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ŁódźHISTORICAL SOURCES OF THE POETICS
OF THE CRIME NOVEL AND DETECTIVE SHORT-STORY *

The study of the history of crime fiction, which developed in postwar period in Great Britain and USA and continues in Poland among other countries, brings more and more proof that the novel of crime and detection and the detective short story had different sources. I used other people's studies and my own to present the case in brief in a paper *Początki powieści kryminalnej w Anglii (The Origins of the English Crime Novel)* in *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis* (Serces F, fasc. 66, Łódź 1980, p. 85—98).

The main source of the English crime novel was *The Newgate Calendar*, a publication begun in the latter half of the 17th century. This was a series of criminal lives printed while the criminals were waiting in Newgate Prison in London for public execution at Tyburn. *The Newgate Calendar* and its continuations until 1826 offered a lot of material and certain models of description to authors of the picaresque novel (which might be called crime novel) such as Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding (cf. *Jonathan Wilde the Great*). Towards the end of the 18th century some authors of the Gothic Novel—Ann Radcliffe and William Godwin—worked out a new type of crime novel in which an aristocrat hid under the cover of a criminal intrigue woven by himself. In the beginnings of the 19th century William Harrison Ainsworth combined the picaresque novel with the historical novel which glorified the romantic bandit-rebel against an unjust social system. A similar path was pursued by Edward Bulwer Lytton who strove for a reform of criminal laws in novels of manners and crime among which *Pelham* distinguished itself by its elaborate detective incident. Both those writers drew their material from various editions of *The Newgate Calendar* and therefore their novels were called *Newgate Novels*.

Before 1840 Dickens and Thackeray had attacked the *Newgate Novels* of Ainsworth and Lytton, writing realistic studies of the criminal underworld.

* The paper was read at the meeting of Modern Literature Section of the Neophilological Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences on 17. 10. 1980.

Later Dickens, William Wilkie Collins, Mary Braddon, and Mrs Henry Wood developed the model of the novel initiated by Bulwer Lytton. It was a combination of the novel of manners and social problems with a strongly developed criminal subplot which involved the detection of crime rooted in socio-economic conditions. When this criminal subplot moved to the fore, the crime-and-detection novel was complete. I consider as the first completely developed crime novels of this type *The Woman in White* by W. W. Collins and *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Braddon, books published in 1860 and 1862 respectively.

THE POETICS OF THE NOVEL OF CRIME AND DETECTION

When the term *crime novel* is used, I should like to make its meaning precise. As the very short outline of its development above shows, before 1860 it had different varieties, just like the multiform historical novel. But its definition is simple enough. *A crime novel is a novel the main theme of which from its beginning to its end is crime and everything that is connected with crime, as its causes, nature, conduct, consequences and the perpetrator or perpetrators, presented in a way and in proportions which the autor thinks fit.* Thus the crime novel may be: a story of preparing and committing one crime; a presentation of the criminal life of a professional law-breaker, treated as a series of adventures or as a psychological and moral problem; a presentation of a group of criminals with their activities; a presentation of the gradual revelation of a criminal plot before it has been realized; and, finally, it may be a presentation of the detection of an unknown criminal, his motives and all the circumstances of a crime already perpetrated. This last variety is often called a novel of crime and detection or simply a detective novel. Having developed plentifully owing to Dickens, W. W. Collins, and M. Braddon in the late 19th century and in the early half of the 20th century, it has got its own, very compact and dramatic composition which it shares with the detective short-story.

In the 20th century under the influence of A. Conan Doyle's detective short-story the detective novel became comparatively impoverished by being deprived of its contents of manners and social problems. At the same time its poetics was strictly defined by the formulation of rules to which all self-respecting British and American thriller writers had to conform, sometimes under the threat of being excluded from professional clubs, but always at the risk of losing fellow writers' respect.

One of those codes of normative poetics was worked out by Fr Ronald A. Knox, the known biblist and Oxford chaplain who put it in the preface to the collection of *The Best Detective Stories* (London 1928) under the title of *A Detective Story Decalogue*. Another collection of rules, worked out by an American writer S. S. Van Dine, was entitled *Twenty Rules for*

Writing Detective Stories and printed in "American Magazine" in September 1928.

In 1931 an English critic H. Douglas Thomson wrote a book *Masters of Mystery. A Study of the Detective Story* in which he formulated the order of the development of events in a detective story:

1. Murder most foul! 2. Introduction of the characters. First suspects, these being either (a) the author's red herrings, or (b) those characters whom the reader suspects intuitively. 3. The Inquest. 4. Clues and False Trails. The investigation carried out by the police (or less often by a bombastic amateur) fails. 5. Impasse. 6. The detective "takes up the case"; his novel line of investigation. 7. New suspects, i. e. those characters whom the reader is supposed to conclude that the detective suspects. In reality, of course, the latter suspects somebody quite different. 8. Dénouement. The detective's Eureka. 9. Explanations.¹

This description refers only to the plot and rather to the plot of the novel than that of the short-story. The part referring to vicissitudes has been developed and enriched just to make a long and complex novel out of a much simpler short-story. One should also add that in Thomson's handling the „typical" (according to him) detective story has been reduced to a skeleton account of „what happened". This variety is, however, only one of its historical forms which has done away with many valuable cognitive and artistic values.

