

## **Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin: Ratiocination Personified**

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### **Abstract:**

*Edgar Allan Poe is rightly called 'father of modern detective fiction'. He has created stories that act as a groundwork for the future writers of detective fiction. It can be found that not just the genre but Poe has also given to this aspect of the literary world a detective. Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin is the creation of Poe featuring exclusively in his three short-stories namely, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', 'The Purloined Letter'. This paper deals with the elements of ratiocination that is logic and reasoning, inherent in the character of Dupin that helps in his case-solving process. The paper also illustrates how these qualities facilitate the ratiocination process to its best.*

**Keywords: Dupin, Ratiocination, Qualities, Logic, Reasoning, Mathematics, Axioms, Law**

Edgar Allan Poe is a name etched in the history of American Literature, a name that abounds in a wealth of great literary works that carry the same original essence even today. In him emerged 'The Father of Modern Detective Fiction', a name that shines as the brightest star in the history of English Literature in general and American Literature in particular. Not only the genre but Poe also gave the literary world a benchmark of what one calls a detective. The three short stories in question are *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), *The Mystery of Marie Roget* (1842) and *The Purloined Letter* (1844-45). These three short-stories mark the creation of the first sleuth character called Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin who tends to solve the mystery of a crime in the 'whodunit' method, that is, the culprit is revealed by the end of the narration.

The first detective Dupin story that Poe created was ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’. A Chinese research scholar Eva Zhao, in the article *Gothicism in Edgar Allan Poe’s Short Stories: A Critical Analysis* reflects on Poe’s own words that while treating these stories, “It’s theme was the exercise of ingenuity in the detecting of the murderer.” (Zhao, 125) This is precisely the task of a detective. Thus the first story “Murders in the Rue Morgue” and the next two following it “established many tropes that would become common elements in mystery fiction: the eccentric but brilliant detective, the bumbling constabulary, the first person narration.” (Zhao, 125)

Matthew Pearl is an America novelist and educator. In an introduction to the book *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Pearl thus quotes that Poe called these stories as his “tales of ratiocination” (Pearl, ix):

...which were among the widest read of his stories in his day, owed their popularity to “being something in a new key.” The author was quite right: His trilogy of stories featuring the analytical or “ratiocinative” C. Auguste Dupin—consisting of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” and “The Purloined Letter”—almost single-handedly gave rise to the genres of mystery and detective fiction. (ix)

Thus, “With the publication of the three Dupin stories during the years 1841-1845, Poe established for all time the conventions of the genre.” (Zhao, 133)

It is evident in Poe’s ‘tales of ratiocination’ that the two concepts, one of detection and the other of ratiocination, run concomitantly. It is this term called ‘ratiocination’ that becomes the basis of study for the present research work. In very simple words, “A ratiocinative or detective tale can be defined as a story characterized by the process of reasoning.” (Zhao, 121) The element of logic also accompanies that of reasoning. Though it is a simple definition, yet it abounds in meaning. In the research that follows, it will be illustrated how Dupin becomes the living embodiment of ratiocination through a display of his qualities.

A detective/ sleuth/ polymath has certain characteristics which mould his personality to become synonymous with perfection. It is he who is all the qualities, techniques, instruments and definition of ratiocination rolled into one. Research scholar B.C. Maria Bursikova writes in her article *Elements of Metaphysical Detective Story Genre in the works of Melville, Hawthorne and Poe*:

The classical detective is often viewed as a representative of a rational world. He is the essential metaphor for order, being able to solve any mystery simply by correct logical reasoning. The detective alone in a world of credulous men, holds to the scholastic principle of *adequatio rei et intellectus*, the adequation of mind to

things, the belief that the mind, given enough time, can understand everything. There are no mysteries, there is only incorrect reasoning. The detective is the embodiment of the belief that everything in the world can be explained rationally. (Bursikova, 6-7)

