

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Police Report

We then entered the Green Room. Poe used this room to entertain his fellow writers and visitors—and it is where Rufus Griswold and Mark Twain claim to have been at the time of the murder. Interestingly, we have just located documents written by these two authors. One is Poe's obituary, written by Griswold but published under a pseudonym—which may require further investigation, as it seems suspicious—and the other is a collection of particularly vicious letters written by Twain that mention Poe.

Griswold Obit

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Poe's obituary, written by Rufus Griswold (excerpt) NEW YORK DAILY TRIBUNE, OCTOBER 9TH, 1849

"Death of Edgar Allan Poe.

Quoth the Raven, "Never more!"

EDGAR ALLAN POE is dead. He died in Baltimore on the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it. The poet was known, personally or by reputation, in all this country; he had readers in England and in several of the states of Continental Europe; but he had few or no friends; and the regrets for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art has lost one of its most brilliant, but erratic, stars.

He was at all times a dreamer—dwelling in ideal realms—in heaven or hell—peopled with the creatures and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayer... He seemed, except when some fitful pursuit subjugated his will and engrossed his faculties, always to bear the memory of some controlling sorrow. The remarkable poem of *The Raven* was probably much more nearly than has been supposed, even by those who were very intimate with him, a reflection and an echo of his own history. Nearly all that he wrote in the last two or three years—including much of his best poetry—was in some sense biographical; in draperies of his imagination, those who had taken the trouble to trace his steps, could perceive, but slightly concealed, the figure of himself."

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Mark Twain considers Poe's prose unreadable, like Jane Austen's. That said, Twain despises Austen's writing but could possibly read Poe's work if he were being paid to do so. He hates all detective literature but believes that "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is decent. He wishes he could beat Jane Austen over the head with her own shinbone.

TWAIN ON POE

Mark Twain on Edgar Allan Poe

"To me his prose is unreadable—like Jane Austen's. No, there is a difference. I could read his prose on salary, but not Jane's. Jane is entirely impossible. It seems a great pity that they allowed her to die a natural death."

—Mark Twain's Letter to William Dean Howells, 18 January 1909

"What a curious thing a 'detective' story is. And was there ever one that the author needn't be ashamed of, except the 'Murders in the Rue Morgue?'"

—Mark Twain's Notebook

"I haven't any right to criticize books, and I don't do it except when I hate them. I often want to criticize Jane Austen, but her books madden me so that I can't conceal my frenzy from the reader; and therefore I have to stop every time I begin. Every time I read Pride and Prejudice I want to dig her up and beat her over the skull with her own shinbone."

—Mark Twain's Letter to Joseph Twichell, 13 September 1898