S. S. Van Dine also demanded this type of the detective novel when he wrote:

A detective novel should contain no long descriptive passages, no literary dallying with side-issues, no subtly worked-out character analyses, no "atmosphere" preoccupations. Such matters have no vital place in a record of crime and deduction. They hold up the action, and introduce issues irrelevant to the main purpose, which is to state a problem, analyze it, and bring it to a successful conclusion.²

Van Dine demanded, however, a sufficient descriptiveness and character delineation.

William Somerset Maugham, a popular writer in his time, thus described detective fiction:

The theory of the detective story of deduction is simple. Someone is murdered, there is an investigation, suspicion falls on a number of persons, the culprit is discovered and pays the penalty of his crime. This is the classic formula and it contains in itself all the elements of a good story, for it has a beginning, a middle and an end.³

Maugham adds that his own prejudices go against too far-fetched murders, erudition, humour, and love. What he likes is, again, a skeleton plot.

¹ H. D. Thomson, *Masters of Mystery*, Dover Publications, New York 1978, p. 51—52.

² Quoted after H. Haycraft, *The Art of the Mystery Story. A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York 1976, p. 192.

³ W. S. Maugham, *The Vagrant Mood, Six Essays*, London 1952, the essay on *The Decline and Fall of the Detective Story*, p. 97—98.

In 1931 one of the most original authors of detective novels, interested in the history and theory of crime fiction, wrote thus:

The expression 'Detective Story', though still loosely used to describe any tale dealing with crime and detectives, has acquired of late years a narrower, specialized meaning. Careful writers now reserve it for those stories of crime and detection in which the interest lies in the setting of a problem and its solution by logical means. Psychological studies of the criminal mind are more properly called 'crime stories', while criminological problems whose solutions are arbitrarily revealed by coincidence or accident, or by straight-forward explanations by the author, are styled 'mysteries' or 'thrillers'.⁴

Almost all the quoted authors use the term *detective story* both for the novel and the short-story. But Dorothy L. Sayers is very well aware of the historical and specific differences between the detective short-story and the detective novel. This is what she writes:

The main difference between these writers (Collins, Gaboriau etc.) and Poe is, put crudely and plainly, that he was a short-story writer and they were novelists [...] Both in England in France this particular interest was grafted on to the main stock of the novel of adventure and the novel of contemporary bourgeois manners. The writers approach the subject in the spirit of the novelist: however complicated the problem, they never present the story as an isolated episode existing solely in virtue of its relation to the mechanics of detection. They are interested in the social background, in manners and morals, in the depiction and interplay of character; their works have a three-dimensional extension in time and space; they all, in their various ways, offer some kind of 'criticism of life'.⁵

Discussing the differences between French, British and American detective fiction, A. E. Murch, the author of *The Development of the Detective Novel* (London 1958) says:

Basically, however, a detective story... may be defined as a tale in which the primary interest lies in the methodical discovery, by rational means, of the exact circumstances of a mysterious event or series of events. The story designed to arouse the reader's curiosity by a puzzling problem which usually, though not always, concerns a crime. Fiction of this type, though not as yet precisely of 'fixed form', has nevertheless acquired its own methods of plot construction, characteristic techniques of presentation and a code of ethical values peculiar to itself.

The detective story has links with certain other groups of popular fiction, notably the Crime Story and the Mystery Story.⁶

The stress put on the detection of crime has also been recognized as a distinguishing mark of detective fiction by H. Haycraft who has written: "The crime in a detective story is only the means to an end which is—detection."⁷

⁴ D. L. Sayers, Introduction to *Tales of Detection*, London 1963, p. VII.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. IX.

⁶ A. E. Murch, *The Development of the Detective Novel*, London 1958, p. 11.

⁷ H. Haycraft, *Murder for Pleasure*, 1941, quoted after J. Symons, *Bloody Murder*, Harmondsworth 1975, p. 8.

THE POETICS OF THE DETECTIVE SHORT-STORY

Now let us try to systematize the poetics of the detective short-story more closely, distinguishing it from the crime novel and the detective novel.

The only type of crime novel from which the detective short-story does not differ much in its structure is the detective novel. Here, however, the length makes for a difference, allowing the short-story to be based on one single event only, reducing the number of characters and their characteristics, but making its plot even more dramatic than that of the detective novel.⁸

The *message* of the detective short-story may be expressed, more or less, thus: Crime cannot escape punishment; sooner or later the hand of justice will reach the criminal, because there are detectives who can solve even the most difficult mysteries of crime, owing to their unusual ability. A human mind which acts rationally and systematically has enormous cognitive powers useful for society; thanks to keen observation, and the ability to distinguish the truth from appearances and to use the power of logical inference this kind of mind can establish the real causes of given effects, because the world is governed by fixed laws of causality and purposefulness. Justice will prevail.

