

# “OUTSIDE OF STORIES”: THE NARRATOR AND THE FLANEUR IN POE’S AND DOYLE’S DETECTIVE FICTION

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**Abstract:** This study compares the characters of Dupin and Holmes from *The murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) by Edgar Allan Poe and *A study in scarlet* (1887) by Arthur Conan Doyle considering the concept of flaneur brought up in the nineteenth century by Charles Baudelaire. Besides that, it analyzes the narration perspective and how it contributes to the construction of the detectives’ character in the story. Given the objectives, the procedures here will be reading both literary pieces along with the theoretical review selected in order to connect mass literature and canonic literature, demonstrating how every literary work can be investigated apart from its academic status. Finally, both characters proved to be compatible with the concept, as they are, indeed, outsiders who see what is hidden to other’s eyes. In addition, the narrator showed himself as someone much more closer to the reader, as their point of view is coherent with one another, making the characterization of the detectives easier to be decoded.

**Keywords:** literature. flaneur. narrator.

**Resumo:** Este artigo busca comparar os personagens de Dupin e Holmes de *Os assassinatos da Rua Morgue* (1841) de Edgar Allan Poe e *Um estudo em vermelho* (1887) de Arthur Conan Doyle considerando o conceito de flaneur criado no século XIX por Charles Baudelaire e analisar a perspectiva da narração e como ela contribui para a construção dos personagens na história. Para isso, realizaremos a leitura de ambas as obras literárias juntamente com o material teórico selecionado para que possamos conectar a literatura de massa e a literatura canônica, demonstrando como toda obra literária pode ser investigada independentemente de seu status acadêmico. Por fim, ambos os personagens provaram ser compatíveis com o conceito, de modo que eles possuem a habilidade de ver o que é oculto aos olhos alheios. Além disso, o narrador se mostrou ser alguém muito mais próximo do leitor, já que o ponto de vista de ambos é coerente entre si, tornando a caracterização dos detetives mais fácil de ser decodificada.

**Palavras-chave:** literatura. flaneur. narração.

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## INTRODUCTION

That anamnestic intoxication in which the flaneur goes about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often processes itself of abstract knowledge – indeed, of the dead facts – as something experienced and lived through. This felt knowledge travels from one person to another, especially by word of mouth. (Walter Benjamin, *The Arcade Project*, 1999)

This study aims at creating a parallel between two narratives: *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (POE, 1841) and *A Study in Scarlet* (DOYLE, 1887) by analyzing the narration and the detectives Sherlock Holmes and Auguste Dupin using the concept of flaneur – hence our epigraph, which provides us with our working definition. The concept was articulated by Charles Baudelaire in the nineteenth century. In *The painter of modern life and other essays* (1964), he defines it as the voice of an artist-poet of the modern metropolis.

“The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are or are not—to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas. Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were

an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.” (BAUDELAIRE, 1863, p. 9)

The flaneur is the one who observes; s/he can see things that the others cannot: “For him alone everything is vacant; and if certain places seem closed to him, it is only because in his eyes they are not worth visiting” (BAUDELAIRE, 1970, p. 20 apud TESTER, 1994, p. 4). S/he is always on the streets, hidden, not being part of the crowd, because he is always analyzing the crowd. “Morally and culturally the public holds no mysteries for the man who is proud of the mystery of himself” (TESTER, 1994, p. 4). This is a someone who knows a great deal about the others, for s/he continually observes and, in a way, reads and interprets them; however, no one knows about him/her, for s/he is careful enough to guarantee such secrecy about him/herself. In a nutshell, the flaneur is the “alienated man of the crowd” (BENJAMIN, 1999, p. 10). S/he can be whoever s/he desires to be.

Our interest in establishing a parallel between these characters and the flaneur is due to the fact that the detective, like the flaneur, also has a particular way of experiencing the mysteries surrounding him/her. “A unique access to these urban secrets allows him [the detective], like a psychoanalyst, to go beyond the purely visible to read the city’s collective unconscious” (CRAWFORD, 1992, p. 120). Our procedures, therefore, consist in: reading *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (POE, 1841) and *A Study in Scarlet* (DOYLE, 1887); selecting parts of each one; analyzing and comparing both along with the theoretical review; and, after this, showing the results of this research. We deem our propo-

sal to be relevant because, the way we see it, mass literature nowadays is still not given deserved credibility for most literature scholars, who privilege classic literature – the canon – instead. Besides that, the concept of flaneur is usually associated with canonic literary works, and Sherlock Holmes, like many other bestselling pieces, may not be taken by some as canonic literature. So, this study connects canonic literature with mass literature, in an attempt to demonstrate how every literary material is amenable to be investigated, regardless of its academic status.