It can be inferred from above that there are essential qualities that must be possessed by the polymath which find their advantage in the realm of carrying out the process of ratiocination most effectively. ‘Attention and concentration’ is the first and foremost thing that is a must for the detective to possess in every little job that he undertakes. ‘Accuracy’ is another aspect that accentuates the formerly mentioned element. The more the accuracy in the concentration and attention, the better will be the result. To overcome obstacles, ‘calculation of events’ and ‘proficiency’ is a must. ‘Common sense’ though its need sounds less than important, yet its avoidance altogether can mask the revelation of necessary clues. ‘Experience and general awareness with a combination of general knowledge’ is the next essential quality of the detective, which might, in one word be called ‘cognizance’. ‘Interdisciplinary knowledge’ also facilitates the crime-solving process. Also, along with analytical ability and experience comes the factor of ‘intuition’ and this factor strengthens with experience and intuitions are proved right in almost all the cases. The following paper is an elaboration of these qualities along with analysis from the three stories to support the idea.

Attention and concentration in any endeavor that a detective takes up, becomes the foremost quality. The importance of ‘attention’ is provided by Poe through the example of the “game of chess” (Rue Morgue, 10) that “if it flag for an instant, an oversight is committed resulting in injury or defeat.” (Rue Morgue, 10) This game tricks the opponent because of its “possible moves being not only manifold but involute” and the winner is the one who is “more concentrative rather than the more acute (perceptive) player.” (Rue Morgue, 10) In Poe’s Dupin attention mingles with concentration and helps Dupin to discard at once the useless evidences which might “cause to deflect from the line of ordinary analysis.” (Roget, 80) Dupin starts with “examining the whole neighborhood, as well as the house” of the L’ Espanaye’s “with a minuteness of attention” of which the narrator “could see no possible object.” (Rue Morgue, 28) This is what sets Dupin apart from the ordinary men folk. Dupin reads the newspapers with concentration which digs out the “ex-patre character” (Roget, 68) of L’Etoile’s suggestion “at the outset.” (Roget, 68) Dupin also directs the reader time and again that “in viewing this question in its full and proper light, we must hold steadily in mind” (Roget, 78) everything that is gathered. Richard Whatley, an English rhetorician, logician, economist and theologian, in his book *Elements of Logic*, seconds the idea: “Hence the importance of logical habits is in fixing our

attention strongly and steadily on the *important* terms of the argument,” (Whatley, 196) marking what Dupin also does perfectly.

To work with accuracy and precision is another indispensable quality inherent in a genius detective. It is a general but essential statement that:

We all, where we have no definite maxims to steer by, guide ourselves in the same way: and if we have an extensive experience, and retain its impressions strongly, we may acquire in this manner a very considerable power of accurate judgment, which we may be utterly incapable of justifying or of communicating to others. (Whatley, 234)

Dupin figures out the “extreme laxity in the examination of the corpse,” (Roget, 79) by the police to be sans accuracy. Also, M. Beauvias recognized the body of Marie by the hair on the arm. It was Dupin who reached the accuracy of the statement by completing with precision what the newspapers left incomplete:

No arm is without hair. The generality of the expression of L’Etoile is a mere perversion of the witness’ phraseology. He must have spoken of some peculiarity in this hair. (Roget, 73-74)

An ordinary person cannot possess such accuracy as that possessed by a detective with strong ratiocinative powers. This is the reason why, “the scrutiny of the various newspaper files” carried with “minuteness” seemed to the narrator “altogether objectless.” (Roget, 81)

Dupin displays accuracy in examining Madame Deluc’s testimony who states that the screams were heard “about dusk.” (Roget, 96) The departure of the gang of miscreants from her inn and the hearing of screams of a girl in the vicinity coincided, reports Madame Deluc. Dupin considers “what words does Madame Deluc designate the period of the evening at which these screams were heard.” (Roget, 96) Madame Deluc reports that it was heard “soon after dark,” and Dupin’s accurate investigation reports that “‘soon after dark’ is, at least, dark; and ‘about dusk’ is as certainly daylight. Thus it is abundantly clear that the gang quitted the Barriere de Roule prior to the screams heard by Madame Deluc.” (Roget, 96)