All in all, the immanent philosophy of detective fiction is in most cases rational, moral, optimistic, and in favour of the interest of society.

The *theme* of the detective short-story is the solution of a puzzle connected with crime. Consequently, the story must contain the fact of a crime and the resulting mystery, investigation, detection, and explanation.

The *world presented* in the detective short-story must contain as *the characters*: the criminal and a person or persons who belong to his milieu, the detective and at least one person associated with him, in most cases his friend or good acquaintance ("Dr Watson"). The *setting* and the *period of action* may be chosen according to wish, but in most cases are modern, because our times offer highly advanced and interesting techniques of crime and detection.

The *action* is in most cases short, limited to a single criminal event which may happen before the story begins. It concentrates on the activities of the detective—professional or occasional—and, owing to its compact causality, has just as dramatic a character as the so-called "well-made play". In accordance with Aristotelian poetics it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, which make it closed and perfect. The starting point of the action is a crime which presents a mystery, for it is not known who committed the crime, or how, or why, or when. It is an unstable situation which gives impulse to investigation in order to detect the unknown elements of the crime. The

⁸ This does not mean that a short-story cannot be a *crime story*. R. L. Stevenson's *Was it Murder?* excluding mystery and detection is a rare example. It presents a moral problem.

middle of the story presents the detective's action and its end consists in the presentation of the effects of his action and leads to a stable situation, logically closing the plot with the detention of the criminal, his death as a result of suicide or an attempt to escape.

The composition of the action might be put in a concise formula: crime puzzle, detection of the mystery in spite of obstacles, and the presentation of the truth. As one can see, the organizing principle of the plot is *mystery* and a very important element of the action is *cause-and-effect connections*. The story of the crime appears in every detective short-story (and novel) twice: firstly as a chaotic jig-saw puzzle, many parts of which may be put in several possible and likely chains of facts but without arranging all the known details into a consistent whole; secondly, as a chronological chain of causes and effects which contains all the facts and all the details, and owing to its perfect inner logic presents a completely satisfying explanation of who did what, how, when, under what circumstances and why.

The presence of mystery and a dangerous criminal influences the atmosphere of the world presented. The atmosphere of mystery, fear or terror, uncertainty, suspense and surprise arouse in the reader the emotions of tension and a not unpleasant excitement traditionally called *thrill*.

Let us now discuss the problem of *the narrator and the narration* in the detective short-story. It follows from regarding the mystery as the organizing principle of the plot that the narrator cannot be omniscient, because then keeping the known secret till the end of the story would be a forced trick. For similar reasons the criminal does not appear as the narrator. He depends on keeping his identity secret so it is best for him to speak about the crime as little as possible.⁹

Nor is the detective a good candidate for the narrator. In the best interests of the investigation he must not reveal his suspicions or vague and unsubstantiated intuitions too early, in order not to warn and scare away the criminal needlessly before time. Besides, in many detective short-stories the detective himself is a source of mysteriousness. The activity of his ingenious intellect is in itself a puzzle exciting wonder. That is why it is not open to the reader while he conducts the investigation, but only towards the end of the narrative, in the form of a finished explanation.

The best and the most convenient narrator is the so-called "Dr Watson" or the detective's friend of average detective abilities. His point of view is the most convenient for the conduct of the narrative. Being a person close to the detective and deserving his trust, he has close access to the crime and investigation. His knowledge of the problem is limited by his average intelli-

⁹ There are, however, some rare deviations from this custom. As an example usually *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) by Agatha Christie is quoted — a novel written in the form of the murderer's diary which reports on the investigation, but — naturally — keeps the identity of the murderer a secret until the moment of detection.

gence and the fact that the detective does not tell him all he knows and thinks before the final solution. The narrator-companion of the detective therefore finds himself in the reader's situation. The reader looks at the investigation with his eyes and from his point of view and understanding. So to a certain extent he can identify "Dr Watson's" experiences with his own while he is reading. The choice of this kind of narrator allows the author to create an atmosphere of mystery round the crime, the investigation, and the detective's personality.

The narrative in the detective short-story begins *after the crime*, goes on chronologically and not retrospectively until the detection and, possibly, the detention of the criminal. When it reaches this point, it does not cease being a causally chronological presentation of the criminal event, but is enriched by retrospective digressions which serve to better elucidate all the motives involved.

On the level of *stylistic texture* the detective short-story is usually realistic, its emotive vocabulary is sparing and a poetic style is avoided. Its intended *artistic effect* is sensation engaging the intellect, imagination, and the emotions of the reader, but not so much through verbal means as through the composition of the plot and the conduct of action which arouse intellectual and emotional states of being intrigued, feeling dramatic tension, suspense, suspicion, surprise, and wonder. Depending on its author's talent the detective short-story may contain deeper insights into human nature, into the problems of law and ethics, and into the meaning of life, enriching the reader's mind as happens with other literary works.

