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RULES AND RATIOCINATION AT PLAY IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THREE DUPIN STORIES:

The Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Mystery of Marie Roget, The Purloined Letter

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Abstract

Edgar Allan Poe is a well-known nineteenth century American writer, famous world-wide. Poetry and criticism are two most prominent areas on which research pertaining to Poe is carried out. He was also a short-story writer on detective genre, a fact which is known but not much acknowledged. The following paper attempts at analyzing 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Roget' and 'The Purloined Letter' from the point of view of the 'twenty rules of writing detective fiction' propounded by S.S. Van Dine, also an American fiction writer. These rules also contain the elements of ratiocination that is logic and reasoning, explained in the paper. The three stories are analyzed to the best and its analysis is presented below.

Key words: *Poe, Ratiocination, S.S. Van Dine, Rules, Detective Fiction, Logic, Reasoning, Dupin.*

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This paper deals with intertwining of 'Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories' by S.S. Van Dine with the three short stories by Edgar Allan Poe namely, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *The Purloined Letter.* S.S. Van Dine (October15, 1888 – April 11, 1939) was the pseudo-name for the famous American art critic and detective fiction writer, Willard Huntington Wright. *The American Magazine* published his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" in1938. A further attempt aims at tracing the elements of ratiocination in the rules. These two steps roll into one in the research that follows supported by the rigorous analysis done on the three stories.

Following are the twenty rules in serial order published in *The American Magazine*, for the convenience of the reader.

Rule 1: "The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described." (Dine, 5)

Rule 2: "No wilful tricks or deceptions may be played on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself." (Dine, 5)

Rule 3: "There must be no love interest in the story. To introduce amour is to clutter up a purely intellectual experience with irrelevant sentiment. The business in hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar." (Dine, 5)

Rule 4: "The detective himself… should never turn out to be the culprit. This is bald trickery… false pretenses." (Dine, 5)

Rule 5: "The culprit must be determined by logical deductions—not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession. To solve a criminal problem in this latter fashion is like sending the reader on a deliberate wild-goose chase… Such an author is no better than a practical joker." (Dine, 5)

Rule 6: "The detective novel must have a detective in it; and a detective is not a detective unless he detects. His function is to gather clues." (Dine, 5)

Rule 7: "There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel and the deader the corpse the better. No lesser crime than murder will suffice… After all, the reader's trouble and expenditure of energy must be rewarded." (Dine, 5-6)

Rule 8: "The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means. Such methods for learning the truth as slate-writing, Ouija boards, mind-reading, spiritualistic séances, crystal-gazing, and the like, are taboo. A reader has a chance when matching his wits with a rationalistic detective, but if he must compete with the world of spirits and go chasing about the fourth dimension of metaphysics, he is defeated *ab initio.*" (Dine, 6)

Rule: 9 "There must be but one detective—that is, but one protagonist of deduction— one *deus ex machine*. To bring the minds of three or four, or sometimes a gang of detectives to bear

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on a problem is not only to disperse the interest and break the direct thread of logic, but to take an unfair advantage of the reader, who, at the outset, pits his mind against that of the detective and proceeds to do mental battle." (Dine, 6)

Rule 10: "The culprit must turn out to be a person who has played a more or less prominent part in the story—that is, a person with whom the reader is familiar... For a writer to fasten the crime… on a stranger or person who has played a wholly unimportant part in the tale is to confess to his inability to match wits with the reader." (Dine, 6)

Rule 11: "Servants—such as butlers, footmen, valets, game-keepers, cooks, and the like—must not be chosen by the author as the culprit. This is begging a noble question. It is a too easy solution... The culprit must be a decidedly worth-while person—one that wouldn't ordinarily come under suspicion." (Dine, 6)

Rule 12: "There must be but one culprit, no matter how many murders are committed… the entire onus must rest on one pair of shoulders: the entire indignation of the reader must be permitted to concentrate on a single black nature." (Dine, 6)

Rule 13: "Secret societies, camorras, mafias, *et al.*, have no place in a detective story. Here the author gets into adventure fiction and secret-service romance… To be sure, the murderer in a detective novel should be given a sporting chance, but it is going too far to grant him a secret society… to fall back on." (Dine, 6-7)

Rule 14: "The method of murder, and the means of detecting it, must be rational and scientific. That is to say, pseudo-science and purely imaginative and speculative devices are not to be tolerated… For instance, the murder of a victim by a newly found element—a superradium, let us say—is not a legitimate problem. Nor may a rare and unknown drug, which has its existence only in the author's imagination, be administered. A detective-story writer must limit himself, toxicologically speaking, to the pharmacopoeia." (Dine, 7)