The Murders in the Rue Morgue is a short story written by Edgar Allan Poe. It was published for the first time in April, 1841. It tells the story of the detective Auguste Dupin, in Paris, in which he solves the mystery of a brutal murder when two women were killed in their own house, at the Rue Morgue. None of the witnesses agrees about what language they heard the suspect speaking. Later, Dupin finds a hair that does not seem to be of a human being at the crime scene. The story is told to us by a friend of Dupin, who we do not know anything about, not even the name; we do not meet this character in the whole narrative. Concerning the story's author, Poe is an American writer, poet, critic and editor known for his short stories and poems. He gave birth to the modern detective stories because of the mystery and horror that are all over his work<sup>3</sup>. He was possibly the main inspiration for Sherlock Holmes. Doyle even mentions Dupin in *A Study in Scarlet* in Watson's speech: "You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 11).

*A Study in Scarlet*, written by Arthur Conan Doyle, was published in November, 1887, in Beeton's Christmas Annual by Ward, Lock & Co., and later republished in July, 1888,

in novel format. The story is divided into two parts, the first is entitled: Being a reprint from the reminiscences of JOHN H. WATSON, M.D., late of the Army Medical Department. The second one is entitled: The country of the saints. Dr. John H. Watson, a veteran of the Second Afghan War, meets Sherlock Holmes, a strange detective. Later they become friends and share a flat on 221B, Baker Street. Then, Watson becomes Holmes's partner in the investigations. The main mystery in the narrative is about a corpse found at an abandoned house in Brixton, London with the word "rache" scrawled in blood on the wall beside the dead body. The story is told to us by another person, not the detective either, but this time we meet the character: his partner, John Watson. Doyle was a British writer, and was known mainly for his Sherlock Holmes's works. He wrote 60 stories – 56 short stories and 4 novels – about Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. He also strove to spread his Spiritualism faith through a series of books that were written from 1918 to 1926. Sherlock's adventures became so famous that when Doyle wrote *The memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* – where Watson reports the death of Holmes – fans were so angry that he had to write another book: *The return of Sherlock Holmes* where the detective reappears.

An important factor is how the characters in each narrative are characterized by the narrator – hence our focus also on the construction of the main characters through the eyes of someone else. Certainly, the kind of narration reflects in the story and mainly in the characters, and this is also true of course when we talk about *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (POE, 1841) and *A Study in Scarlet* (DOYLE, 1887). We see what the characters that are telling the story see, and this is a different point of view from the prota-

3 2014. Biography: <https://www.biography.com/people/edgar-allan-poe-9443160>

4 2014. Biography: <https://www.biography.com/people/arthur-conan-doyle-9278600>

gonist detectives, which gives the reader the opportunity to look at the story with a different perspective. The flaneur searches for a meaning in his/her freedom: a self-definition. In the case of the detectives Dupin and Holmes, they use deduction and investigation for that searching; and, in our research, such concept is tested as a mechanism to identify, analyze, and expose how the narrator, as well as the object narrated (i.e. the detectives), might be seen as interconnected spheres for the construction of meaning(s).

Our overall objective, therefore, is to investigate if and, if so, in what way the concept of flaneur is applicable to the development of both detectives inside the narrative, and through the eyes of the narrator – i.e. analyzing, consequently, if we can say that Holmes and Dupin fit in this concept. The specific objectives are the following: 1) to compare the two detectives, Dupin and Holmes, drawing attention to the manner whereby they are built by the respective narrators; 2) To propose a parallel between the narrators of these stories as to identify how their perspectives interfere in the construction of the plot; and, finally 3) to set off from the analysis of the narrators to the idea of the flaneur, shifting our focus from the eyes that observe to the object observed: the two detectives. Besides, we believe that, in both narratives, we have this feeling of “non-belongingness” related to the detectives, and our hypothesis is that this feeling is enhanced by the type of narration we have in these stories.