PREHISTORY OF THE DETECTIVE SHORT-STORY

Where did the model of the detective short-story described here have its beginnings? What are its historical sources?

To answer these questions I had to draw a chronological table of those circumstances in which the early crime short-stories and detective short-stories in Great Britain, the USA, and, to a certain extent in France, were written in the years preceding the detective short-stories of Edgar Allan Poe and in the years following his death.

I have chosen the tales of E. A. Poe, because they have been generally recognized as the beginning of the detective story. They are: *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1840), *The Mystery of Marie Rogét* (1842—43), *The Purloined Letter* (1844), and (mentioned by some) *The Gold Bug* (1843).

Two of these short-stories deal with the detection of a murderer; one of them presents the search for and recovery of a compromising letter; one—the deciphering of hints as to where a treasure was hidden.

Before E. A. Poe wrote these four tales, there existed in England crime literature which consisted of the literature of factual documents and of lite-

rary fiction modelled on those documents or exploiting some known forms of the novel.

To the literature of factual documents belonged: a) French and English *pitavals* such as *Recueil des causes celebres* by Maurice Méjan (1807—1814); the aforementioned *The Newgate Calendar*, *The New Newgate Calendar* published in 1826, and *Celebrated Trials and Remarkable Cases of Criminal Jurisprudence* by George Borrow ending in 1825; b) press accounts of crime, detection, and punishment. Here should be mentioned: "Westmoreland Gazette" edited by the known essayist Thomas De Quincey in 1818 when E. A. Poe was in England; De Quincey's essays begun in 1827 and published in 1839 under the title *On Murder Considered As One of the Fine Arts* (which Poe may not have known); James Harmer's "Weekly Dispatch" the circulation of which in the years 1836—1840 jumped from 30 to 60 thousand copies; and the New York newspapers from which E. A. Poe took descriptions of crime since 1837, as is evident from *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*; c) real or pretended police memoirs. Among these the following should be mentioned: Thomas Gaspey's *Richmond, or Scenes in the Life of Bow Street Officer* (1827), Eugène François Vidocq's *Histoire de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sureté, écrite d'après lui-même par M. Fromeat ex-chef de brigade de cabinet particulier de prefect* (publ. in Paris in 1828 and in England in 1830).¹⁰ In 1838 *Unpublished Passages in the Life of Vidocq* were printed in "Burton's Magazine" which Poe read and which he used when he was writing his stories. While they were being written *Histoire complete de Vidocq et des principaux scelerats [...] d'après les propre documents et memoires de cet homme* (1842) was published in Paris and Vidocq himself organized an exhibition on crime combined with lectures at the *Cosmorama* in Regent Street in June 1845. In 1847 H. Balzac published *La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* the main character of which was based on Vidocq.

The growth of the literature of criminal fact was enormous and it increased. One of the typical forms of narrative was a story of crime and the arrest of the criminal written from the point of view of a narrator writing retrospectively i. e. fully informed about what had happened from beginning to end. Another kind of narrative was the recollections of a police officer put down in his memoirs and presented on the whole in the order of gradual acquaintance with the crime and, consequently, with a certain degree of being puzzled, but also with some retrospective explanations freely intervening in the course of narration.

These narrative forms were, together with their titles, carried over into fiction. D. W. H. Reynolds, the editor of "Reynolds News" (1850) and "Miscellany" (1856) was also the author of the novels *The Mysteries of*

¹⁰ Between the Parisian and the London editions of *Vidocq*, Douglas Jerrold, an author and actor staged a play *Vidocq, The French Police Spy* at the Sussex Theatre.

London (1844) and *The Mysteries of the Court of London* (1848—1859)—modelled on *Les Mystères de Paris* (1843) and *Les Mystères de Londres* (1844) and on pitavals. In 1849 *Recollections of a Police Officer* called Waters appeared in “Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal”. “Waters” (William Russell?) published them in the form of a book in the USA in 1852 and in Great Britain in 1856, where he also published *Experiences of a Real Detective* in 1862. Of course, in his stories the narrator is the detective.

There existed as well, already in 1832, three cheap weeklies busy with publishing crime stories modelled on the literature of criminal fact—“Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal”, “Penny Magazine”, and “Saturday Magazine”. In 1854 Reynolds’ “Miscellany” reached a circulation of 200 thousand copies and in 1858 this number was said to have grown to 500 thousand. Margaret Dalziel, the author of *Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago, An Unexplored Tract of Literary History* (London 1957) mentions at least five titles of sensational publications of various types, including the abovementioned *penny dreadfuls*. It is worth stressing that E. A. Poe used to read “Chambers’s Journal” in spite of its being a cheap sensational paper.

Journals of high literary quality did not shun crime stories either. In 1853 Dickens printed in his *Household Words* three anecdotes about crime, told by “Inspector Wield”—*The Pair of Gloves*, *The Artful Touch* and *The Sofa*—the common striking feature of which is the presentation of detective work: its routine, but also its ingenious tricks.

