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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyse, on the one hand, the method of Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot and Father Brown in order to build their personality, and, on the other hand, to establish the similarities that the three detectives share with C. Auguste Dupin. By creating a relationship between them, the analysis will provide a definition of character from the assertions of these detectives as well as a clear picture of how their minds work towards the same purpose: solving cases.

Keywords: Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Father Brown, detective story, crime fiction

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The Detective's Method: Holmes, Poirot, Father Brown and the Influence of C. Auguste Dupin

0. Introduction

As one of its core premises, detective fiction invites and challenges its readers to solve the crime in simultaneity with the protagonists' investigation. Readers collect the pieces and look at the details to see if they have been capable of solving the crime or not. This gives readers the opportunity to look at things from another perspective: the detective's point of view. As Danyté well explains, "the murder or crime puzzle allows the readers the pleasure of witnessing criminal acts" (10). However, one of the things that captivates readers is to discover the detective's method, that is, the procedure these characters have used to find

the answer. Humans always want answers that explain things they do not know. The human being is curious by nature and just as magicians are asked for their tricks, detectives are asked about their methods.

The figure of the detective, as it is known today, emerged about the 19th century (Knight 3). At first, in the early stories, there was no knowledge about who committed the crimes. As Knight affirms in *Crime Fiction since 1800*, religious morality was predominant at those times, which made criminals confess because they were afraid of the consequences: going to hell (5). This becomes a more important issue that will eventually create a figure that can provide all the answers, at least in fiction, to something that did not have (Knight 5).

Scaggs, in his book *Crime Fiction*, argues that in the age of the Enlightenment appeared new ideas "which came to replace religious faith" (18). He explains that the origins of the detective story go back to this thought. The aftereffect of this belief was the establishment of reason as the base of a new ethos. According to Scaggs, detectives used the analytical and deductive capacity to solve crimes that apparently did not have an explanation (19). Thus, a new intellectual discipline that paid more attention to how things work. This current of thought is the factor that inspires many writers to create the fictional detective: a character that was able to solve crimes through reason.

Scaggs also describes the concept of the Fair Play, which consists in the ability of the reader to solve the crime if he or she has been a competent observer (36-37). Father Ronald Knox wrote a *Detective Story Decalogue* (1929), where he "codified the notion of fair play by establishing ten basic rules" (Scaggs 36). As such, readers need to have the same information as the detective in order to solve the case at the same time. Scaggs suggests that the idea of the detective story as a game involves similarities and differences among writers of different periods. In this question comes to light the importance of each detective's method (38-9).

Scaggs states that the detective's method was already clearly defined with Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin. Poe conceives the figure of a methodical detective who establishes a pattern for other writers of the genre. These authors begin the story by proving that their detective is a genius because he possesses a method that places him above the narrator, who represents the ignorance of the average reader (39). Hence, the method is crucial in detective novels. Just as crime is the basis for the stories in this genre, the method is the piece that manages to close the puzzle. It is what creates the personality, the technique and the way of thinking of the detective; in short, it is what makes a detective special. The method illustrates how his mind works and how he perceives the world.

Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and Father Brown, in particular, preach about their own method. In their texts, the detectives themselves tell the reader how they work. Sherlock Holmes talks about clues and traces, Hercule Poirot talks about grey cells and Father Brown about human nature. The method is what provides a view of how the detective sees himself in these stories and that presents a character definition. In that regard, this paper intends to, in the first place, define and study the method of these three characters in

order to build an analysis of the detective figure and, in second place, to demonstrate the connections and influence they share in the stories of C. Auguste Dupin.

1. C. Auguste Dupin: The first detective

C. Auguste Dupin was the first detective archetype, since "Poe is rightly credited with the invention of the short tale of detection as a literary form and with the creation of the abstract, analytical reasoner which subsequently became the model for such detectives as Sherlock Holmes and Solar Pons" (Hammond 91). Poe does not only create the first model of detective but establishes, as Thoms writes, a new kind of fiction with the form of a puzzle or a game (133). Poe creates a formula in which the detective is the only one capable of getting the reader out of the labyrinth of complexity within the story (Thoms 136). Besides, according to Thoms, a detective like Dupin also becomes an author, who figuratively "writes the hidden story of the crime" (133).

