

= The Murders in the Rue Morgue =

" The Murders in the Rue Morgue " is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe published in Graham 's Magazine in 1841 . It has been recognized as the first modern detective story ; Poe referred to it as one of his " tales of ratiocination " . Two works that share some similarities predate Poe 's stories , including Das Fräulein von Scuderi (1819) by E. T. A. Hoffmann and Zadig (1747) by Voltaire .

C. Auguste Dupin is a man in Paris who solves the mystery of the brutal murder of two women . Numerous witnesses heard a suspect , though no one agrees on what language was spoken . At the murder scene , Dupin finds a hair that does not appear to be human .

As the first fictional detective , Poe 's Dupin displays many traits which became literary conventions in subsequent fictional detectives , including Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot . Many later characters , for example , follow Poe 's model of the brilliant detective , his personal friend who serves as narrator , and the final revelation being presented before the reasoning that leads up to it . Dupin himself reappears in " The Mystery of Marie Rogêt " and " The Purloined Letter " .

= = Plot summary = =

The story surrounds the baffling double murder of Madame L 'Espanaye and her daughter at their home in the Rue Morgue , a fictional street in Paris . According to newspaper accounts , the mother was found in a yard behind the house , with multiple broken bones and her throat so deeply cut that her head fell off when the body was moved . The daughter was found strangled to death and stuffed upside down into a chimney . The murders occurred in a fourth @-@ floor room that was locked from the inside ; on the floor were found a bloody straight razor , several bloody tufts of gray hair , and two bags of gold coins . Several witnesses reported hearing two voices at the time of the murder , one male and French , but disagreed on the language spoken by the other . The speech was unclear , and every witness admits that he does not know the language he claims to have heard .

Paris natives Dupin and his friend , the unnamed narrator of the story , read these newspaper accounts with interest . The two live in seclusion and allow no visitors . They have cut off contact with " former associates " and venture outside only at night . " We existed within ourselves alone " , the narrator explains . When a bank clerk named Adolphe Le Bon is arrested even though no evidence exists pointing to his guilt , Dupin becomes intrigued and remembers a service that Le Bon once performed for him . He decides to offer his assistance to " G ? " , the prefect of police .

Because none of the witnesses can agree on the language the murderer spoke , Dupin concludes they were not hearing a human voice at all . He and the narrator examine the house thoroughly ; the following day , Dupin dismisses the idea of both Le Bon 's guilt and a robbery motive , citing the fact that the gold was not taken from the room . He formulates a method by which the murderer could have entered the room and killed both women , involving an agile climb up a lightning rod and a leap to a set of open window shutters . Showing an unusual tuft of hair he recovered from the scene , and demonstrating the impossibility of the daughter being strangled by a human hand , Dupin concludes that an " Ourang @-@ Outang " (orangutan) killed the women . He has placed an advertisement in the local newspaper asking if anyone has lost such an animal , and a sailor soon arrives looking for it .

The sailor offers to pay a reward , but Dupin is interested only in learning the circumstances behind the two murders . The sailor explains that he captured the orangutan while in Borneo and brought it back to Paris , but had trouble keeping it under control . When he saw the orangutan attempting to shave its face with his straight razor , imitating his morning grooming , it fled into the streets and reached the Rue Morgue , where it climbed up and into the house . The orangutan seized the mother by the hair and was waving the razor , imitating a barber ; when she screamed in fear , it flew into a rage , ripped her hair out , slashed her throat , and strangled the daughter . The sailor climbed up the lightning rod in an attempt to catch the animal , and the two voices heard by witnesses belonged to it and to him . Fearing punishment by its master , the orangutan threw the mother 's body out the window and stuffed the daughter into the chimney before fleeing .

The sailor sells the orangutan , Le Bon is released from custody , and the prefect of police mentions that people should mind their own business once Dupin tells him the story . Dupin comments to the narrator that G ? is " somewhat too cunning to be profound " , but admires his ability " de nier ce qui est , et d 'expliquer ce qui n 'est pas " (a quote from Julie , or the New Heloise by Jean @-@ Jacques Rousseau : " to deny that which is , and explore that which is not ") .

= = Themes and analysis = =

In a letter to friend Dr. Joseph Snodgrass , Poe said of " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " , " its theme was the exercise of ingenuity in detecting a murderer . " Dupin is not a professional detective ; he decides to investigate the murders in the Rue Morgue for his personal amusement . He also has a desire for truth and to prove a falsely accused man innocent . His interests are not financial and he even declines a monetary reward from the owner of the orangutan . The revelation of the actual murderer removes the crime , as neither the orangutan nor its owner can be held responsible . Later detective stories would have set up M. Le Bon , the suspect who is arrested , as appearing guilty as a red herring , though Poe chose not to .