Rule 15: "The truth of the problem must at all times be apparent—provided the reader is shrewd enough to see it… that if the reader, after learning the explanation for the crime, should reread the book, he would see that the solution had, in a sense, been staring him in the face—that all the clues really pointed to the culprit—and that, if he had been as clever as the detective, he could have solved the mystery himself without going on to the final chapter… And one of my basic theories of detective fiction is that, if a detective story is fairly and legitimately constructed, it is impossible to keep the solution from all readers… these perspicacious readers will be able, by analysis, elimination and logic, to put their finger on the culprit as soon as the detective does. And herein lies the zest of the game." (Dine, 7)

Rule 16: "A detective novel should contain no long descriptive passages; no literary dallying with side-issues, no subtly worked-out character analyses, no "atmospheric"

preoccupations. Such matters have no vital place in a record of crime and deduction. They hold up the action… To be sure, there must be a sufficient descriptiveness and character delineation to give the novel verisimilitude… A detective story is a grim business, and the reader goes to it, not for literary furbelows and style and beautiful descriptions and the projection of moods, but for mental stimulation and intellectual activity—just as he goes to a… cross-word puzzle." (Dine, 7-8)

Rule 17: "A professional criminal must never be shouldered with the guilt of a crime in a detective story… A really fascinating crime is one committed by a pillar of a church, or a spinster noted for her charities." (Dine, 8)

Rule 18: "A crime in a detective story must never turn out to be an accident or a suicide. To end an odyssey of sleuthing with such an anti-climax is to play an unpardonable trick on the reader. If… the crime was a fake, any court with a sense of justice… would add a stinging reprimand to the author who thus hoodwinked a trusting and kindhearted reader." (Dine, 8)

Rule 19: "The motives for all crimes in detective stories should be personal… a murder story must be kept *gemütlich*, so to speak. It must reflect the reader's everyday experiences, and give him a certain outlet for his own repressed desires and emotions." (Dine, 8)

Rule 20: "I herewith list a few of the devices which no self-respecting detective-story writer will now avail himself of. They have been employed too often, and are familiar to all true lovers of literary crime.

(a) Determining the identity of the culprit by comparing the butt of a cigarette left at the scene of the crime with the brand smoked by a suspect.

(b) The bogus spiritualistic séance to frighten the culprit into giving himself away.

(c) Forged finger-prints.

(d) The dummy-figure alibi.

(e) The dog that does not bark and thereby reveals the fact that the intruder is familiar.

(f) The final pinning of the crime on a twin, or a relative who looks exactly like the suspected, but innocent, person.

(g) The hypodermic syringe and the knockout drops.

(h) The commission of the murder in a locked room after the police have actually broken in.

(i) The word-association test for guilt.

(j) The cipher, or code letter, which is eventually unraveled by the sleuth." (Dine, 8-9)

After the elaboration of the twenty rules, it is important to throw light on the term 'Ratiocination'. For that, the description of the genre of the detective fiction is needed because it can best be appropriated with the use of 'ratiocination'. Chinese doctorate scholar Eva Zhao**,** in

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the article *Gothicism in Edgar Allan Poe's Short Stories: A Critical Analysis* defines Detective Fiction as:

> … a branch of crime fiction that centers upon the investigation of crime, usually murder, by a detective either professional or amateur… A common feature of detective fiction is an investigator… The traditional formula for the detective story starts with a seemingly irresolvable mystery. (120)

It is Poe whose name is the first that clicks the mind whenever there is a mention of detective fiction because "Poe brought all the basic ingredients of it together in his 'tales of ratiocination' of the 1840s." (Zhao, 120) If Poe gave birth to detective fiction, then it was the latter that further gave birth to the concept of 'ratiocination'. As mentioned earlier, Poe called his three aforementioned tales as his 'tales of ratiocination'. Hence, the two concepts, one of detective fiction and the other of ratiocination, run concomitantly. In very simple words, "A ratiocinative or detective tale can be defined as a story characterized by the process of reasoning." (Zhao, 121) 'Ratiocination' is a process that involves the essential element of logic and reasoning. This is, nevertheless, a very basic idea of the concept, but its limits extend to far greater meanings. Poe also created an unforgettable and diligent detective/sleuth/polymath named Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin who featured only in these three stories and became a benchmark for future writers to create their detective characters on. The research that follows is a mingled work on all the above mentioned factors.

It is worth quoting from the article *From Dupin to Oedipa: Thomas Pynchon's Parodic take on Detective Fiction* by Suradech Chotiudompant, an instructor in the department of Comparative Literature in the Chulalongkorn University of Bangkok:

> In 1928, S.S. Van Dine laid down the twenty rules that distinguish detective fiction supporting the idea that detective fiction follows a visible, though not always identical pattern… stressing the importance of three main agents: a detective, a murderer and at least one victim… Apart from the identity of the murderer, the motive of the crime also plays a central part… (Chotiudompant, 71)

The aforementioned rules can be categorized for making the analysis more systematic. These categories arise from within the rules and have their own ratiocination elements inherent in them. The rules lay emphasis on i) The Reader, ii) Plot, iii) Detective, iv) Clues and Evidences, v) Crime-Solving Process, vi) Culprit, vii) Corpse, viii) Motive. The witnesses also have a very logical role to dispense in crime solving. Apart from these, Rule 20 comprises the 'don'ts', the hackneyed strategies and components of detective fiction which must not be included, to maintain freshness and innovation.