Hammond defines Dupin as a young man who comes from a high-class family but whose capital has been reduced, so he decides to share an apartment with the narrator in Paris. Dupin's character and methodology and the use of logic following an analytical procedure (Hammond 92-93), became models for later authors who tried to emulate Poe, recreating the character's essence and method but from different approaches. According to Hammond, however, none have managed to overcome him (92-93). Poe possesses a superior power of imagination that, in agreement with Shulman, creates an attraction to readers since he is a master of the poetic imagination (254).

Poe creates a very complex portrait of Dupin. Hammond claims that despite appearing to be a cold and analytical machine, Poe is also able to create and represent the figure of a distinctive human being. Thanks to the narrator, the reader is able to know more details about the narrator's and Dupin's personality (94). However, Marković and Oklopčić describe Dupin as a character with a dual personality evinced by "the hints of the bi-part soul/madness he exhibits: imagination and cold analysis, melancholia and enthusiasm" (94). Authors like Hammond, see Dupin as an alter-ego of Poe. Despite having suffered mental problems on several occasions, the stories of C. Auguste Dupin reflect the great intellectual capacity of Poe (95). In Dupin, he presents an idealization of himself, creating a figure that has the opportunity to put into practice his exceptional abilities (Hammond 95). This duality is also present in later detectives and so it is going to be a key fact for the analysis of personality in later sections of this paper.

In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), the first appearance of Dupin in literature, the action takes place in Paris where the narrator and Dupin discover in the newspapers the murder of Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter Mademoiselle Camille L'Esplanaye. In the end, they discover that the author of the murder was an ourang-outang that escaped from its owner, a sailor. In a letter to Dr. Joseph Snodgrass, Poe wrote about this story that "its theme was the exercise of ingenuity in detecting a murderer" (Quinn 354). In that period the interest of solving crimes through logic increased in Poe's writing. The plot stands out for its originality and for how Poe deals with the mystery until reaching a final solution, what gave rise to a new branch of literature (Hammond 91-93).

The second story is "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842-1843). On this occasion, the narrator and Dupin resolve the disappearance of a young woman, Marie Rogêt, through the different reports offered by journals of the area. Both stories "involve the study of newspapers" (Thoms 134). As stated by Hammond, Poe discovered a real case that took place in New York in 1842 which caused social commotion, while he was looking for inspiration for a new adventure for his detective. Yet, the argument of this narrative was more complex and longer than that of the previous story (93). Therefore, as Hammond says, the narrative had less popularity among readers, but this story "helped to enhance both Poe's reputation as an analytical thinker and Dupin's renown as the infallible solver of intractable problems" (95).

The third and last of Dupin's stories, "The Purloined Letter" (1844), is "possibly the one which has been most influential in shaping the rationale of the detective story as we know it today" (Hammond 95). Dupin explains to the narrator how he has managed to get back a letter that had been stolen by a minister. In this case, as Thoms explains, Dupin adopts the point of view of the criminal in order to discover the reason for his actions and in consequence be able to find the stolen letter (134-135). This same case occurs in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" when following the thoughts of the narrator and the sailor and in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" in order to discover the steps the girl took the night she disappeared. Nevertheless, the clearest instance of this particular procedure resides in "The Purloined Letter" (136).

As previously stated, Dupin's main method used in the three stories is reasoning, but it is applied differently in each of them. In "The Murders of the Rue Morgue", "the detective [...] solves a crime through a process of logical deduction, or ratiocination, from the evidence that is presented to him or her by others" (Scaggs 21). In the case of "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt", "Dupin solves the murder by reading the various newspaper reports describing it" (Scaggs 21). And in "The Purloined Letter", Dupin solves the crime "by listening to the police prefect's description of the situation" (Scaggs 21). Moreover, each of the methods that Dupin uses in different stories can be associated with the methods used by later authors. In this way, Sherlock Holmes would be linked to Dupin's deduction method in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", Hercule Poirot and his psychology in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" and, Father Brown and his knowledge of human nature in "The Purloined Letter". In that regard, the methods of Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot and Father Brown are going to be studied in the following sections in relation with the procedures that Dupin uses in each of the three short stories written by Edgar Allan Poe.