Accuracy needs to be possessed while Dupin calculates the various events attached to each case. He calculates all the events that must have led to the deception of the police regarding the window opening from where the Orangutan escaped. He calculates a series of events and reports:

In the present instance, these shutters are fully three feet and a half broad. When we saw them from the rear of the house, they were both about half open- that is to say, they stood off at right angles from the wall. It is probable that the police, as

well as myself, examined the back of the tenement; in looking at these *ferrades*... did not perceive this great breadth itself. (Rue Morgue, 36)

Whatley's statement contributes to the importance of calculating the events:

When we conclude that some person will, on some given occasion, feel or act so and so, we sometimes judge from an enlarged consideration of the manner in which human beings in general, or persons of some particular character, are accustomed to feel and act; but much oftener from merely recollecting the feelings and conduct of the same person in some previous instance, or from considering how we should feel or act ourselves. (Whatley, 234)

The Orangutan must have entered the window from the following way as described by Dupin logically:

...the shutter belonging to the window... if swung fully back to the wall, reach to within two feet of the lightning rod. It was also evident that, by exertion of a very unusual degree of activity and courage an entrance into the window, from the rod, might have thus been effected. (Rue Morgue, 36)

In *The Mystery of Marie Roget* M. Beauvias is rendered free from suspicion because as per Dupin's calculation "the suspicious circumstances which invest him" readily "tally much better" with Dupin's "hypothesis of romantic busy-bodyism, than with the reasoner's suggestion of guilt." (Roget, 76) This way, Beauvias is not guilty but just coming into the lime light for publicity. The calculation of all the events results in Dupin concluding that in the thicket, "the articles were placed... with the view of diverting attention from the real scene of the outrage." (Roget, 89) Dupin also calculates that "the bandage was employed" around the neck of the corpse of Marie "from circumstances arising at a period when the handkerchief was no longer attainable" and that can only be "after quitting the thicket, (if the thicket it was,) and on the road between the thicket and the river." (Roget, 95)

Proficiency comes into play where Dupin displays his skills, competence and ability at crime-solving. This also contributes to effective ratiocinative process. Poe's definition of this quality is highlighted in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*:

When I say proficiency, I mean that perfection in the game which includes a comprehension of *all* the sources whence legitimate advantage may be derived. (Rue Morgue, 11)

Dupin is skilled at gathering useful evidences. He considers the newspaper reports but never totally relies on them. His skill becomes known when he declares that "The deductions from the premises (of Le Commercial) are philosophical and acute; but the premises, in two instances, at

least, are founded in imperfect observation.” (Roget, 77) He sees that “there... seems deficiency of observation on the part of Le Commercial.” (Roget, 78) Whatley says:

It should be added that a close observation and logical analysis of fallacious arguments, as it tends (according to what has been already said) to form a habit of mind well suited for the practical detection of Fallacies; so, for that reason, it will make us the more careful in making *allowance* for them. (Whatley, 194)

Dupin is proficient at his detection process and knows that “queries, skillfully directed, will not fail to elicit...information.” (Roget, 98) Dupin is fully aware that it is his duty to elicit the “information which the parties themselves may not even be aware of possessing” (Roget, 98) in a case. Therefore, being proficient, he is able to dig out unsaid pieces of importance from deep recesses of its sources. His proficiency at case solving also lies in wearing “a pair of green spectacles” (Letter, 119) under cover of which he could “cautiously and thoroughly” (Letter, 119) scrutinize the whole apartment. In order to rivet the attention on the letter under the green spectacles, he created “a most animated discussion with the Minister upon a topic which had never failed to interest and excite him.” (Letter, 121) There can be no doubts left in the mind of the reader that Dupin will solve the case positively.