Some authors of such stories, like Tom Fox in *The Revelations of a Dedective* (1860), were unable to keep within the convention of memoirs. In spite of the assumption that they were writing from the detective’s point of view, they used the privileges of the omniscient narrator and re-created, together with the dialogue, scenes which they did not witness. The form of *memoirs* gets into the English story of crime and detection after 1849 and leaves its trace even in the writings of A. Conan Doyle. It is to be seen in the title of the *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1893) and in a short-story — *The Recollections of Captain Wilkie*—printed in “Chambers’s Journal” in 1895. In this story the first narrator soon gives place to a second narrator, a converted former thief. The recollection of “Captain Wilkie’s” former feats and his display of pickpocket skill form the subject of the story.¹¹

Four editions of *memoirs*, real or pretended, appeared before *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and after the story and before 1862 eight books of this kind were published.

If we add to all this crime novels which have been mentioned the background is complete against which the stories by E. A. Poe appeared. During his lifetime 8 novels appeared in England which were stories of crime or of manners with richly developed crime plots or even with some elements

¹¹ An accessible reprint of the story is to be found in *A Treasury of Victorian Detective Stories* ed. by E. F. Bleiler, Brighton 1980.

of detective plots, like E. Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham* or Dickens's *Bleak House* published after Poe's death.

From 1839 Dickens and Thackeray started their attack against the idealization of the criminal underworld, writing their own crime novels — *Oliver Twist*, *Catherine*, and *Barry Lyndon*. After E. A. Poe's debut in the field of the detective short-story at least 12 such novels were written until 1862.¹²

It may be added that already in those times—ever since Walter Scott—continuous contacts were maintained between the British and the American publishing markets and the masses of readers in both countries. "Waters's" *Recollections* printed in Scotland in 1849, appeared as a book in America three years later and after three years were printed in the same form in England. Poe not only read "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal", but also printed in it *The Purloined Letter* (1844) and corresponded with Dickens, while his tales were translated and published in France and read in England. Andrew Forrester Jr, an able English author of detective short-stories who modelled them on "Waters" at first, considered himself Poe's follower and disciple.¹³

Notwithstanding all these contacts and possible suggestions and models it seems certain that Edgar Allan Poe was the independent pioneer of the detective short-story as presented in the analysis of its poetics. Here the internal and the external evidence of his four short-stories are equally convincing.

E. A. POE AS THE MAKER OF THE MODERN DETECTIVE SHORT-STORY

The circumstances in which Poe's detective short-stories originated have been presented well enough by Arthur Hobson Quinn in his book *Edgar Allan Poe, A Critical Biography* (New York—London 1942). Some valuable details have also been contributed by the editors of *The American Tradition in Literature*.¹⁴

A. H. Quinn writes:

He created the character of C. Auguste Dupin, a name which he borrowed from Marie Dupin, the heroine of a story *Marie Laurent*, the first of a series of *Unpublished Passages in the Life of Vidocq, the French Minister of Police*. These appeared in *Burton's* from September to December 1838 and are signed "J. M. B." Poe must have read them because he refers to

¹² Rich materials and information connected with sensational literature can be found in the books: M. Dalziel, *Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago. An Unexplored Tract of Literary History*, London 1957 and K. Hollingsworth, *The Newgate Novel 1830—1847. Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens and Thackeray*, Detroit 1963.

¹³ See E. F. Bleiler [in]: *A Treasury of Victorian Detective Stories* p. 15.

¹⁴ This is an anthology of American Literature edited by S. Bradley, R. C. Beatty, and E. H. Long and published in two volumes by W. W. Norton and Co in New York in 1972 as a revised edition.

Vidocq in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* as "a good guesser", but one who "impaired his vision by holding the object too close". They probably suggested to Poe that he attempt a story in which a crime is solved, "but his method is quite different".¹⁵

Quinn says that in the quoted story Vidocq accidentally catches the criminals *in flagranti*.

The name of Pauline Dubourg is a reminiscence of the Misses Dubourg whose school Poe frequented in London.

Quinn quotes interesting passages from Poe's letter of 4th June 1842 to Snodgrass which refer to the origins of *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*. The writer states in the letter that the story

is based upon that of the real murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers, which created so vast an excitement, some months ago, in New York. Further he says: I have handled the design in a very singular and entirely *novel* manner. I imagine a series of nearly exact coincidences occurring in Paris [...] Under pretence of showing how Dupin (the hero of the rue Morgue) unravelled the mystery of Marie's assassination, I, in fact, enter into a very rigorous analysis of the real tragedy in New York [...] I have demonstrated the falsity of the idea that the girl was the victim of a gang, but have indicated the assassin. My main object, however, as you will readily understand, is the analysis of the principles of investigation in cases of like character. Dupin *reasons* the matter throughout.¹⁶

These words should be remembered. Quinn accepts the value of their truth and weight, saying that "Poe in the person of C. Auguste Dupin, proceeds not by guessing, but by analysis". (p. 311). Important is his remark that Poe introduces the crime through the usual medium by which the reader learns about such things — the newspaper account. Indeed, in the first two short-stories a whole series of newspaper cuttings are quoted.