2. The method of Sherlock Holmes

If Dupin was the prototype for the detective figure, Conan Doyle's iteration of this archetype rivalled, or even surpassed, the fame of its predecessor. Indeed, "Holmes is the first in a series of great modern detectives, and undoubtedly one of the best known" (Binyon 11 qtd. in Van Laethem 18). Doyle creates a more complex and nuanced version of the detective established with Poe, since "even though Dupin gives the reader a glimpse into his mind and moody character, it is Holmes's fully developed human side that makes him a more individualized character" (Van Laethem 28). This complexity also enabled Doyle to reflect the

values of Victorian England, using reason as a tool to solve concerns intrinsic to that period. As Caprettini explains, "Holmes's investigations are not merely based on cultural assumptions, they often probe and test those assumptions" (401).

Even though authors of detective fiction wrote their works in the form of novels, since the short stories were too small to develop the plot of the crime, Doyle decided to use the short story (Danyté 8), while managing to increase its complexity. The rationale behind Holmes' canon was that each short story presents a new case and plot, but the characters are still the same, preserving the main narrative thread "instead of writing the traditional novel in serial form." (Binyon 12 qtd. in Van Laethem 18). So, in this way, Doyle took advantage of this format in order to play with the character in different scenarios.

However, there are still many blanks about this character: his personality, his method, or perspective. Holmes is presented through the narrations of his friend John Watson and it is from the latter's impressions that the personality of Holmes can be built. Danyté makes a brief description about him in her work:

[...] he is an expert in the new science of identifying fingerprints, and can also distinguish different kinds of tobacco as well. He often published an article on some very specialized topic. He has a laboratory in Baker Street and acts as a kind of scientist [...]. At the same time, Holmes is subject to deep fits of depression and dreaminess, in which he plays the violin for hours, smokes one pipe after another and sometimes uses narcotics drugs. (9-10)

Yet, what makes possible the accessibility to the way the detective's mind works is the method. The method of Sherlock Holmes is based on the science of deduction and analysis, and above all, "Holmes is able to solve cases because he knows what he needs to pay attention." (Van Laethem 51). "A Study in Scarlet" (1887) is the first work where Sherlock Holmes appears and, therefore, it is the work in which Doyle puts more emphasis on describing him and his method. The first time the reader learns about the science in which Holmes bases his method is when the narrator reads an article entitled "The Book of Life" whose objective was "to show how much an observant man might learn by an accurate and systematic examination of all that came in his way." (Doyle "Study" 27; pt. 1). Holmes explains the basis of this science: "by a man's finger-nails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot [...] by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed." (Doyle "Study" 28; pt. 1).

Holmes considers the art of deduction very simple: "it was easier to know it than to explain why I know it." (Doyle "Study" 35; pt. 1). He not only has extensive knowledge in different areas but also possesses a great intelligence of which he is aware. As De Carli well describes, "he knows that his mind works in a different way and sometimes doesn't truly understand how other people do not function in the same manner" (18). On one occasion, he asks Watson the number of stairs in their house at Baker Street, but Watson had never counted them, to which Holmes replies: "You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed." (Doyle "Scandal" 8; ch. 1). That is what makes Sherlock Holmes special and unique, taking advantage of that to solve crimes. This is reflected in the work of Neill, who

explains that "although detectives usually cannot fly or lift off rooftops, the best of them might, like Holmes himself, be gifted with a form of intuition that analogously enables them to see more than the human faculties normally make possible." (616).

The method of Sherlock Holmes surprises the narrator although he has explained the procedure numerous times, he even says: "you would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago" (Doyle "Scandal" 7; ch. 1). Like the reader, Watson tries to understand how the detective's mind works, so he watches him carefully while he puts his method into practice. Watson offers a vision of Holmes while he is analysing the crime scene: So engrossed was he with his occupation that he appeared to have forgotten our presence, for he chattered away to himself under his breath the whole time, [...]. As I watched him I was irresistibly reminded of a pure-blooded, well-trained foxhound [...] until it comes across the lost scent. (Doyle "Study" 51; pt. 1).