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Picking up one story at a time, the analysis begins with *The Murders in the Rue Morgue.* This very first Dupin story by Poe deals with the murders, not one but two, of "Madame L' Espanaye and her daughter Mademoiselle Camille L' Espanaye" (Rue Morgue, 19) declared by the newspaper under the eye-catching headline "EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS" (Rue Morgue, 19) thus rendering Rule 7: "there simply must be a corpse in a detective novel" (Rule 7) to be true. This simple declaration works as an impetus for the detection process and also starts the narration of the story. The corpse of Madame Camille L'Espanaye was found "in the chimney… head downward, was dragged wherefrom; it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance" (Rue Morgue, 20) whereas the dead mother was found in the "small paved yard in the rear of the building" (Rue Morgue, 21) establishing right at the onset the fact that "the deader the corpse the better." (Rule 7) With all the testimony as well the newspaper reviews, the reader is assured that "there was not an inch of any portion of the house which was not carefully searched." (Rue Morgue, 24) With this background in mind, the whole story has to gain pace because "crime is a moving force there," (Zhao, 123) for the detective and the reader to apply their ratiocination skills in the matter. The story advances with the detective taking up the case in his hands at the recommendation of a Parisian police officer and ultimately reaches out to catch the true murderer. All this is carried out in accordance with the rules in a very disciplined and planned manner, right from gathering of clues to the revelation of the culprit.

The reader is the core around which detective fiction is spun.

> Poe invented the term "Tales of Ratiocination." The Ratiocination however is not just for the detective. He does not allow the reader to sit back and merely observe; the process of ratiocination which he sets up is intended for the reader, as well as for the detective. (Zhao, 125-6)

The very first of the twenty rules states that "the reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery" (Rule 1) and Poe follows this through and through when he directs the reader: "let us enter into some examinations for ourselves." (Rue Morgue, 28) Phrases like "we," "You saw the locks…," "You are aware…," "I wish you also to look at…" (Rue Morgue, 39) indicate the writer's desire for the detective to solve the crime in collaboration with the reader. The detective's direct address to his readers takes the latter into confidence and assures him that "no willful tricks or deceptions" (Rule 2) are being played on him. This provides the reader "with a feeling of being just as clever as the detective in the story." (Bursikova, 46) Thus, without any spec of deceptions in narration, a re-reading of the story makes the reader feel that "the truth of the problem" was at all times "apparent." (Rule 15) The reader, by the end, feels justified that the culprit was an Orangutan and all through the narration "the solution had, in a

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sense, been staring him in the face." (Rule 15) This also exactly reflects Rule 12 that "the entire indignation of the reader must be permitted to concentrate on a single black nature" (Rule 12) and so it does. The witnesses also play a very important role for the reader. Poe chooses people from close to reality, that is, ordinary people with ordinary professions like "*Pauline Dudourg,* laundress," "*Pierre Moreau,* tobacconist," "*Isidore Muset, gendarme,*" "*William Bird,* tailor," "*Paul Dumas,* physician," (Rue Morgue, 21-25) and the like. The more the acquaintance of the reader with such professions, the more will he find them reliable.

Along with the reliability on the witnesses, the crime must be such that the readers can easily relate with it. A murder is so common a happening, which is why in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* there is no moment of awe left for the reader which might hinder his affinity with the text. The fact remains that the enthusiasm on the part of the reader of solving such a crime never ceases because such an atrocious murder triggers the intellectual faculties of the mind on the spot. The work of the author at this point is to start providing the clues and evidences to its reader. Poe describes the site of murders having in its vicinity "four Napoleons, an ear-ring of topaz, three large silver spoons, three smaller of *metal d'Alger,* and two bags, containing nearly four thousand francs in gold." (Rue Morgue, 20) Also, in order to avoid "hoodwinking" (Rule 18) the reader and to prove the non-monetary motive of the detective, Dupin communicates with the reader:

> I wish you, therefore, to discard from your thoughts the blundering of *motive,* engendered in the brains of the police by that portion of the evidence which speaks of money. (Rue Morgue, 38)

Thus, by providing the reader with the following testimony, Poe has done the job of arresting the reader's attention into the next aspect, which is 'the plot':