Common Sense, Whatley says is “an exercise of the judgment unaided by any Art or system of rules.” (Whatley, xi) But its possession is very necessary. Dupin’s statement: “Those who are guilty of such horrid crimes, choose darkness rather than light...” (Roget, 58) is not inferred by any set of rules but essential enough for Dupin to reach to worthy conclusion. The editor of Le Commercial asserts that Marie was a known personality and could not have passed unnoticed from the streets of Barriere du Roule. “This is the idea of a man long resident in Paris—a public man—and one who walks to and fro in the city, have been mostly limited to the vicinity of the public offices.” (Roget, 77) Dupin practices common sense as “an exercise...such as we must necessarily employ in numberless cases of daily occurrence.” (Whatley, xi) Common sense finds its importance in Dupin and Dupin finds its importance in the ratiocination process:

There is, however, abundant room for the employment of Common-Sense in the application of the system. To bring arguments, out of the form in which they are expressed in conversation and in books, into the regular logical shape, must be of course, the business of Common-Sense, aided by practice. (Whatley, xii)

Dupin applies common sense “having no established principles to guide...no line of procedure, as it were, distinctly chalked out,” still he can be credited as the one “who is eminently skilful in doing this, is said to possess a superior degree of Common Sense.” (Whatley, xi) In describing the scene of the thicket, Dupin concludes that “it seems almost impossible that

these evidences of guilt should have been accidentally left where found.” (Roget, 92) Common sense states that “there was sufficient presence of mind (it is supposed) to remove the corpse” but then “a more positive evidence than the corpse itself (whose features might have been quickly obliterated by decay,) is allowed to lie conspicuously in the scene of the outrage?” (Roget, 92) This is out of the realm of common sense, therefore illogical. Dupin successfully establishes that, “An individual has committed the murder” (Roget, 92) of Marie Roget. This is inferred from common sense because no gang will carry the body as a burden and drag it but will lift it instead. An individual will not be able to do that and thus, has to make a design “of affording a handle by which to carry the body” (Roget, 94) found in the form of a bandage around Marie’s neck. It should nevertheless be kept in mind that:

Common-Sense is only our second best guide—that the rules of Art, if judiciously framed are always desirable when they can be had, is an assertion, for the truth of which I may appeal to the testimony of mankind in general; which is so much the more valuable, inasmuch as it may be accounted the testimony of *adversaries*. (Whatley, xi)

Awareness of the world around and its various general phenomena along with all the qualities mentioned above enhance the experience of the detective. John Stuart Mill was a British philosopher, political economist and civil servant. In his book *A System of Logic* he writes:

So complicated are the conditions which govern our practical agency, that to enable one thing to be *done*, it is often requisite to *know* the nature and properties of many things. (Mill, 2)

*The Mystery of Marie Roget* is the story where Dupin wants to call the attention of the reader that “the time elapsing between the first ascertained, and the second supposed elopement, is a few months more than the general period of the cruises of our men-of-war.” (Roget, 83) His intention is to converge the reader’s focus of suspicion on the naval officer as the murderer of Marie. His awareness is lent to the reader:

...a murder perpetrated, by a lover, or at least by an intimate and secret associate of the deceased. This associate is of a swarthy complexion, the ‘hitch’ in the bandage, and the ‘sailor’s knot’ with which the bonnet ribbon is tied, point to a seaman. His companionship with the deceased, a gay (lively), but not an abject (miserable) young girl, designates him as above the grade of the common sailor. (Roget, 97)

It is a result of Dupin's awareness that he knew for certain that "there was no advertisement of the picking up of this boat." (Roget, 99) Everything pointed out towards a solitary murderer, the naval officer. The best example of Dupin's awareness lies in the following:

All experience shows that drowned bodies, or bodies thrown into water immediately after death by violence, require from six to ten days for decomposition to take place to bring them to the top of the water. Even where a canon is fired over a corpse, and it rises before at least five or six days' immersion, it sinks again, if left alone. (Roget, 58)

*The Murders in the Rue Morgue* reflects Dupin's experience and awareness when he readily discards the idea of "self-destruction" as a means of death of Madame L'Espanaye. He also points out that mother Espanaye has not murdered her daughter and bases his reason on the "method," (Rue Morgue, 34) by which the murder has been committed. It is evident from the condition of the corpse that the mother's strength could never have matched the way Camille Espanaye was thrust in the chimney. In the same story, when the nail resists all effort of Dupin, he instantly comes to know that "a concealed spring must exist" and this proves to be a "corroboration" of his idea and "convinced" him that his "premise, at least, were correct." (Rue Morgue, 34)