Onderková states that "Holmes is very confident in his conclusions and he is never mistaken" (34). The same procedure is repeated in each case: first Holmes examines the scene of the crime and reaches his own conclusions thanks to his method; then, he gives the resolution of the case; and finally, the police agent or Watson asks him how he was able to know the answer and Holmes explains his method. He knows the height of the murderer because "the height of a man, in nine cases out of ten, can be told from the length of his stride" (Doyle "Study" 55; pt. 1) and because "when a man writes on a wall, his instinct leads him to write about the level of his own eyes"; whereas he knows his age, because "if a man can stride four and a-half feet without the smallest effort, he can't be quite in the sere and yellow" (Doyle "Study" 55-6; pt. 1).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Holmes speaks about his own method, he does not want to reveal all the details since "a conjuror gets no credit when once he has explained his trick; and if I show you too much of my method of working, you will come to the conclusion that I am a very ordinary individual after all" (Doyle "Study" 58; pt. 1). Thus, the reason why Holmes solves crimes is pure pleasure, since it is a challenge for his intelligence. He does not look for glory or money, but challenges. Resolving cases is the reason for his existence.

2.1 Sherlock Holmes and C. Auguste Dupin

It is impossible not to remember C. Auguste Dupin when defining Sherlock Holmes. Both use the same method to solve crimes, they have a narrator who is their partner and friend in the cases and very similar personalities and tastes. That is why, according to Van Laethem:

He [Holmes] exemplifies the 'ideal' detective or analyst as described in the prologue to 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue': he is able to combine imagination and observation. Holmes's attention to peculiar details is reflected by the stereotypical image people have of him; a cloak-wearing character that inspects everything in a crime scene using a magnifying glass (51).

In "A Study in Scarlet", Watson compares Holmes with Dupin from the very beginning: "you remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist

outside of stories" (Doyle "Study" 31; pt. 1). However, Holmes considers himself a much more superior being than the character of Dupin: "he had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine" (Doyle "Study" 31; pt. 1).

Dupin and Holmes use the same method in "The Crimes in the Rue Morgue" and "A Study in Scarlet". Both are based on the observation of small details that are unremarkable for others. Dupin, like Holmes, describes his interests in the science of observation: "observation has become with me, of late, a species of necessity" (Poe "Murders" 9). The crimes in both stories are very similar. The two deal with seemingly unsolvable murders in a room with no witnesses. Holmes, as it has been explained before, registers the whole crime scene. Dupin does the same: examines the corpses and checks the windows: "I now replaced the nail and looked attentively. A person passing through this window might have reclosed it [...]. The conclusion was plain, and again narrowed in the field of my investigations" (Poe "Murders" 23).

In both stories, the two detectives make use of newspapers to attract the murderer. In "A Study in Scarlet", Holmes writes an advertisement under the name of Watson, with the intention of not being recognized, so that the murderer "would eagerly look out for the evening papers in the hope of seeing it among the articles found" (Doyle "Study" 72; pt. 1). In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", Dupin follows the same method, writing in this case an advertisement about an orang-outang. Similarly, the owner of the animal takes the detective's bait and thanks to the version he provides, Dupin manages to solve the case: "if the Frenchman in question is indeed, as I suppose, innocent of this atrocity, this advertisement, which I left last night, upon our return home, at the office of 'Le Monde' [...] will bring him to our residence." (Poe "Murders" 29).

These two detectives not only coincide in their method, but they also have very similar personalities. In fact, Dupin and Holmes share the same duality: both are characterized by having an ambiguous personality that with fits of melancholy while they reflect on the information of the cases, becoming quite introverted. The narrator in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" explains his impression about Dupin's duality: "Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent." (Poe "Murders" 7). Watson also observes this trait in Holmes in his moments of reflexion: "I heard the low, melancholy wailings of his violin, and knew that he was still pondering over the strange problem which he had set himself to unravel." (Doyle "Study" 81; pt. 1). O'Brien presents the same understanding in his work: "in Poe's tales, we read of Dupin's 'bi-part soul.' In Holmes, we see a man of intense action when on a case and the bored drug user whenever he misses the stimulation of work." (7).