## DISCUSSION

One of the things that this analysis provides us with is a comparison between Dupin and Holmes, taking their similarities, differences, and particularities into consideration. This relationship has already been studied by researchers such as Laethem

(2017), who reflects upon the construction of Sherlock Holmes with the inspiration that Arthur Conan Doyle supposedly took from Auguste Dupin. “Moreover, without Dupin as a predecessor, Holmes as we know him might never even have existed” (LAETHEM, 2017, p. 4). Holmes and Dupin do seem to have some common characteristics, and the more notable one is their ability of deduction. When they use their deductive skills people get impressed, as we can see, for example, in Watson’s speech when he meets Sherlock Holmes: “how on earth did you know that?” I asked in astonishment” (DOYLE, 1887, p. 6). It happens, as well, in the speech of Dupin’s friend: “Then, he surprised me by telling what he knew about my own soul; and I found that he knew things about me that I had thought only I could possibly know” (POE, 1841, p. 39). In *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) Doyle mentions Poe’s character Dupin, and Holmes gives his own opinion about this fictional detective:

Dupin was a very inferior fellow. That trick of his of breaking in on his friends’ thoughts with an apropos remark after a quarter of an hour’s silence is really very showy and superficial. He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine. (1887, p.11)

Nevertheless, and before we address more specifically the construction of each detective as flaneurs, our focus shall be directed to the strategies of narration. This is so for, to understand these characters, we consider the type of narration in these stories to be of great importance. When we read *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (POE, 1841) and *A Study in Scarlet* (DOYLE, 1887) we see the whole story through the eyes of the narrator. In both cases, the character who narrates the story is close to the detective. We see the story, the characters

and their personality, their thoughts, their actions, and their feelings through the narrator's point of view, and this allows for a greater participation from the reader – who can see him/herself within the story, trying as well to interpret the actions of this strange fellow who is investigating a crime. Both detectives' personalities are central, methodical and analytical and, therefore, we tend not to feel comfortable with them.

Birke and Köppe (2015) suggest that for every fictional story there is a fictional narrator who tells the story to us; hence their concoction of a pan-narrator theory. "No matter what or who narrators are exactly, all brands of pan-narrator theories have in common that they hold them to be fictional in the same way a character like Sherlock Holmes is fictional." (2015, p. 139). This is to say that the voice telling a story is also part (and an integral part) of that story:

"theories lead us to expect that texts in fiction always refer to speakers, which come as part of these utterance contexts. Intuition, on the contrary, tells us that many stories do not create the impression that there is someone who is telling us all this" (BIRKE; KOPPE, 2015, p.153).

In the case of our objects of analysis, the authors' choice is for a secondary character who is very close to the central one to narrate the story – what we call an intra and homodiegetic narration. One of our hypothesis, bearing that in mind, is that such choice results in that these central characters' feeling of belongingness is increased due to this sort of narration.

## THE NARRATOR

The role these two narrators have in both literary pieces is very significant, since it is through their eyes that we see each part of the story. Most importantly, it is through

the narrator that we grasp both detectives' personalities. It is precisely because of the peripheral narrator that all the suspense is created with the characters and goes along in the story; besides that, both narrators are chosen maybe for they have a good view of what is happening around them. Another interesting perspective about peripheral narration, which is presented to the reader in both stories, is that we do not accompany the train of thoughts from neither Dupin nor Holmes. This becomes clearer within the discourse of the narrators, since they are, in a certain way, a reflection of the reader him/herself into the story that goes along with the detectives. In *The murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), when Dupin and his friend are casually walking down the streets of Paris, Dupin suddenly gives our narrator a conclusion about his thoughts without any discussion, almost as he had foretold what the narrator was thinking.

Suddenly he said: "You're right. He is a very little fellow, that's true, and he would be more successful if he acted in lighter, less serious plays. 'Yes, there can be no doubt of that!' I said. [...] At first I saw nothing strange in this [...] I stopped walking and turned to my friend. "Dupin," I said, "Dupin, this is beyond my understanding. How could you know that I was thinking of..." (POE, 1841, p. 39).