> …the door of the chamber in which was found the body of Mademoiselle L. was locked from the inside when the party reached it… Upon forcing the door no person was seen. The windows, both of the back and the front room, were down and firmly fastened from within. (Rue Morgue, 24)

Poe provides his own idea of plot construction in his self-composed essay *The Philosophy of Composition:*

> Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the denouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention. (n.pag)

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On thorough reading of the above stated lines, ratiocination is clearly seen as coming into play. Poe has constructed the plot of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* fairly and legitimately. This story has no central theme of "love interest" (Rule 3) or "to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar." (Rule 3) Poe has depicted honesty in every facet of case-presentation. The short-story of the murders of a mother and a daughter under mysterious and brutal circumstances by an Orangutan has been kept "*gemutlich.*" (Rule 19) The plot aptly follows the rules of writing detective fiction because as a reader anyone can spare time on such a crime written as a short-story which does not even demand much labor.

One of the most essential elements of a plot is its 'characters'. The most essential character of any story is its protagonist. The essential character that the rules prescribe for the detective story is its "rationalistic detective," (Rule 8) its "one protagonist of deduction" (Rule 9) Rule 9 also states that there is just "one detective" in the whole story because a "gang of detectives to bear on the problem is… to disperse the interest and break the thread of logic." (Dine, 6) So, there is one detective named "Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin" (Rue Morgue, 13) in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* who is "highly observant and expert at creating chains of reasoning." (Zhao, 128) Not overstating the character-sketch of the detective (which is also a Rule), Dupin is described as:

> Residing in Paris… This young gentleman was of an excellent- indeed of an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world… Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries. (Rue Morgue, 13)

Such a description is enough to facilitate the reader's understanding of the detective's character. As a matter of fact, ratiocination concentrates more upon the detective's detection. Rule 4 states that "the detective himself… should not turn out to be the culprit," and "a detective is not a detective unless he detects." (Rule 6) Both these facts are true in the present case as well. Dupin had, since the beginning "seemed singularly interested in the progress of this affair" (Rue Morgue, 26) through rationalistic means. Dupin is shrewd at pointing out the flaws of the newspapers as well as the Parisian police official named "Vidocq" who was a "good guesser and a persevering man" but "without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations." (Rue Morgue, 27) Dupin's dedication to his job is not stirred by the equivocal situations. In his speech, Dupin says that "as reasoners" it is a fallacy to reject a case merely "on account of apparent impossibilities." (Rue Morgue, 33) It is instead a responsibility of the detective to prove that "these 'apparent impossibilities' are, in reality, not such." (Rue Morgue, 33)

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Dupin's job lay in examining "the bodies of the victims" and "the whole neighborhood, as well as the house, with a minuteness of attention." (Rue Morgue, 28-29) The fact that "the problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means," (Rule 8) becomes the basis for Dupin to infer that the culprit was the Orangutan of a sailor "belonging to the Maltese vessel." (Rue Morgue, 28) It is the rationalistic employment of knowledge about the ribbon and the knot with which it was tied that Dupin solves the crime efficiently, abiding by the rules at the same time.

The detective's most powerful tool to excellence is the clues and evidences pertaining to the case. It is a compulsion that all clues be "plainly stated and described." (Rule 1) Dupin recovers at the site of murder "two or three long tresses of grey human hair, also dabbed in blood, and seeming to have pulled out by the roots." (Rue Morgue, 20) The "rational" (Rule 14) instrument of the murder was a "besmeared razor," (Rue Morgue, 20) flawlessly avoiding what Rule 14 directs to avoid:

> For instance, the murder of a victim by a newly found element- a superradium, let us say, is not a legitimate problem. Nor may a rare and unfound drug, which has its existence only in the author's imagination, be administered. (Rule, 14)

After considering every point, the reader confidently realizes that "the author has shown proper sportsmanship and honesty in his statement and projection of the crime and its clues." (Rule 15) Many testimonies were gathered which could be taken as clues. The mother-daughter's lifestyle was "exceedingly retired… were reputed to have money" (Rue Morgue, 21-22) and also kept themselves isolated from outside world. The voices in contention were said to be of two types, "the one a gruff voice, the other much shriller- a very strange voice" (Rue Morgue, 22) in which the only words which prominently stood out were "*'sacre,' 'diable'* and once *'mon dieu.'*" (Rue Morgue, 23) The fact that one voice was "loud and quick-unequal-spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger" (Rue Morgue, 23) along with the corroboration of the same fact by different people really pointed to the Orangutan, the culprit of the story. Hence, the whole set of evidences converged on the Orangutan and not "Adolphe Le Bon" (Rue Morgue, 26) who had been wrongly arrested because "nothing appeared to criminate him." (Rue Morgue, 26)