In conclusion, C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes are so similar because both represent the ideal model of the detective and because Poe was a great influence for Doyle's writings. As Van Laethem describes, "the discussion of the stories' context showed which other people could have inspired Doyle and to what extent Holmes's creator adapted certain aspects of Poe's stories to make his detective respond to contemporary changes" (73).

3. The method of Hercule Poirot

As Havlíčková explains in her thesis, "Agatha Christie was the most prominent writer of this period and belonged to the first wave of English Queens of Crime" (9). Hercule Poirot is a character who was born in a time when its creator, Agatha Christie, was one of the most famous writers. It was in 1920 when Christie published *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, a work in which Poirot appears for the first time, becoming one of the detectives that has left his mark in history. Bajaj describes Poirot as a man "with his egg shaped head, large mustaches, a somewhat comic appearance and those deadly 'little grey cells' which were to become so enduringly appealing to all readers of detective fiction" (15). In this case, Poirot is a refined detective. It can be seen in his way of dressing, his behaviour and in his different tastes, such as the drinks he takes. On one occasion he describes Captain Hastings' tea as "your English poison" (Christie "Disappearance" 159).

Poirot's method is also based on deduction. However, the science that he relies on is psychology, combining both of them. One of the most famous facts about Poirot is his constant references to grey cells, which is the term he adopts to say that his mind is working: "Let us be calm. Let us reflect. Let us reason. Let us—*enfin!*—employ our little gray cells!" (Christie "Veiled" 210). When Poirot is going to solve a case, his method consists in asking questions to witnesses and the suspects: "I do not know everything. Therefore, you see, I have to ask questions." (Christie *Elephants* 136).

His methodical and organized personality is reflected in the way he solves cases: "It is true that I approach such problems with an exact science, a mathematical precision, which seems, alas, only too rare in the new generation of detectives!" (Christie "Disappearance" 161). For him, solving crimes is like a children's game. On one occasion, Poirot makes a bet with Inspector Japp, claiming that he will be able to solve the crime without leaving the room. When he succeeds, he feels sorry for the inspector because it is "like robbing a child" (Christie "Disappearance" 166). In addition, Poirot feels a great pleasure, as Holmes does, in solving crimes (Christie "Veiled" 205), and he also has an "insatiable curiosity" (Christie *Elephants* 135) that makes it difficult for him to stop investigating. Poirot also leads a lifestyle that does not allow him to put an end to his role as a detective. As Havlíčková describes, "he leaves his house quite often and travels abroad, [...] and every time some kind of crime comes his way. This is the reason why he cannot stop being a detective, even though he tends to promise so for ages" (39-40). Although he does not depend economically as much on being a detective as Sherlock Holmes does, investigation constitutes "one of my [his] tasks in life" (Christie *Elephants* 123).

As any good detective, Poirot is a master at looking at the details that seem irrelevant: "Most details are insignificant, one or two are vital. It is the brain, the little gray cells [...] on which one must rely" (Christie "Disappearance" 161). As with Holmes and Dupin, he is able to see what ordinary people cannot. Poirot's intellect is such that in some cases he only needs to listen to the different testimonies of those involved in the crime to solve the case; declarations that he gets thanks to inspiring confidence in people because "Poirot is more open; he is soft spoken and can easily strike up a conversation and speaks kindly to everyone" (Björk 18).

In conclusion, he creates a different way of approaching crimes. He is an expert in psychology because he knows why people act in one way or another and he provides that clues are not the most important piece to solve crimes. As Havlíčková explains:

When investigating, he builds upon several principles: logic, sense, knowledge, feelings and psychological examination of the suspects. He deduces and then selects thoughts as one might select pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. He believes that all crimes are psychological and having clues is not everything (43).