Our narrator is again, astonished with Dupin's reasoning "power". "[...] tell me, in Heaven's name, the method — if method there is — by which you have been able to see into my soul in this matter" (POE, 1841, p. 40). It is possible to see the same content in Watson's speech. "His quiet self-confident manner convinced me that he had already formed a theory which explained all the facts, though what it was I could not for an instant conjecture." (DOYLE, 1887, p. 20).

This sort of camera-eye perspective is a detail that makes the story even more in-

teresting and appealing to the reader. The reader has no clue of what is going on inside the detectives' mind, except for the narrator's discourse. As a result, we have not only the mystery of the crimes that are being investigated by the detectives, but also the mystery of their own thoughts and reasoning – we do not know what they are thinking about neither what probable conclusion they might get to regarding the puzzles that we are being shown by the narrator. Usually, the solution for the mystery appears in the end, when Dupin and Holmes tell us each step they have followed prior to getting to it. This may have a huge impact on the reader, because, even though s/he has been there all the time, s/he is not able to follow all the facts that lead both detectives to find the solution to the crimes they are investigating.

Even though both these narrators perform, in a certain way, a biographer role, they are actually considerably different. The narrator in Poe's story is not developed as a character, he is shallowly constructed. S/his role is telling the story to the reader as if the reader was the eyes of the narrator; the result here is that the reader can feel as if s/he was closer to the detective. According to Lathem (2017, p. 52): "The narrator's main function is that of a biographer who records the detective's genius. The narrator therefore mainly functions as the 'reader-like' perspective on events and on the character of the detective while Watson is built as a fully developed character". As a matter of fact, although through Doyle's work we take the detective as the main character, there are moments in which the story is focused only on Watson. The beginning of the story, for instance, tells us a lot about the narrator. He gives us a brief summary about his life after taking his degree of Doctor in Medicine and going to the second Afghan war. He says: "The campaign brought honours and promotion to many, but for me it had nothing

but misfortune and disaster." (DOYLE, 1887, p. 5). Watson plays the role of the narrator and biographer, but he is also physically and overtly present during the events in the story, mostly as an observer. Sometimes, however, his role as an observer is replaced by the one of the helper, such as when Holmes is discussing about some pills that have been found in one of the crime scenes, and he asks Watson about them – because he is a physician, the detective knows his partner may be able to provide a reliable opinion.

"Now, Doctor,' turning to me, 'are those ordinary pills?' They certainly were not. They were of a pearly grey colour, small, round, and almost transparent against the light. 'From their lightness and transparency, I should imagine that they are soluble in water,' I remarked" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 29). Sometimes Watson turns out to represent a sort of reflection for Holmes' thoughts (for the reader) about these events, such as when Watson is telling Holmes everything he does not understand about the case they are taking care of. After sharing with his partner every detail that seemed, at first, not to have a connection with one another, Holmes says: "You sum up the difficulties of the situation succinctly and well," (DOYLE, 1887, p. 18). Lathem (2017) suggests that because Holmes appears in a long series of tales – while Dupin appears in only three short stories – we are able to see more about Holmes and Watson's relationship. This is, to us, a coherent suggestion; after all, even though Dupin is one among the many central characters created by Poe in a long legacy of stories about the most varied issues (and with the most varied people within it), Holmes and Watson are something like Doyle's "children". There are bunches of stories about them, and although the mysteries of each of these stories may be (mostly) unrelated, it would be fair to say that, regarding these characters, each new tale is a continuation – a develop-

ment for their relationship.

## THE FLANEUR

It is well-known that Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes, these two detectives, are well-known for observing what normal people – so to speak – cannot see. In Holmes' words "[o]bservation with me is second nature" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 10), and this works for Holmes himself, as well as for Dupin. As the narrator tells us,

I soon noticed a special reasoning power he had, an unusual reasoning power. Using it gave him great pleasure [...], he surprised me by telling what he knew about my own soul; and I found that he knew things about me that I had thought only I could possibly know. His manner at these moments was cold and distant. (POE, 1876, p. 39).