Poe wrote " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " at a time when crime was at the forefront in people 's minds due to urban development . London had recently established its first professional police force and American cities were beginning to focus on scientific police work as newspapers reported murders and criminal trials . " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " continues an urban theme that was used several times in Poe 's fiction , in particular " The Man of the Crowd " , likely inspired by Poe 's time living in Philadelphia .

The tale has an underlying metaphor for the battle of brains vs. brawn . Physical strength , depicted as the orangutan as well as its owner , stand for violence : the orangutan is a murderer , while its owner admits he has abused the animal with a whip . The analyst 's brainpower overcomes their violence . The story also contains Poe 's often @-@ used theme of the death of a beautiful woman , which he called the " most poetical topic in the world " .

= = Dupin 's method = = =

Poe defines Dupin 's method , ratiocination , using the example of a card player : " the extent of information obtained ; lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation . " Poe then provides a narrative example where Dupin explains how he knew the narrator was thinking about the actor Chantilly . Dupin then applies his method to the solving of this crime .

Dupin 's method emphasizes the importance of reading and the written word . The newspaper accounts pique his curiosity ; he learns about orangutans from a written account by " Cuvier " ? likely Georges Cuvier , the French zoologist . This method also engages the reader , who follows along by reading the clues himself . Poe also emphasizes the power of the spoken word . When Dupin asks the sailor for information about the murders , the sailor himself acts out a partial death : " The sailor 's face flushed up as if he were struggling with suffocation ... the next moment he fell back into his seat , trembling violently , and with the countenance of death itself . "

= = Literary significance and reception = =

Poe biographer Jeffrey Meyers sums up the significance of " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " : " [it] changed the history of world literature . " Often cited as the first detective fiction story , the character of Dupin became the prototype for many future fictional detectives , including Arthur Conan Doyle 's Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie 's Hercule Poirot . The genre is distinctive from a general mystery story in that the focus is on analysis . Poe 's role in the creation of the detective story is reflected in the Edgar Awards , given annually by the Mystery Writers of America .

" The Murders in the Rue Morgue " also established many tropes that would become common elements in mystery fiction : the eccentric but brilliant detective , the bumbling constabulary , the first

@-@ person narration by a close personal friend . Poe also portrays the police in an unsympathetic manner as a sort of foil to the detective . Poe also initiates the storytelling device where the detective announces his solution and then explains the reasoning leading up to it . It is also the first locked room mystery in detective fiction .

Upon its release , " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " and its author were praised for the creation of a new profound novelty . The Pennsylvania Inquirer printed that " it proves Mr Poe to be a man of genius ... with an inventive power and skill , of which we know no parallel . " Poe , however , downplayed his achievement in a letter to Philip Pendleton Cooke :

These tales of ratiocination owe most of their popularity to being something in a new key . I do not mean to say that they are not ingenious ? but people think them more ingenious than they are ? on account of their method and air of method . In the " Murders in the Rue Morgue " , for instance , where is the ingenuity in unraveling a web which you yourself ... have woven for the express purpose of unraveling ? "

Modern readers are occasionally put off by Poe 's violation of an implicit narrative convention : readers should be able to guess the solution as they read . The twist ending , however , is a sign of " bad faith " on Poe 's part because readers would not reasonably include an orangutan on their list of potential murderers .

= = Inspiration = =

The word detective did not exist at the time Poe wrote " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " , though there were other stories that featured similar problem @-@ solving characters . Das Fräulein von Scuderi (1819) , by E. T. A. Hoffmann , in which Mlle. de Scuderi , a kind of 19th @-@ century Miss Marple , establishes the innocence of the police 's favorite suspect in the murder of a jeweler , is sometimes cited as the first detective story . Other forerunners include Voltaire 's Zadig (1748) , with a main character who performs similar feats of analysis , themselves borrowed from The Three Princes of Serendip , an Italian rendition of Amir Khusro 's " Hasht @-@ Bihisht " .

Poe may also have been expanding on previous analytical works of his own including the essay on " Maelzel 's Chess Player " and the comedic " Three Sundays in a Week " . As for the twist in the plot , Poe was likely inspired by the crowd reaction to an orangutan on display at the Masonic Hall in Philadelphia in July 1839 . The name of the main character may have been inspired from the " Dupin " character in a series of stories first published in Burton 's Gentleman 's Magazine in 1828 called " Unpublished passages in the Life of Vidocq , the French Minister of Police " . Poe would likely have known the story , which features an analytical man who discovers a murderer , though the two plots share little resemblance . Murder victims in both stories , however , have their neck cut so badly that the head is almost entirely removed from the body . Dupin actually mentions Vidocq by name , dismissing him as " a good guesser " .