Chevalier A. Dupin is a type of the so-called armchair detective who solves criminal problems, sitting in his armchair and thinking. A later American short-story writer Jacques Futrelle (1875—1912) called this type the Thinking Machine and raised it from the level of an intellectual with an academic education to the higher rank of Professor Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen.

H. Haycraft equates Poe's detective and his author. It is certain that the poet tried his powers at detection. He who might have doubts about this even after having read the quoted letter to Snodgrass, should be convinced by Poe's following introduction to his essay *The Philosophy of Composition* (April 1846):

¹⁵ A. H. Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe, A Critical Biography*, New York-London 1942 p. 310—311. In connexion with the origins of Dupin a piece of information may be added here taken from H. Haycraft's *Murder for Pleasure* (1941), one of the essays in *The Art of the Mystery. A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York 1976. Haycraft writes that there existed one André Marie Jean Jacques Dupin (1783—1865), an attorney general and author of works on French criminal procedure. Some of those works were translated into English and published in Boston in 1839. His younger brother François Charles Pierre Dupin (1784—1873) was a known mathematician and economist, also translated into English, Haycraft *op. cit.* p. 173—174.

¹⁶ Quinn, *op. cit.* p. 355—356.

Charles Dickens, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of *Barnaby Rudge*, says—"By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his *Caleb Williams* backward? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr Dickens's idea—but the author of *Caleb Williams* was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intension.¹⁷

The quoted introduction contains valuable evidence. Firstly, it mentions the correspondence with Dickens on the criminal and detective plot in the novel *Barnaby Rudge*. In 1841 when the novel was being published as a serial, Poe wrote a review in which by the strength of his reasoning he succeeded in naming the murderer before he was revealed by the author. Secondly, the discussion of *Caleb Williams*, W. Godwin's political novel of crime, points to the fact that both correspondents were interested in the technique of the mystery story. Thirdly, it is evident that Poe knew well the 18th century Gothic Novel with its criminal intrigues wrapped in a veil of mystery. And it is just the placing of a criminal mystery in the centre of the short-story and making it the organizing principle of the narrative that distinguishes Poe from all contemporaneous crime short-story writers. W. W. Collins, closest to him in this respect, published his collection of stories *After Dark* as late as 1856. Owing to his acceptance of mystery as the main element of the story and owing to his combining mystery with the character of an intellectual detective Poe became the maker of the detective short-story based on the poetics generally accepted today.

Now let us ask what led him to it and how much he was conscious of the way he chose.

Answers are to be found in the four essays of Edgar Allan Poe: the already quoted *The Philosophy of Composition*; the co-called *Letter to B*, which formed the Preface to *Poems* published in 1831 and reprinted in "Southern Literary Messenger" (June 1836); the review of the *Twice-Told Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, printed in "Graham's Lady's and Gentelman's Magazine" (April 1842) and *The Poetic Principle*, a lecture delivered by the poet several times and printed three times in the year after his death — in "Home Journal" (August 1850), "Sartain's Union Magazine" (October 1850) and in Griswold's edition of his *Works*.

In these essays Poe developed his own poetics or literary theory based on the assumption that the object of a literary work is the evocation of a definite

¹⁷ *The American Tradition...*, vol. I, p. 871.

response by the reader—the unity of effect or impression (*Twice-Told Tales*). The immediate object of a poem is indefinite pleasure, of a romance — definite pleasure, of a scientific work — Truth. “But Truth is often and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination”. (*Twice-Told Tales*).

To the main object of the conscious planning and execution of a literary work length must be subordinated. “A long poem does not exist” because it is merely a series of minor poems (*The Poetic Principle*). A prose narrative, to achieve the unity of effect, must require “from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal.” “Only then can it achieve the immense force derivable from totality” (*Twice-Told Tales*). The literary artist

having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. (*Twice-Told Tales*)

It clearly follows from these principles that in Poe’s attitude as a writer there was nothing of the motto: “I sing to myself and the Muses”. Contrary to this, it was analogous to the attitude of a thriller-writer or a satirist who wishes to make the greatest possible impression and to exert the greatest possible influence on his readers. That is why in the review of Hawthorne’s tales Poe defended sensational fiction:

How full of prejudice are usual animadversions against those tales of effect, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of Blackwood!

Now we have got all the elements and materials which went into the making of the four tales giving origin to the modern detective short-story. But E. A. Poe never named them *detective short-stories*. He used the term *story of ratiocination* or *an analytical tale*. Together with *Ligeia*, *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Black Cat* he considered them as his best stories.¹⁸ Writing them, he aimed at an intellectual effect—cognition, truth, and not merely sensation.

No wonder that the first *tale of ratiocination* begins in a way not at all sensational. Before the word “murder” is said, almost one-fourth of the text is devoted to a discussion of the ability to think and infer as well as to the presentation of an eminent intellect who only accidentally is engaged in the detection of the perpetrator of horrible murders in the rue Morgue.