As this excerpt clearly informs us, more than a tool to make out the meanings surrounding him, Dupin's reasoning power seems then to be a source of delight, of excitement. Maybe this is why, if they are not solving a mystery, these detectives try to occupy their minds with something else, often studying about a variety of subjects. Talking to people, interacting with others, is something that is far from being attractive for both – one of the worst ways for them to waste their time. Dupin did not like people, but "with books he was happy" (1876, p. 38); and the same could be said about Holmes. In the first interaction between them, when Holmes and Watson meet, the detective, being as straightforward as he is, gives Watson a description about his own personality: "I get in the dumps at times, and don't open my mouth for days on end. You must not think I am sulky when I do that. Just let me alone, and I'll soon be right" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 7).

Here, we begin to see a little bit more about Holmes' disregard for socializing. Although Dupin was an assiduous reader, especially when it comes to literature, Holmes does not show the same characteristic. After moving in together, Watson, stimulated by his curiosity and aim to know more about the detective, tries to analyze a little of his personality and habits. "His ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge. Of contemporary literature, philosophy and politics he appeared to know next to nothing." (DOYLE, 1887, p. 9). In order to make the best of his work, Holmes claims that he only absorbs information that is useful to him. "It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 9). Clearly, Holmes does not find anything important, unless it gives him some advantage or improves his abilities for his work to be effectively done. Nothing else matters but his fathomless need to find a solution, or answer to whatever mystery appears on his way.

Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with. He was quiet in his ways, and his habits were regular. It was rare for him to be up after ten at night, and he had invariably breakfasted and gone out before I rose in the morning. Sometimes he spent his day at the chemical laboratory, sometimes in the dissecting-rooms, and occasionally in long walks, which appeared to take him into the lowest portions of the City. Nothing could exceed his energy when the working fit was upon him; but now and again a reaction would seize him, and for days on end he would lie upon the sofa in the sitting-room, hardly uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night. On these occasions, I have noticed such a dreamy, vacant expression in his eyes, that I might have suspected him of being addicted to the use of some narcotic, had not the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life forbidden such a notion. (DOYLE, 1887, p. 8)

However, let us begin by remembering how it has all started. In *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1876), the narrator and the detective Auguste Dupin meet while searching for the same book. They reencounter each other later and soon they become friends and start living together. The narrator describes Dupin as someone who is always thinking: “Dupin was a lover of the night [...], sometimes talking, sometimes quiet, always thinking” (POE, 1876, p. 39). As they get to know one another, one of the first things that catches the narrator’s attention – which is something he is really amazed of – is Dupin’s reasoning power:

I soon noticed a special reasoning power he had, an unusual reasoning power. Using it gave him great pleasure [...]. [H]e surprised me by telling what he knew about my own soul; and I found that he knew things about me that I had thought only I could possibly know. His manner at these moments was cold and distant. (POE, 1876, p. 39)

There are, in our view, two interesting aspects in this characterization of Dupin by the narrator. Firstly, one can notice how the detective reasoning power is described almost as a bizarre force – something that has, apparently, no logical and/or concrete explanation. Besides that, we have this revelation that, every time such reasoning power is “activated”, the detective becomes automatically even colder and more distant. So here we see that there is a direct relation between the aloof personality of this character with his ability to analyze the world around him in such a particular way. In *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), Watson is searching for a place to live after coming back from Afghanistan. Since he does not have much money, he thinks about sharing an apartment with somebody else. While in a bar, Watson reenounters an old acquaintance, called Stam-

ford. In the middle of their conversation he mentions that he is looking for a roommate to share an apartment on Baker Street, “[...] trying to solve the problem as to whether it is possible to get comfortable rooms at a reasonable price” (DOYLE, 1887, p. 5).