= = Publication history = =

Poe originally titled the story " Murders in the Rue Trianon " but renamed it to better associate with death . " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " first appeared in Graham 's Magazine in April 1841 while Poe was working as an editor . He was paid an additional \$ 56 for it ? an unusually high figure ; he was only paid \$ 9 for " The Raven " . In 1843 , Poe had the idea to print a series of pamphlets with his stories entitled The Prose Romances of Edgar A. Poe . He printed only one , " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " oddly collected with the satirical " The Man That Was Used Up " . It sold for 12 and a half cents . This version included 52 changes from the original text from Graham 's , including the new line : " The Prefect is somewhat too cunning to be profound " , a change from the original " too cunning to be acute " . " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " was also reprinted in Wiley & Putnam 's collection of Poe 's stories simply called Tales . Poe did not take part in selecting which tales would be collected .

Poe 's sequel to " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " was " The Mystery of Marie Rogêt " , first serialized in December 1842 and January 1843 . Though subtitled " A Sequel to ' The Murders in the

Rue Morgue " , " The Mystery of Marie Rogêt " shares very few common elements with " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " beyond the inclusion of C. Auguste Dupin and the Paris setting . Dupin reappeared in " The Purloined Letter " , which Poe called " perhaps the best of my tales of ratiocination " in a letter to James Russell Lowell in July 1844 .

The original manuscript of " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " which was used for its first printing in Graham 's Magazine was discarded in a wastebasket . An apprentice at the office , J. M. Johnston , retrieved it and left it with his father for safekeeping . It was left in a music book , where it survived three house fires before being bought by George William Childs . In 1891 , Childs presented the manuscript , re @-@ bound with a letter explaining its history , to Drexel University . Childs had also donated \$ 650 for the completion of Edgar Allan Poe 's new grave monument in Baltimore , Maryland in 1875 .

" The Murders in the Rue Morgue " was one of the earliest of Poe 's works to be translated into French . Between June 11 and June 13 , 1846 , " Un meurtre sans exemple dans les Fastes de la Justice " was published in La Quotidienne , a Paris newspaper . Poe 's name was not mentioned and many details , including the name of the Rue Morgue and the main characters (" Dupin " became " Bernier ") , were changed . On October 12 , 1846 , another uncredited translation , renamed " Une Sanglante Enigme " , was published in Le Commerce . The editor of Le Commerce was accused of plagiarizing the story from La Quotidienne . The accusation went to trial and the public discussion brought Poe 's name to the attention of the French public .

= = Adaptations = =

" The Murders in the Rue Morgue " has been adapted for radio , film and television many times .

The first film adaptation was a short silent film made in 1914 . [1] .

The first full @-@ length version was Murders in the Rue Morgue by Universal Pictures in 1932 , directed by Robert Florey and starring Bela Lugosi , Leon Ames and Sidney Fox , with Arlene Francis . The film bears little resemblance to the original story .

Another adaptation , Phantom of the Rue Morgue , was released in 1954 by Warner Brothers , directed by Roy Del Ruth and starring Karl Malden and Patricia Medina .

A TV movie made by Syndicated in 1968 , The Murders in the Rue de Morgue , is an adaptation by James MacTaggart , starring Walter Horsbrugh , Charles Kay and Dennis Edwards .

A film in 1971 directed by Gordon Hessler with the title Murders in the Rue Morgue had little to do with the Poe story .

On January 7 , 1975 , a radio @-@ play version was broadcast on CBS Radio Mystery Theater .

A made @-@ for @-@ TV movie , The Murders in the Rue Morgue , aired in 1986 . It was directed by Jeannot Szwarc and starred George C. Scott , Rebecca De Mornay , Ian McShane , and Val Kilmer .

It has also been adapted as a video game by Big Fish Games for their " Dark Tales " franchise under the title " Dark Tales : Edgar Allan Poe 's Murders in the Rue Morgue " .

Murders in the Rue Morgue , and The Gold Bug (1973) , a simplified version by Robert James Dixon , was published by Regents Pub . Co .

The British heavy metal band Iron Maiden has a song called Murders in Rue Morgue , based on the story .

Morgue Street is a 2012 short film directed by Alberto Viavattene starring Federica Tommasi and Désirée Giorgetti .