3.1 Hercule Poirot and C. Auguste Dupin

Havlíčková affirms that "Agatha Christie herself confesses that she was inspired by Sherlock Holmes stories when creating this figure" (45). In the same way that Arthur Conan Doyle was influenced by Auguste Dupin, as previously stated, it is inevitable that all these characters have connections and similarities between them. In this case, there can be established a relationship between "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" and Agatha Christie's *Elephants Can Remember*. Both stories deal with murders that took place in the previous decades ago and were covered by many newspapers. Thus, the two crimes represent the same idea: looking into the past in order to know the truth.

As explained in the analysis of "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt", the only knowledge that the reader has about the famous murder of the girl is what Dupin and the narrator read in the newspapers: "the public papers immediately took up the theme, and the police were upon the point of making serious investigations" (Poe "Mystery" 39). They take reports from different journals in order to have diverse points of view of the case. In *Elephants Can Remember*, the papers narrate the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Ravenscroft whose corpses were found on the edge of a cliff near their house in Overcliffe, stirring "a lot of attention at the time" (Christie *Elephants* 20). The only thing that was discovered was a revolver that belonged to Mr. Ravenscroft, which showed fingerprints of both members of the couple. The information that appeared in the newspapers was very limited, so Poirot does not have many resources to solve the crime either.

In both cases the detectives use the same method: psychology. Neither of the two has been in the scene, the two crimes happened several years ago, and the evidences are practically non-existent. Dupin recreates the steps and thoughts that Marie Rogêt could have had the night in which she was murdered. Dupin uses psychology in order to find out if the young girl had planned an escape and, unfortunately, a gang of criminals ended her life on the way, or if instead, it was the work of a single murderer. In the same way, Poirot has to use psychology to analyse the testimonies of the people who could have been involved in the murder. He has to find out if they are telling the truth and the reasons that could have led them to commit the crime.

The declarations and the newspapers are documentation and evidence from the past because "we all have interests in certain cases that are past" (Christie *Elephants* 66). Dupin and Poirot have to look among the small details to discover the truth. Both crimes have a lack of evidences, so the police never came to find the truth. The ignorance of the facts in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" and in *Elephants Can Remember* creates speculation. Cases

like these, those that seem to be easily solvable but are not so, attract Dupin and Poirot. This is very well explained by Poe's narrator: "there is nothing peculiarly *outré* about it, you will observe that, for this reason, the mystery has been considered easy, when, for this reason, it should have been considered difficult, of solution." ("Mystery" 50).

As the truth is not known, all kinds of speculations are explored, such as the existence of lovers in both crimes, and even the possibility of suicide is considered. In "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt", Dupin dismisses it quickly: "Here, too, we are freed, at the commencement, from all supposition of selfmurder" (Poe "Mystery" 50). However, in *Elephants can Remember*, several people, including the police and the couple's relations, believed that Mrs. Ravenscroft was ill and that both decided to end their lives as a result: "If the police could not find out at the time, then the motive must have been a difficult one, not easy to see" (Christie *Elephants* 36). So, Poirot does not eliminate that possibility till the end. Thus, in these cases, Dupin and Poirot solve crimes despite the lack of evidences. Both are able to go beyond the versions that appear in newspapers and once again demonstrate their superior mental capacity.

4. The method of Father Brown

The last detective that is going to be analysed in this paper is Father Brown, created by Gilbert Keith Chesterton and who made his first appearance in 1911 in *The Innocence of Father Brown*. Following the footsteps of Conan Doyle, Chesterton was inspired by someone from his environment to create this character, in this case, "the original of Father Brown was Monsignor John O'Connor, a Yorkshire priest and a great friend of Chesterton" (Hollis 12-13).

Chesterton subverts the basic premise of detective fiction, rooted in the Enlightenment's glorification of reason as previously stated, as reason alone ceases to be the main method to solve the cases. Indeed, "Chesterton proves that the church, rather than a philosophy that only considers the physical evident, is much better at understanding the world" (Stumme 73). So far, the detectives studied—like many others have only used reason for their methods. The spiritual dimension has always disregarded, as "Dupin and Holmes do not rely on a Christian understanding of the universe. Instead, they adhere to a rationalistic worldview, one that observes logic and physical observation as the only means to knowledge" (Stumme 72).