Stamford tells Watson he knows about a man that is searching for a roommate as well, but this man – Sherlock – is a very eccentric fellow. Watson does not seem to care about it, due to his despair to find anyone to share his expenses. In fact, he promptly responds: “I should like to meet him” (DOYLE, 1887, p. 6). During the conversation, Watson even gets to the conclusion that probably their personalities would be compatible, since he prefers to live with someone who is studious and quiet. So, both Stamford and Watson go to meet Sherlock Holmes, and even the way they shake hands is, for Watson, a confirmation that Holmes is indeed a rather peculiar and surprising fellow: “Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” said Stamford, introducing us. ‘How are you?’ he said cordially, gripping my hand with a strength for which I should hardly have given him credit” (DOYLE, 1887, p. 6). Immediately after that, the first thing Holmes does is start talking about Watson, stating that he had been in Afghanistan. Such thing seemed impossible for Watson, considering they had never talked to each other before: “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.’ ‘How on earth did you know that?’ I asked in astonishment” (DOYLE, 1887, p. 6). Later, Holmes explains how that seemed so obvious to him:

I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind, that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, “Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and



that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan." The whole train of thought did not occupy a second. "I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished." (DOYLE, 1887, p. 11)

This quality is coherent with the idea of the flaneur: someone who is able to see what others cannot, just like Dupin and Holmes. Regarding this deductive power, manifested by Holmes, it is worth mentioning that even Watson himself realizes that there is nothing paranormal and/or mystical about it. Holmes' ability is not, moreover, a mere matter of luck or chance, either. Holmes, himself, says to Watson "[...] 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, 1887, p. 18). Even though the stranger admits he had "arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps", he knows later rather well how to identify and scrutinize such steps, exposing the linear logic of his deduction. This is considerably relevant given that it is coherent with the idea that our detectives are not deities, but rather very well trained in the art of flaneurie. According to Tester (2017, p. 7), "the flaneur is the secret spectator of the spectacle of the spaces and places of the city". Every corner (not only places, but anything or person whatsoever) is usually booming with information for the flaneur, which makes him/her perfect for any sort of investigation. The flaneur knows that "to dwell means to leave traces" (BENJAMIN, 1999, p. 9), and these traces are the raw material for both detectives' investigations – something they are indeed obsessed with, and certain that everything everywhere is filled

with traces of something (or someone) else. Torrell (2005, p. 2) relates the issue of the traces with the flaneur's intellectual capability to build narratives out of superficially hollow elements:

Traces are everywhere, and everywhere we go we leave traces behind; from time to time even the solid pavement speaks and responds to the weight of our shoes. Every day we have the opportunity to engage with the traces of other people; but how often do we notice, for example, the sculptural richness of compounded community flyers, the narrative possibilities of one lost glove, or the reflective familiarity or connectedness we might experience when objects from a residential demolition are revealed? By virtue of its process and indebtedness to the "overlooked", the investigation of traces carries with it the ability to shape aesthetic awareness, to stimulate imagination, and to build social connectedness.

The flaneur teaches us how to historicise; his/her deduction builds a chronological construction for an image that is already available, but unexplained. It is a scientific method: disassembling the parts in order to understand how the whole was conceived, in the first place. But this deduction and study of the traces is also about art, about the volition to look for an aesthetic virtue, as it entices thoughts and whims – blending reason and imagination. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the fact that, through their flaneurie, our protagonists indeed "build social connectedness", the detectives we analyze are mostly described as quiet and distant. "But I could see in his [Dupin's] eyes that cold, empty look which told me that his mind was working busily" (POE, 1876, p. 46). Therefore, with their empty looks, both Holmes and Dupin are also presented as outsiders, since they are always observing from a perspective that is exclusive to them. It is possible to see their unique way of looking at their surroundings when the narrators

describe to us, readers, the personality and actions of Dupin and Holmes.

He (Dupin) was an unusually interesting young man with a busy, forceful mind. This mind could, it seemed, look right through a man's body into his soul, and uncover his deepest thoughts. Sometimes he seemed to be not one, but two people — one who coldly put things together, and another who just as coldly took them apart. (POE, 1876, p. 42)

The narrator in *The murders in the Rue Morgue* (1876) often talks about how Dupin's reasoning power is able to make him see not only superficial facts that are also hidden to the eyes of others, but through and beyond body and mind. For the narrator, Dupin has the ability to see through everything. Watson, on the other hand, has a much more physical and materialized perception of Holmes' observations, as we can see in this excerpt:

I had imagined that Sherlock Holmes would at once have hurried into the house and plunged into a study of the mystery. Nothing appeared to be further from his intention. With an air of nonchalance which, under the circumstances, seemed to me to border upon affectation, he lounged up and down the pavement, and gazed vacantly at the ground, the sky, the opposite houses and the line of railings. Having finished his scrutiny, he proceeded slowly down the path, or rather down the fringe of grass which flanked the path, keeping his eyes riveted upon the ground. Twice he stopped, and once I saw him smile, and heard him utter an exclamation of satisfaction. There were many marks of footsteps upon the wet clayey soil, but since the police had been coming and going over it, I was unable to see how my companion could hope to learn anything from it. Still I had had such extraordinary evidence of the quickness of his perceptive faculties, that I had no doubt that he could see a great deal which was hidden from me. (DOYLE, 1887, p. 14)

Constructed as characters that are often blasé, behaving as if they did not belong to the space where they are, this again brings us to a possible interface with the flaneur. Using the concept to discuss the work of Baudelaire, Tester (2015, p. 3) alleges that the "poet is the man of the crowd as opposed to the man in the crowd [...]. It is this sense of being of rather than being in which makes the poet different from all the others in the crowd" (TESTER, 2015, p. 3). Applying this concept to Dupin and Holmes, even though they are not poets, but detectives, allows our analysis to suggest that they are, to some extent, in fact always out of the crowd, of the plot, and actions described. They are immersed in their own thoughts, even when they are also explaining their train of thoughts to someone else – mostly the narrator. "Dupin began to talk. But it did not seem that he was trying to explain to me what he had thought. It seemed that he was talking to himself. He looked not at me, but at the wall" (POE, 1876, p. 49). Inner monologues are, for both, second nature; and they also inform us about the fact that, prior to their stating something very clear, objective, straight-forward and, especially, accurate, both Holmes and Dupin would probably have had intensely discussed the matter to themselves over and over again (which, one more time, proves there is nothing divine about their deductions).

One could say such process is presented as a sort of addiction, after all both detectives are usually obsessively looking for a case for them to work on, and if they are not working on a case, or they find it hard to find an answer for the mystery, they will be disturbed. "[...] Holmes showed signs of irresolution. He continued to walk up and down the room with his head sunk on his chest and his brows drawn down, as was his habit when lost in thought" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 30). Likewise, Dupin claims that: "There must be

an answer. There must!" (POE, 1876, p. 46). Naturally, we tend to see more of Holmes through Doyle's works than Dupin through Poe's works, since, as mentioned before, the former has a much larger literary piece to be developed within in comparison to the latter. Although, it is clear that both detectives feel a great pleasure when they are working on something that requires their reasoning power. There is no other source of excitement as big as solving a puzzle, such as a mystery, as it is presented in the stories. "His cold eyes seemed to see only what was in his own mind [...]. His eyes were now hard and bright. And I understood that using his unusual reasoning power to find the answer to those bloody murders was giving Dupin great pleasure!" (POE, 1876, p. 54).

Finding the answer seems to be something these characters need to do all the time; otherwise, they feel they are useless. This brings us to the unique idea of freedom that surfaces in the specific construction of the flaneur. "Freedom because the figure revolves around the dialectic of self-definition and definition from outside, although this freedom is perhaps something more by way of a curse than a promise" (TESTER, 2015, p. 8). In other words, using their abilities is something that defines them, that says who they are. This is the characteristic of an outsider, always searching for something to observe. Seeing things that are seemingly invisible for other people, the flaneur understands how observation is crucial for his/her self-definition. As such, and regardless of how distant the flaneur seems to be from the scenes, s/he is actually defined by the objects and spaces that envelop him/her. "Everything potentially taking place in a single room is perceived simultaneously [...]. The space winks at the flaneur: What do you think may have gone on here?" (BENJAMIN, 1999, p. 418)