Undertaking the whole process efficiently, Dupin discards the superfluities and unwanted diversions through a purely intellectual experience. After the examination of the place until dark, Dupin also "stepped in for a moment at the office of one of the daily papers." (Rue Morgue, 29) It was Dupin's safe conclusion that "The Gazette… has not entered the unusual horror of the thing" so it would be better to "dismiss the idle opinions of the print." (Rue Morgue, 29) This was a rational and logical decision taken by a rational detective who does not soar into "the realms of fantasy" (Rule 14) which can result in breaking the link with reality. Dupin is diligent

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enough to squeeze various conclusions from the same set of evidences. One such fact was that the mother and daughter have not killed each other and the "Murder… had been committed by a third party." (Rue Morgue, 31) Hence, each clue and evidence becomes the stepping stone for Dupin to reach to the ultimate end.

Dupin has nowhere taken the assistance of "pseudo-science and purely imaginative and speculative devices." (Rule 14) He investigates the "means of egress" which at first seem "preternatural," (Rue Morgue, 32) but in reality, is not. Dupin declares that "Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye are not destroyed by spirits. The doers of the deeds were material, and escaped materially." (Rue Morgue, 32) The means of egress and ingress (which were same) become hard to discover because of a deception caused by a combined effect of "a concealed spring" (Rue Morgue, 34) and a broken nail with an invisible fissure. Drawing a "*fac-simile*" (Rue Morgue, 40) to experiment how the murder could have been committed, Dupin concludes that the necks of the deceased were throttled and this was not a human act. The execution of such murders needs power beyond human limits. Dupin gives every aspect a "fair trial." (Rue Morgue, 40)

There is always one motive behind the whole detection process and that is to reach to the culprit. What are the logical points attached to this category of rules? The following explanation will suffice. The fact that makes this murder the "most extraordinary and frightful affair" is that the bodies of the mother and daughter were found with many bruises and unusual marks. Camille L'Espanaye's body was found with "many scratches... dark bruises… and deep indentations" (Rue Morgue, 20) and her mother's corpse lay "with her throat cut… fearfully mutilated." (Rue Morgue, 20) These work as impetus for the detective to try to reach the culprit. Dupin here states that he has "spoken of a *very* unusual degree of activity as requisite to success" (Rue Morgue, 26) where all the clues combine in his rationalistic mind to finally reveal that the culprit is a "large frivolous (Brownish- Yellow) Ourang-Outang of the East Indian Islands." (Rue Morgue, 41) The brutal act is a result of the "gigantic stature… prodigious strength and activity… wild ferocity and the imitative propensities of these mammilia." (Rue Morgue, 41) Although the owner of the Orangutan named "Cuvier (French Naturalist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832)" was "cognizant of the murder" but the culprit is just the Orangutan. Cuvier was innocent because he had "done nothing" which can render him "culpable." (Rue Morgue, 45) He was not even "guilty of robbery" when he has all the chance to have "robbed with impunity." (Rue Morgue, 45)

The element of motive is vested in the detective story bi-angularly. One is the motive of the culprit in committing the crime and another is the detective's motive in searching for the culprit. The Orangutan cannot possibly have any motive but his brutal act is a result of a combined effect of fear of punishment and defense on seeing his master at the site of crime.

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Dupin's motive is to rescue the innocent Adolphe Le Bon who had once rendered his service to him and get the real culprit behind bars instead. The twist lies in the fact that neither the owner nor the Orangutan can be put behind bars. Nevertheless, Dupin succeeds in fulfilling his own two-fold motive, that is, to save Adolphe Le Bon and outdo the Parisian police.

The story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* thus fulfills the requirements of the rules and the logical elements in it, also proving that Poe:

> …viewed total reality as a process of the mind. Not a fact of physical existence; consequently, for Poe, the human mind rather than the social world is the preferred arena of action. (Zhao, 128-9)

The second Dupin story is *The Mystery of Marie Roget* based on a real murder of "a young girl, Mary Cicilia Rogers… in the vicinity of New York." (Roget, 49) The name in the story has been fictionalized as "Marie Roget… daughter of widow Estelle Roget." (Roget, 52) A brief background throws light on two disappearances of Marie with a gap of five months and it was the second from which she never returned. Her corpse is found on "the fourth day" of her disappearance "floating in the Siene, near the shore." (Roget, 53) The suspense attached to the whole incident and the inability of the Parisian police to solve it becomes the impetus for Dupin to solve the crime.

