

The Purloined Letter by

by
Edgar Allan Poe (Theoretical Analysis)



French psychoanalyst *Marie Bonaparte*. Bonaparte was Poe expert, she evaluated his works and life on the basis of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Freud did never write on Poe himself, but he wrote a preface as an introduction for Bonaparte's book on Poe, in which he praised and approved Bonaparte's work.

Poetry

This creates the castration anxiety. Lacan as well, takes maternal penis not as an anatomical object, but as an apparatus which enables the first encounter with *otherness* and lack when the child senses that s/he is not ~~the mother's entire world~~ and that the mother wants something more than and apart from the child.

The child, according to Lacan, wishes to be the *phallus* for the mother.

Footnote



In the story, the letter is stolen and then it goes to the Minister. Dupin then takes it and brings it back to Queen.

With the logic he developed, he finds the place of the letter hidden in Minister's apartment, in full-view hanging over the fire-place.

For Bonaparte, the fireplace symbolizes female genitals. The letter is hanged over female genitals, surely it is in *fantasy*.

Letter would have been hung there if it existed. The detective is victorious at the end, and Bonaparte describes the relationship between him and the minister as *son & father* relationship, which comes out of *Oedipal struggle*.

Here, Bonaparte suggests that detective is the son, and to prove this she points at the past relationship between detective and Minister, which the story reveals in some passages.

Bonaparte suggests that at the end of the story, Dupin restores missing phallus; additionally gold which he gained for finding the letter is equivalent and symbolic to the penis.



Lacan's seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' in 1954 itself was a critique of Marie Bonaparte's interpretation of 'The Purloined Letter' and mocked the idea of taking Freudian concepts and finding them in any text, in whatever way possible.

Slavoj Žižek titled "Why Does a Letter Always Arrive at Its Destination?"



Lacan's "Seminar on *the Purloined Letter*" from 1956 (which you can read [here](#)) analyzes [the Edgar Allan Poe short story](#).

Lacan's point is to investigate "[repetition automatism](#)," which was a puzzle for Freud: if all of our actions come from the libido ([the pleasure principle](#)), then why do we sometimes engage in repetitive, self-destructive behavior.

Lacan's explanation is that the unconscious is not just a bundle of drives, but is made up of symbolic strings, which participate in systems that have their own internal logic and thus motive force.

In the story, the various characters take on certain roles in reaction to a letter being used to blackmail the Queen of France.





Memory



Front

RAM





Thank You!