Mastering the fictional environment is a challenge, and the flaneur loves such challenge. In a way, s/he is more powerful than the narrator, becoming something like the very author of the piece – for the flaneur is also building the scenes and organizing the narrative structure. S/he is an outsider, but one that paradoxically could not be more inserted in the story. I.e. s/he fits in the tale in a particular fashion, different from other characters – but because s/he does it more passionately, controlling and scheming every corner. Self-reliant and even a little bit arrogant, both narrators feel such power regarding our detective. As Dupin himself utters: "From what I have already said, you must know that I have ways of learning about the matter — ways you could never have dreamed of" (POE, 1876, p. 61). This shows us the detective knows he sees things that other subjects cannot. Even people's unconscious abilities to fantasize while dreaming would not be enough for them to see what is only visible for himself. This also happens with Holmes, according to Watson: "I had had such extraordinary evidence of the quickness of his perceptive faculties, that I had no doubt that he could see a great deal which was hidden from me" (DOYLE, 1887, p. 14). Making out meanings that are invisible or hidden for others, Dupin and Holmes mesmerize both narrators, who gradually understand it is not a matter of providence or magic, but of cunning and astute deduction – as Benjamin (1999, p. 10) poses it: the result of a "voyeuristic spatial surveillance".

### Final remarks

Recalling our objectives, this study made it possible for us to compare Dupin and Holmes through the eyes of the narrators, as well as understand how these narrators' perspectives interfere in the story and, finally, observe if our detectives could

possibly fit in the concept of flaneur. Firstly, in *The murders in the Rue Morgue* (POE, 1876) as well as in *A study in scarlet* (DOYLE, 1887), we see everything through the narrators' discourse, and this happens because they are also characters of each story who happen to be very close to their respective detectives – i.e. an intra and homodiegetic narration. One of our hypotheses in this study was that the type of narration of both stories increased the feeling of belonginglessness related to the detectives. Besides being a way of channeling the detectives' deductions, the narrator has indeed proven to be a sort of reflection of the reader him/herself into the story. To some extent, the narrator's point of view, his astonishment and surprise, is maybe coherent with the reader's point of view (or at least with the kind of reaction those involved with this literary genre tend to expect). Of course, however, when it comes to *The murders in the Rue Morgue* (POE, 1876) and *A study in scarlet* (DOYLE, 1887), we are not only talking about the mystery we see in the story, but also about the personality of someone who is a mystery himself. We are, in fact, much closer to the narrators' character and characterization than to that of Dupin and Holmes. Along the pages, we do not follow the detectives' thoughts, actions and feelings unless the narrator does so – which actually does not happen very often.

After all, we dare say that Holmes and Dupin both indeed reflect to some level the concept of flaneur. They are outsiders for they see what others cannot at the same time as they manage to position themselves in a greater distance than others are able to. They are outsiders when their observation and deduction belong to them, and only to them: outsiders because only they can tell how they got to this or that conclusion, following steps completely unbeknownst to other characters. Finding a solution to some-

thing that seems impossible for the ordinary eye is part of who these characters are. This is what may grant Dupin and Holmes the status of flaneurs: the mysterious, invisible, and secret spectator of the crowd who sees what is hidden from all around him.

Before coming to an end, let us walk you, reader, through one of the objectives of this research, which was connecting canonic and mass literature. We meant to say that it is possible to consider every literary work worthy of being researched, regardless of its academic status. When we first talked about this research, it was a nice discovery that writing about mass literature, in an academic environment, was a possibility, since for a long time there was this misconception that only canonic literature deserved the credibility of an academic research. It was of great importance having the opportunity to discuss such a matter. If we talk about literature, we also talk about immeasurable possibilities. So, why limit ourselves when there is so much we can do?

Given that, we made the choice of analyzing only two of the literary pieces among the vast possibilities in Poe and Doyle's legacy. And, having said so, we conclude this research by reminding our readers that there are many more aspects to be explored about these two worlds, the one built by Poe's narrator and the one built by Doyle's. There are other characteristics about Holmes and Dupin, as well as about the narrators who tell their stories, that could perhaps be analyzed by future researchers interested in studying these characters. Also, there are more materials along Poe and Doyle's literary work, such as other short stories and novels that could be analyzed along with the flaneur's concept and its theoretical review. However, since both authors do have an extensive work, we chose two pieces, among all of them, given our obvious time and space constraints. The concept of flaneur has

also proven to be a fruitful field of inquiry and analysis; hence our suggestion that future researchers bring such concept for the analysis of other characters, from any literary piece, who seem to be constructed as outsiders. It is unnecessary to say that every character belongs to the narrative where they appear: what is interesting to identify is how and why they belong in the specific way they do.

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Submissão: setembro de 2023.

Aceite: março de 2024.