The readers are at once absorbed in the story:

> The atrocity of the murder, (for it was at once evident that the murder had been committed,) the youth and beauty of the victim, and, above all, her previous notoriety, conspired to produce intense excitement in the minds of the sensitive Parisians. (Roget, 53)

The many rules thus ascribed for the reader can be found to be applicable from the statement above. It focuses on a murder intense enough to catch the reader's attention. Since Cavalier Dupin is the only detective in the story so, the reader gets "equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery" (Rule 1) and gets "a chance" to match "his wits" with only one "rationalistic detective" (Rule 8) for better results. The truth of the case has been stated right at the beginning, so the readers are left under no doubt that it was a murder. Since the partial reproduction of the story is factual, the readers find affinity with it to such an extent that "for several weeks, in the discussion of this one absorbing theme, even the momentous topics of the day were forgotten." (Roget, 53) In such a scenario, the reader can hardly be hoodwinked by Poe. It is also necessary that Poe makes a conscious attempt to "skillfully and intentionally hoodwink his readers. It is a part of the very dramatic nature of his presentation." (Zhao, 195) This is done to outwit the reader and prove the detective to be smarter. Poe tries to perplex the reader by putting forward the idea that "Marie Roget still lived" but still there is a "continual absence of all

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the clue to the mystery." (Roget, 53) This calls for the active participation of the reader in the case. In this story too, phrases like "Let us examine," (Roget, 66) "let us proceed," (Roget, 79) "let us reflect," (Roget, 84) demand the collaborative work of Dupin and the reader. *The Mystery of Marie Roget* is the longest of the three Dupin stories where Poe provides wide paraphernalia of clues and evidences. The reader is expected at this stage to read the story with "a certain degree of suspension of belief" which enables him to "select only relevant hints that can eventually lead to the criminal." (Chotiudompant, 74)

The next aspect is the plot of the story. As mentioned before, *The Mystery of Marie Roget* is a mingling of the factual and the fictional where:

> Under pretence of relating the fate of a Parisian grisette, the author has followed in minute detail, the essential, while merely paralleling the inessential facts of the real murder of Mary Rogers. (Roget, 49)

This is why, "The Mystery of Marie Roget is interesting both historically and structurally." (Zhao, 124) It is true that Marie and her murderer, the naval officer, were in a love relationship but the fact remains that the plot of the story has nothing to do with bringing them back together. The eccentricity of this story lies, undoubtedly, in the unveiling of Marie's murdered, who is also her lover. However, Poe has kept a check that the mystery is preserved "until the proper denouement." (Zhao, 122) This fact is ensured by a fair, naturalistic and rationalistic construction of the narration.

A rationalistic detective occupies the highest position in the list of characters when it comes to this genre specifically. It is stated in the analysis of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* about the "remarkable features in the mental character… of the Chevalier (low-ranking French nobleman) C. Auguste Dupin." (Roget, 50) The success that Dupin achieved in revealing the Orangutan as the culprit has made him grow "into a household word." (Roget, 51) Research Scholar Charity Lea Givens, in the article named *Poe's Poisoned Pen: A Study in Fiction as Vendetta* reports:

> Because Dupin has been introduced as an intelligent man, and because an example of his detective skills has been put forth… his subsequent mystery solving ability is believable. (Givens, 34)

Hence, nowhere has the character portrayal been overdone. The abilities of Dupin reflect in his actions rather than words. Although G-, the Prefect of the Parisian police has "made unusual exertions; and the powers of the whole Parisian police were, of course, tasked to the utmost extent," (Roget, 53) but none is as brilliant as Dupin to solve the case. Dupin is fully aware of the application of scientific theories and rational means to restore the correct order of things.

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Techniques as these are applied on the clues and evidences in this longest of the three stories, gathered from newspapers particularly. Research scholar B.C. Maria Bursikova, in the article called *Elements of Metaphysical Detective Story Genre in the works of Melville, Hawthorne and Poe* aptly remarks that Poe succeeds in:

> …creating for the reader, a labyrinth of clues, not overly simple or complex, complicated enough to provide the reader with a satisfying feeling of solving the crime. (Bursikova, 46)

Immediately at the recovery of Marie's corpse, "it was not supposed that the murder would be able to elude… the inquisition which was immediately set on foot." (Roget, 53) Dupin elicits a list of clues from the newspapers which he examines one at a time and render each useful or useless. Marie's corpse was recovered floating, by a fisherman. "Madame Deluc," (Roget, 62) owner of a roadside inn, and also "two small boys, sons of Madame Deluc" (Roget, 62) gave their testimonies. The lady had heard "screams of a female in the vicinity" (Roget, 63) while her sons had discovered a thicket at the Barriere du Roule, "a supposed scene of the assassination" (Roget, 86) which gives birth to "an excellent reason for doubt." (Roget, 87) According to Dupin's intellectual powers and strong reasoning faculties, this "highly artificial arrangement of the articles" (Roget, 90) is created so as to "redivert the attention" (Roget, 87) from the real crime and so was it. Dupin addresses his friend "to proceed methodically" (Roget, 79) in scrutinizing excerpts of newspapers regarding Marie's dress too. Dupin evades the superfluities and comes across an important piece of information in the newspaper "Le Diligence- Thursday, June 26" (Roget, 83) which takes him closer to the murderer. It is reported that:

> On Monday, one of the bargemen connected with the revenue service saw an empty boat floating down the Siene. Sails were lying in the bottom of the boat. The bargeman towed it under the barge office. The next morning it was taken from thence, without the knowledge of any of the officers. (Roget, 83)

This, combined with the fact that the time lapse between the two elopements of Marie is the same as the "cruises of our men-of-war" (Roget, 83) reflected the relation of murder with the navy and its officers. Madame Deluc's testimony also reports a man of "swarthy complexion" along with a girl to have visited her inn. The bonnet-ribbon around the corpse's neck, "the 'hitch' in the bandage, and the 'sailor's knot,' with which the bonnet-ribbon is tied, point to a seaman." (Roget, 97) Rule 15 undoubtedly fits that "that all the clues really pointed to the culprit" (Rule 15) who had also been long absent from the scene of crime.

The crime solving process is depicted on two levels- the unsuccessful and the successful. The unsuccessful is personified in the Parisian police and the successful in Dupin. The police set huge sums as rewards which over time were doubled and even trebled. Several arrests are made

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but all in vain. At last only Dupin's ratiocination skills could prove fruitful for Police officer G-. Thus, "a full report of all the evidences was elicited" (Roget, 55) from the Prefecture and "at the various newspaper offices, a copy of every paper, in which, from first to last, had been published any decisive information in regard to this sad affair." (Roget, 55) Newspapers like "L'Etoile," "Le Commerciel (The New York *Journal of Commerce,)*" "Le Soleil," (Roget, 60-62) merely corroborated the idea of one another. Dupin's very first step is to establish a one-to-one correspondence between "the identity of the corpse" (Roget, 65) and "Marie Roget who is missing." (Roget, 65) Achieving success at this, Dupin also decides to "satisfy" (Roget, 79) himself "by personal enquiry." (Roget, 79) This leads Dupin to "discard the interior points of this tragedy, and concentrate… attention on the outskirts." (Roget, 80) Therefore, Dupin assures that "corroboration will rise upon corroboration and the murderer will be detected." (Roget, 100) Minuteness of examination and precision in investigation leads Dupin towards success.

"It is implicit in the classical detective fiction that, no matter how mysterious the case seems, there will always be one and *only* one solution." (Bursikova, 6) The solution of a detective story lies in finding the culprit. The Culprit of the story has been, since the beginning of the story, subject to doubt pertaining to its number. It is not known whether there is an "assassin" or "assassins." (Roget, 53) "St. Eustache fell especially under suspicion." (Roget, 57) Marie was also supposed to have become "a victim of one of the numerous bands of blackguards." (Roget, 82) Dupin was sure that it is "the solitary murderer" (Roget, 94) none other than the naval officer, "much noted for his debaucheries." (Roget, 81)

The focus is then on the motive of the crime. From what can be inferred from the story, the murder was a result of a quarrel between the couple. One aspect which led to this brutal act was the naval officer's ill-character and bad reputation. Dupin's motive to put the real criminal behind bars is also fulfilled. Thus, the following from the article *Edgar Allan Poe at 200: "The Absolute Literary Case"* by Thomas Devaney, an Assistant Professor of Poetry in the Haverford University, concludes the section:

> Poe is a mischief maker, constantly teasing the reader, blending author and narrator, daring him to think the teller of tale mad, lucid, or some kind of in-between genius. (Devaney, 1)

The Purloined Letter is the third and last of Dupin stories as well as the last of the stories analyzed here. This is a one-of-its-kind story which fulfills the rules but in its own unique way. Instead of a murder, this story deals with a theft interesting enough to hold the reader's interest. The case which is "very simple" and yet "excessively odd" (Letter, 104) is posed in front of Dupin by the Prefect of police. There are no newspaper declarations in this case because it is a highly confidential matter pertaining to "a very high quarter." (Letter, 104) The whole matter lies

in the fact that "a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments." (Letter, 104)

For arresting the reader in the narration, suspense comes into play. Poe declares that this letter is not just a piece of paper but "gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." (Letter, 106) It is from this declaration that "a reader's gratification" (Bursikova, 5) is aimed at and achieved too. "In a ratiocinative tale, Poe thinks every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader and to whet his desire for elucidation." (Zhao, 122) It is a fact that "the reader must accompany the detective… and apply his own powers of logic and deductions along with the detective" (Zhao, 126) and one can readily find it while reading *The Purloined Letter.*

The simple plot of the story is a titular crime, a letter been purloined and "the ascendancy" (Letter, 105) which it provides to its possessor. That ascendancy "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber." (Letter, 105) The plot comprises of a simple narration and is free from complexities of any sort. The case and its solution are presented with utmost honesty and feature the element of *gemutlich*. Hence, Poe's creation of the plot holds two important points, "first that no undue or inartistic means be employed to conceal the secret of the plot; and secondly that the secret be kept well." (Zhao, 122) In this story, the culprit is known since the beginning of the story but the essence is still preserved in the way Dupin is going to recover that letter.