As the strong man exults in his physical ability — writes Poe — delighting in such exercises as call his muscles in to action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of *acumen* which appears to the ordinary apprehension praeternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.¹⁹

¹⁸ Quinn, *op. cit.* p. 430.

¹⁹ *The American Tradition*..., p. 795.

When we accept the writer's poetics, all his four short-stories fulfill the requirements of a *tale of ratiocination*. Then critics' objections against *The Gold Bug* — in which there is no detection of a crime, but the deciphering of a cryptogram—drop away.²⁰ In connexion with this, it is worth remembering what D. L. Sayers has said:

Although, theoretically, there is no very good reason why a problem story should not be written about some subject other than crime, yet the detective story, is, historically, an offshot of the story of crime and sensation, and retains the marks of its origin: its intellectual structure is embellished by the emotional elements of horror, moral indignation, and excitement common to all types of crime literature.²¹

In the first three *tales of ratiocination* a synthesis between a crime story and an *analytical tale* was made and this resulted in the *detective short-story* typical at present. In *The Gold Bug* the *tale of ratiocination* did not absorb any elements of crime, but rather those of adventure—the case of some treasure hidden by pirates.

Edgar Allan Poe's intention was to create a serious though sensational analytical short-story dominated by intellectual elements. That is why the character of an ingenious intellectual and thinker came to the fore, shown in action by a less gifted friend from whose point of view the narrative is conducted. The detective hero is not a policeman, is not called a detective, but an analyst. If he undertakes a criminal problem for the first time, he does it to try his abilities on something that nobody so far was equal to.

In this way a new type of story originates—a crime story the action of which develops according to the formula: a mysterious crime, investigation undertaken by an eminently able detective, the solution of the problem and the presentation of the reconstructed crime. The main message is the presentation of the powerful abilities of a human mind and not the quenching of a thirst for cheap sensation, which can only ask: "And what next?" and: "Well, and who has done it in the end?"

Like every writer, Edgar Allan Poe acted in the context of history and literature. Many things went into the making of his detective short-story: the models of the Gothic Novel and the crime novel, real and pretended memoirs of police officers and the sensational press. But all this and the motifs inherent in all this material, such as a mysterious crime, a policeman,

²⁰ H. D. Thomson refuses *The Gold Bug* the title of a detective short-story, but E. A. Murch includes it among them. The cause of such divergent opinions is the non-typical character of the poetics of *The Gold Bug*. There is neither crime nor a criminal in it. Dramatic tension is comparatively slight. The narrator and the point of view change from the moment of discovery of the treasure. The puzzle does not intrigue all the characters engaged in its solution, because at first it concentrates rather on the strange behaviour of the occasional detective than on the mysterious cipher.

²¹ Sayers, *op. cit.* p. VII.

detection, and sensation did not give and would not have given the same effect if the American poet, writer, and critic had not created his own theory of a literary work written *for effect*, if he had not had higher intellectual aspirations which were expressed in the desire to create the analytical tale, and if he had not invented a new point of view in the conduct of narration about a criminal case, which allowed for maximum effect of mysteriousness in the crime, in the detective, and even in the investigation and through those created the highest tension until the *dénouement*.

As I have said, from among Poe's contemporaries the most likely to have done something similar was William Wilkie Collins, the author of *The Woman in White*. But, if he was capable of it, he would have done it much later. And this is exactly why we cannot be sure. His first collection of sensational stories *After Dark* (1856) contains *The Stolen Letter* which resembles E. A. Poe's *The Purloined Letter* so much that it may be an echo or an unconscious plagiarism.²² In a later collection of stories—*The Queen of Hearts* (1859) the most typical of Collins's short tales is *The Biter Bit* with a plot, which is rather epic than dramatic and the narrative form of series of letters. The story has a lot of humour in it and rather derives from the novelistic tradition, developing since the 18th century independently from Poe, which owing to Dickens, Collins and Mary Braddon created the English type of the novel of crime and detection in the years 1860—1862.

Only towards the end of the century in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle did E. A. Poe's poetics of the detective short-story and the poetics of the detective novel meet and join. A. Conan Doyle was by nature a short-story writer, which may be seen not only in the overwhelming number of his short-stories about Sherlock Holmes, but also in the three rather awkward attempts at enlarging a short-story to the size of a novel. His only completely artistically successful novel is *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

ŹRÓDŁA HISTORYCZNE POETYKI POWIEŚCI KRYMINALNEJ I NOWELI DETEKTYWNEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Celem rozprawy jest udowodnienie, na podstawie badań prowadzonych w okresie powojennym w W. Brytanii i USA oraz własnych, że powieść kryminalno-detektywna i nowela kryminalno-detektywna mają odrębne źródła historyczne. Głównym źródłem angielskiej powieści kryminalnej,

²² *The Stolen Letter* differs from Poe's story in that the adversaries know each other and wage a war of tricks. The letter is cleverly concealed and not exposed to the eye as in Poe's tale. Cf. Murch, *op. cit.* p. 104.