For this reason, through Father Brown, Chesterton will create a new way not only to solve crimes, but also of looking at criminals. Chesterton expresses his view of the crimes in a peculiar way: "the criminal is the creative artist, the detective only the critic" (Chesterton "Blue" 9). Their stories are no longer going to be focused only on the history of the crime itself, but rather "there is superb writing, marvellous descriptive scenes of both nature and city life, humour, and, above all, philosophical reflections." (Gardner 5).

Despite seeing the crimes in a different way, Father Brown, like the rest of detectives studied, speaks about his method. Father Brown's method consists in his knowledge of human nature. By assuming the criminal's perspective, he is able to discover how the crimes have been committed. He explains this method in *The Secret of Father Brown*: "I had thought

out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who he was." (Chesterton *Secret* 10). This is possible thanks to his experience as a priest, and thus a confessor, a fact that he mentions on more than one occasion: "we can't help being priests. People come and tell us these things." (Chesterton "Blue" 29). This position has permitted him to hear innumerable confessions of criminals, so many that he always finds one that is similar to the crime he is investigating. It is this knowledge that allows him to think as the criminal: "I mean that I thought and thought about how a man might come to be like that, until I realised that I really was like that, in everything except actual final consent to the action." (Chesterton *Secret* 11).

Nevertheless, what makes Father Brown a great detective is his ability to combine reason with the spiritual. The spiritual is reflected by his intuition, which has a fundamental role when it comes to solving crimes as he always lets himself be guided by it and rarely errs. That is why "the Catholic priest Father Brown, may initially find the particulars of a case perplexing but he ultimately succeeds in deciphering them because he is confident that there is an order to the universe which man can intuit" (Aguilar 15-16).

Another important fact about the personality of Father Brown is that his goal, apart from solving the crime, is to reform the criminal. In this case Father Brown is more involved with criminals because what Father Brown seeks is the criminal's repentance, since "he investigates murders for the sake of the murderer who can save his soul if he will confess and repent" (Auden qtd. in Gardner 9). This is reflected in one of the cases in which Father Brown discovers Flambeau in one of his numerous robberies, threatening the criminal with a vision of hell, "I want to threaten you with the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched", and admonishing him to repent, "and I am ready to hear your confession" (Chesterton "Queer" 77). It also appears represented in another case in which he lets the murderer turn himself in to the police: "I leave things to you because you have not yet gone very far wrong, as assassins go" (Chesterton "Hammer" 257-258).

Thus, it is these qualities that make him different from others. Father Brown not only incorporates a new way of solving cases, but he is more involved with criminals. His role as priest is indispensable since what he seeks is their repentance. In this way, as Stumme explains, "Father Brown is able to use both logical reasoning and a knowledge of the supernatural to make himself an exceptionally 'complete' detective who can understand all aspects of a case" (76).

4.1 Father Brown and C. Auguste Dupin

Although at first it may seem that Dupin and Father Brown have nothing in common, both share the same method in two very similar cases. Again, this is produced by the great influence of Poe over many writers, Chesterton included. These two works are "The Purloined Letter" and "The Queer Feet". The case in Poe's tale revolves around a letter that has been stolen and that is hidden in the house of the thief. Chesterton's narration presents a similar case in which a silver cutlery is stolen during a dinner at a hotel. The assistants do not realize this until the end, in which thanks to the intelligence of Father Brown, the thief is stopped in time and the cutlery recovered.

The main element that unites these two stories is that the answer to the mystery of the crime is in front of the characters but the only one who is able to see it is the detective. In "The Purloined Letter", the letter is in the same office of the minister's house, in full view, with the only difference being that the minister had changed its appearance, making it "radically different from the one of which the prefect had read us so minute a description" (Poe "Purloined" 98). In "The Queer Feet" the thief was hiding among the members of the dinner, and thanks to the similar suits of the thief and the hotel's staff, the former had no problem to infiltrate among staff and guests without anyone noticing. That is the reason why the narrator begins this story describing the clothes of the members of the club, because they had decided to change the colour of their coats in order to avoid precisely that misunderstanding: "his evening coat is green [...] he does it to avoid being mistaken for a waiter" (Chesterton "Queer" 65).