The recovery of the letter is the work of the rationalistic detective "whose unique process of discovery informs the logic of reasons." (Givens, 21) Dupin is approached by "Monsieur G- the Prefect of the Parisian Police," (Letter, 103) the same as has happened in the two previous stories. By the time the reader comes to read *The Purloined Letter*, Dupin's reliability is deep-seated in their minds. A further character elaboration is not required in words. The readers readily enter into the "ultra-rational world of the detective." (Bursikova, 47) Dupin's success and fame lies in solving this particular case in the most ordinary yet effective way.

"The reader should be presented with a mystery and simultaneously a key to its solution interwoven in the text in the form of clues." (Bursikova, 5) Evidences are provided largely by the Prefect of police directly to Dupin. The Prefect tells Dupin the fact that the letter is still in possession of the robber. He could say this with affirmation because of the "non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing out of the robber's possession." (Letter, 105) The eyewitness from whose "royal budoir" (Letter, 105) the letter is stolen, also plays a very important role in this story. It can be inferred that the royal lady who is both, the eyewitness and the robbed, is a helpless being. She has seen Minister D take it, but "the entrance of the other exalted personage" (Letter, 105) forbade her from making this issue public and take any

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immediate action. In the narration of the events, Prefect also mentions the way Minister D has taken away the letter "to which he had no claim" (Letter, 106) by producing "a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other." (Letter, 106) Dupin is further assisted by the "minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document" (Letter, 110) provided by G. Dupin has no interest in all evidences collected by G- because for him the case solving lies in some other method. It is as if the police have merely been wasting time all through. The fact that the Minister remained absent all night from his hotel has been deliberate because he wanted to evade suspicion. This character trait of the Minister could only be understood by the shrewd Dupin and not the Parisian police. Thus, with all the clues, Dupin commences to sort and solve them as "The detective has to read the clues in order to assign corresponding meanings to them." (Bursikova, 6)

In this story also, the search is initially made to be done by the Parisian police who as usual, fail at their thorough attempts. It is Dupin whose detection brings forth fruitful results. Leaving no stone unturned, the Prefect makes a "thorough search of the Minister's hotel" (Letter, 106) under cautious circumstances for "three months… ransacking the D- Hotel," (Letter, 107) its "entire building… room by room… furniture." (Letter, 108) The Prefect has had the Minister "twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched" (Letter, 107) The job had been so painstaking for the Prefect that not even "a single grain of gimlet-dust" (Letter, 109) was spared. Taking off from this level, Dupin starts "picking up clues by internalizing the process and sorting the problem out in his head" (Chotiudompant, 72) instead. Dupin's simple and naturalistic approach lies in entering the Minister's premises in his presence, and lamenting "the necessity of spectacles," (Letter, 119) he "cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation." (Letter, 119-20) In scrutinizing the whole room on the first day, Dupin discovers the letter "upon a trumpery fillagree card-rack of pasteboard" (Letter, 120). He utilizes the second day only to recover the letter thus discovered and replaces it with a "fac-simile" which he has "carefully prepared… imitating the D-cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread." (Letter, 121)

The solution lies in bringing forth the culprit and it is in this story that the culprit is known since the beginning of narration. The labor of suspicion and arrests of people not guilty of crime is saved. The Prefect announces that "the individual who purloined it is known; this beyond doubt; he was seen to take it" (Letter, 105) and that individual is "Minister D-, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man." (Letter, 105) All the clues aptly point towards Minister D, a shrewd man with a "lynx eye." (Letter, 105)

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Minister D has successfully fulfilled his motive behind purloining the letter, not once but many times now. He has been taking undue advantage of its possession and the Prefect solidifies the idea that "the power thus attained, has for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent." (Letter, 106) This statement also emphasizes the need to recover that letter to its rightful owner urgently. The motive of the detective as well as the culprit is concretized. Undoubtedly, "It takes a literary genius, and a Chevalier, to pull off an ending like that" (1) states the article *Le Chevalier and the Art of Ratiocination.*

To conclude, it can be said that the analyses of the three stories based on the twenty rules provided by Dine prove to contain the following:

> …The brilliant but eccentric detective, who posses uncanny, reasoning powers and subordinates, all else to his intellectual gifts, the devoted but less intelligent friend; the puzzling crime which defeats the utmost efforts of the police, the innocent suspect and finally the detailed explanation by the detective and the complete solution of the mystery. (Zhao, 133)

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