ak wykazał autor w pracy *Początki powieści kryminalnej w Anglii w Zeszytach Naukowych UŁ* (Seria I, z. 66, Łódź 1980, s. 85–98), jest publikacja *The Newgate Calendar* z XVII w. i jej kontynuacje do 1826 r. Materiały dotyczące autentycznych zbrodni weszły w XVIII wieku do powieści łotrzykowskiej, gotyckiej a w XIX w. do historyczno-przygodowej i obyczajowej z mocnymi wątkami kryminalnymi. Autorami byli: Daniel Defoe, H. Fielding, A. Radcliffe, W. Godwin, W. H. Ainsworth, E. Bulwer Lytton, Ch. Dickens, W. W. Collins, M. Braddon i H. Wood. Jako swoista odmiana powieści kryminalnej powstała powieść detektywna, wypracowana przez Dickensa, Collinsa i pannę Braddon około lat 1860–62 z powieści obyczajowo-społecznej.

Poetyka powieści detektywnej ściśle została sformułowana przez ks. RONALDA A. KNOXA w *A Detective Story Decalogue* (1928), przez S. S. VAN DINE'a w *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories* (1928) omówiona dokładniej przez H. DOUGLASA THOMPSONA w książce *Masters of Mystery* (1931) i formułowana w różnych miejscach przez D.L. SAYERS. Różni się ona od poetyki noweli detektywnej pewnym rozbudowaniem fabuły, sprowadzonej w noweli detektywnej do jednego wydarzenia następującego po dokonaniu tajemniczej zbrodni—dochodzenia, wykrycia i wyjaśnienia zagadki. Głównymi i koniecznymi postaciami noweli są: zbrodniarz, detektyw i jego towarzysze, który jest najczęściej narratorem. Organizacyjną zasadą fabuły jest tajemnica zogniskowana w przestępstwie, detektywie i sposobie dochodzenia. Niezmiernie ważnym elementem akcji są powiązania przyczynowo-skutkowe. Zamierzonym efektem artystycznym jest sensacja angażująca intelekt, wyobraźnię i emocje czytelnika dzięki takimi ukształtowaniu fabuły i przebiegu akcji, które wprowadzają dramatyczne napięcie, niepewność, podejrzenie, niespodziankę i podziw. Nowela detektywna może zawierać głębsze wglądy w naturę ludzką, w problemy prawa i etyki oraz w sens życia.

Ten obecnie powszechnie przyjęty model noweli detektywnej ukształtował się w latach 1840—1844, kiedy Edgar Allan Poe napisał 3 nowele detektywne (*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* i *The Purloined Letter*). Nowele te powstały na tle dawno już istniejącej angielskiej powieści kryminalnej (ale nie detektywnej), angielskich i francuskich *pitavalów*, bogato rozwijającej się prasy sensacyjnej, prawdziwych i fikcyjnych wspomnień detektywów policyjnych. Przegląd tej literatury dają: M. DALZIEL, *Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago*, A. E. MURCH, *The Development of the Detective Novel*, K. HOLLINGSWORTH, *The Newgate Novel 1830—1847*, E. F. BLEILER, *A Treasury of Victorian Detective Stories* i J. SYMONS, *Bloody Murder*.

Nowością wprowadzoną przez E. A. Poe'a, który dobrze znał tę literaturę i próbował własnych sił jako detektyw, o czym świadczy jego biograf A. H. QUINN w *Edgar Allan Poe, A Critical Biography* (1942) i on sam w esejach i listach, było wprowadzenie do istniejącej noweli detektywnej tajemnicy jako zasady organizującej akcję i narrację, co w powieści nastąpiło dopiero około lat 1860–62.

Ten nowatorski krok E. A. Poe'a był konsekwencją założeń jego własnej poetyki ogólnej, wyłożonej w esejach: *The Philosophy of Composition*, *Letter to B*, *The Poetic Principle* i w recenzji *Twice-Told Tales*. Jak dla satyryka i pisarza sensacyjnego tak i dla E. A. Poe'a naczelnym celem twórczości było wywołanie jednolitego efektu utworu. Wśród utworów, których efektem miało być dojście do prawdy, umieszczał *tale ratiocination*, którą nazywał także *analytical tale*. Bohaterem pierwszej z tych opowieści zrobił intelektualistę, Dupina, przygodnego, a nie zawodowego detektywa, rozwiązującego tajemnicę niezwyklej zbrodni. W rękach Poe'a *tale ratiocination* stała się nowocześniejszą *nowelą detektywną*.

Pod koniec XIX w. w twórczości A. CONANA DOYLE'a nowela detektywna typu Poe'a i powieść detektywna typu COLLINSA spotkały się. Ponieważ jednak A. Conan Doyle był przede wszystkim nowelistą, wpłynął na powieść detektywną raczej ujemnie, gdyż w wyniku tego wpływu wiele powieści tego typu zostało pozbawionych bogactwa obyczajowego i społecznego.