Another part of Dupin's and Father Brown's common method is their knowledge of human nature, which helps them assume the perspective of others. As Stumme affirms, "the simplicity of the case is in that to understand the mystery one must realize only a small part of human nature" (23). They put themselves in the mind of the criminal and thanks to that they manage to deduce the whereabouts of the stolen letter and of the silver cutlery. Dupin thinks that if the minister wanted to use the letter, it should always have been accessible: "the document must always have been at hand" (Poe "Purloined" 97). When he explores the minister's house, he quickly discovers the letter, since he reaches the same conclusion as the minister would by assuming his perspective, realising that the best place to hide the letter is not to hide it: "the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident" (Poe "Purloined" 97).

Father Brown is in a hotel room writing when he suddenly hears strange footsteps: "these footsteps were so odd that one could not decide to call them regular or irregular" (Chesterton "Queer" 71). The shoes of those steps produce a strange noise, so Father Brown deduces that it has to come from the same person, in this case, the well-known thief Flambeau. Father Brown has such a knowledge of human nature that he is also able to explain how the thief has managed to go unnoticed: "all those vague and kindly gentlemen were so used to the utter smoothness of the unseen machinery that a waiter doing something unexpected was a start and a jar" (Chesterton "Queer" 82).

In conclusion, Dupin and Father Brown are able to detect even what is disguised by being in plain sight, since they are able to put themselves in the place of the criminal, thanks to their knowledge of human nature, and to follow exactly the steps of the suspects, recreating their every thought and solving the case.

5. Conclusion

This paper has contemplated in the first place the method of Holmes, Poirot, and Father Brown, showing the way in which their minds work in order to discover their gift, and, in the second place, the importance of Poe's works as the main influence, not only in style, but also in method, in such a way that it can be found a multitude of connections as has been demonstrated.

As to the origin of the fictional detective, the need to find answers as well as the emergence of new Enlightenment's ideas resulted in the creation of this character. That new figure was capable of solving crimes through reason by using some skills that differentiate him from ordinary people. Crimes were seen as a puzzle in which the detective is the one who unites each of the pieces until everything makes sense. Therefore, it is this concept that gives importance to the method, the way in which the detective joins each of the pieces.

Concerning the method, it has been stated that the method of Sherlock Holmes is based on the science of deduction which consists of looking at the small details. Holmes is not only able to see, but also to observe, and possess enough knowledge in different areas to be able to find an answer to the crimes. The method of Hercule Poirot is quite different since Poirot bases his research on the science of psychology. For him, the evidence is not the basis for solving the crime, but the truth is always in the past. Father Brown, with his method based on the knowledge of human nature, creates a new way of looking not only at crimes, but also at criminals, since thanks to his position as a priest, he knows the way in which criminals think because of their confessions.

As it has been proved, Poe's character was an inspiration for later authors of the genre, and that is why it can be established connections between the methods used by Dupin and those used by Holmes, Poirot and Father Brown. Holmes and Dupin coincide not only in the method of deduction, but also in personality, since both share a duality in their character with moments of lucidity and melancholy. Poirot and Dupin have the ability of solving crimes with something that is missing. They use psychology in order to find the truth through the memories of those involved. Father Brown and Dupin have in common a great knowledge of human nature since their intuition plays a fundamental role.

These detectives, despite using different methods, are connected through Dupin, and at the same time, through a single purpose: solving crimes for the purest and simplest pleasure. In that regard, Dupin is a key figure since Poe is not inspired by any previous author, but he is able to create a model for the rest of writers. He has the method of Holmes, Poirot and Father Brown, and applies each of them according to the crime. For this reason, it can be stated that C. Auguste Dupin is the most complete detective in the genre.

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Lydia Navajas Martín holds a degree in English Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid. Concerning her academic research, her main areas of interest are crime fiction and gothic literature. During her university studies, she became attentive in Edgar Allan Poe and, more specifically, on the analysis of detective stories. Following her activity in this field, she carried out a study of the method of the detective and the influence of the character C. Auguste Dupin in her final year research project.

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