries to ascertain his supposition as the most accurate probability. According to Dupin's theory it was a sailor with whom Marie mysteriously disappeared for two days, later he also detects that it was this sailor who murdered Marie and disposed her body into the Siene. Poe concludes that the sailor cleverly plants fake evidence along the river banks to mislead the police investigation. The story culminates into an open ending for the readers to use their own imagination. This story has been written in the mood of Pessimism. The writer makes this mood very vivid through his dull description, constant mention of unfortunate events which provoke a sense of sorrow in the reader.

The Purloined letter is the final short story featuring Dupin and his friend who is also the unanimous narrator. This story is not the kind of brutal graphic representation of the previous two stories, but, a deep dive into the brains of Dupin who investigates a simple case of a stolen classified letter from the Royal Apartments. As the Parisian police are not able to trace the letter, Mr. G approaches Dupin to trace the letter. The Parisian police actually know who stole the letter, it is Minister D, an important government official. The Police are still unable to trace the letter despite conducting a thorough search in the suspect's residence. According to Mr. G the

letter contains important information that could harm a very powerful individual. It was a woman in the Royal Apartment who read the letter first. While the woman was reading the letter, the concerned person in the letter arrived at the spot, to avoid suspicion the woman left the letter on a nearby table and left the place. Mr. D who happened to pass the place took cognizant of the letter and understood the enormous power it held over the individual, in no time he made a similar letter with some other content and replaced it and obtained the original letter. Dupin knowing the perspectives of the Parisian police took different angles in his search, he learns Mr. D's daily routine and activities to analyze where he would confide the letter if he was in Mr. D's shoes, he later locates the letter folded among the visiting cards hung upon a wall in Mr. D's residence. Dupin submits his discovery to Mr. G after a month when the bounty was increased twice. While everyone assumes that the letter being found in a hanger folded between cards is a pure coincidence. Poe proves that his discovery is completely based on methods differentiating probability with coincidence by analyzing the complete routine and activities of MR. D. Poe's technique of not accounting anything to incidence is very much used when we understand his deduction technique used in this story.

The story of *The Gold Bug* is again narrated by our unanimous narrator who introduces MR. William Legrand as the protagonist of the story. Legrand comes from a well to do aristocratic family but lost fortune due to successive unfortunate events, he then later relocates to the Sullivan Islands, South Carolina with his slave Jupiter. Upon the arrival at the Sullivan Islands the narrator and Legrand build a bond of good friendship. One such day, Legrand with his slave Jupiter discovers a gold Scarab a species of the beetle. When the narrator turns up to the residence of Legrand they both converse about the Scarab, but is unable to show it to his friend as he had lent the species for a night to a colonel who also resides in the Island. So Legrand draws a parchment from his pocket to draw the Scarab and shows it to his friend (narrator), the narrator comments that the drawing resembles to a human skull.

A month later Jupiter arrives at the narrator's doorstep carrying a message from Legrand to immediately attend him, Jupiter also describes that his master has been sick and acting crazy since the advent of the beetle. The narrator immediately rushes to his friend's house and finds that Legrand is very aghast but not medically ill as he expected. The narrator wants Legrand to go to bed but Legrand states that he and his slave are up to an expedition and also urges the narrator to join them. After a long stride they reach a huge Tulip tree, Legrand commands Jupiter to climb the tree till the seventh limb and crawl out to its end with the Scarab fastened to Jupiter through a string, Jupiter executes the order and comes across a skull, upon enlightening the scene to his master below, Legrand commands Jupiter to install the beetle to the left eye socket of the skull and to lower it down through a peg. Upon the peg reaching the ground Legrand does some calculation on the place of contact of skull to the ground and start digging the specific spot, after hours of exertion their commitment seemed futile and they give up, Legrand roars at Jupiter to show him his left eye but Jupiter points his right eye, understanding the error Legrand recalculates and starts digging yards away from the latter spot, they soon uncover immense treasure with some human bones and empties it into Legrand's residence in two shifts. The narrator who is awestruck at the unfurling of events before him seeks proper explanation from Legrand to comprehend the situation. Legrand begins that he was first insinuated when the narrator commented the drawing upon the as a skull when he gave it to him. Legrand who is already meditating the narrators comment in connection with some mysterious surrounding the island is further enlightened at learning that the parchment reveals hidden messages when exposed to heat. He understands this mechanism when the narrator accidentally brings the parchment close to the hearth set ablaze by Jupiter to beat the cold. Legrand suspects that the parchment holds more information and performs a more careful heating of the parchment which reveals a symbol of a goat, a skull and a set of well-organized lines of symbols. Legrand understands that the skull represents the fraternity of piracy and the goat represents the notorious pirate; Captain William Kidman. Legrand also narrates how comprehended the tales of the buried treasure of Capt. Kidman in the Sullivan Islands with that of the parchment and the beetle and concludes that the organized set of symbols are nothing but a cipher that could reveal the location of the pirate treasure of Capt. William Kidman. Upon deciphering the Cipher Legrand learns he must locate a decisive location of the Devils seat in the Bishops hostel, doing a little groundwork he locates the Devils seat which is actually in the Bishops hostel. On situating himself in the devils seat; a small rock, he finds the large Tulip tree which is also mentioned in the cipher and it was upon this tree that Jupiter was commissioned to climb up to the seventh limb and locate the skull. On performing some math according to the cipher Legrand locates the precise location where he has to use the shovel. Legrand also learns that the human bones were actually the bones of men who helped

Capt. Kidman burry the treasure, Legrand kills them and buries them with the treasure to keep the location of the treasure only to himself. Poe's technique in crafting staunch humor in the conversations between Legrand and Jupiter which makes even the most intense moments laughable proves his prowess in wit and humor. He has further proved his mastery by knitting strong humor with such an intense storyline

Conclusion:

This article focusses on the complete analysis of Edgar Allen Poe in respect to his contribution to the genre of detective fiction. Hence this article will prove Edgar Allen Poe as the father of the Detective by examining other major and contemporary detective fictional works with Poe's work to justify how Poe has been and will be the cornerstone of the genre of detective fiction. The paper has exclusive techniques of Poe to construct the complex plot of detective fiction and his expertise in the art of revealing things in a grand manner.

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