Cognizance, the quality of being well-informed, is "the guidance of one's own thoughts. Logic takes cognizance of our intellectual operations only as they conduce to our own knowledge, and to our command over that knowledge for our own uses." (Mill, 3) Dupin is well-informed that the knotted piece of ribbon found at the lightning rod in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* belongs to a sailor from a Maltese vessel because of:

...its form, and its greasy appearance...evidently been used in tying the hair in one of those long *queues* (braids) of which sailors are so fond. Moreover, this knot is one which few besides sailors can tie, and is peculiar to the Maltese. (Rue Morgue, 42)

Dupin's quality of being well-informed is reflected in his knowledge about the type of windows called by Parisian carpenters as "*ferrades*" (Rue Morgue, 35) and it is this information which leads to solve the mystery of the mode of descent of the Orangutan after murdering the women. Dupin knows the window to be:

...a kind rarely employed at present day, but frequently seen upon very old mansions at Lyons and Bourdeaux. They are in the form of an ordinary door except that the lower half is latticed or worked in open trellis- thus affording an excellent hold for the hands. (Rue Morgue, 36)

This knowledge of the window's design, says Dupin, facilitated the escape of the Orangutan.

More examples can be quoted from *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. Residing in a secluded place does not deprive Dupin of the necessary information. Dupin knew:

About three years ago, a disturbance very similar to the present, was caused by the disappearance of this same Marie Roget... At the end of the week however, she re-appeared... with a slight paleness not altogether usual.... We presume that the present absence is a freak of the same nature, and that, at the expiration of a week, or perhaps of a month, we shall have her among us again. (Roget, 81)

The insinuations leveled at Beauvias are of no importance because of Dupin's cognizance of the people around him. The fact is that Beauvias "is a busy body (snoop) with much of romance and little of wit." (Roget, 76) He is not guilty because:

... anyone so constituted will readily so conduct himself, upon real occasion of real excitement, as to render liable to suspicion on the part of the over acute, or the ill-disposed. (Roget, 76)

There is a lot of controversy attached to the dress of Marie's corpse pertaining to its fabric and the overall condition. Dupin very well knows that:

From the very nature of such fabrics, a thorn or nail becoming entangled in them, tears them rectangularly, divides them into two longitudinal rents, at right angles with each other, and meeting at an apex (culminating point) where the thorn enters- but it is scarcely possible to conceive the piece 'torn off.' To tear a piece off from such fabric, two distinct forces, in different directions, will be, in almost every case, required. (Roget, 90-91)

In *The Purloined Letter*, it is Dupin's awareness regarding the Parisian police and also the basic science involved in all the actions that take place. When the Prefect says that they have checked the cavities of every piece of furniture, Dupin asks, "But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" (Letter, 108) A cognizant detective such as Dupin solves the mysteries with excellence.

Dupin possesses interdisciplinary knowledge and the necessary skill of its application in the suitable areas. Dupin uses the branch of Biology, Physics and Chemistry and its worthy application in solving the problem of whether Marie's body drowned itself or was drowned by outer force. He talks of "decomposition" which releases "gas, distending the cellular tissues and all the cavities," causing "the bulk to materially increase" (Roget, 70) and appear on the surface. He further combines this fact with the laws of Chemistry stating that decomposition is "hastened or retarded" by "mineral impregnation or purity of the water, by its depth or shallowness,"

(Roget, 70) etc. So the time of decomposition cannot be accurately stated. Application of Physics in the firing of the canon, along with the facts of other branches, affect the rising of the body to the surface. Thus, the whole statement in the newspaper is rendered “a tissue of inconsequence and incoherence.” (Roget, 71) It is rightly pointed out thus: “Logic, however, is not the same thing with knowledge, though the field of logic is co-extensive with the field of knowledge.” (Mill, 5)

The logical and reasonable pursuance of investigation process is not a bed of roses even if all the elements mentioned till now are effectively put into use. Dupin has to face certain hurdles which he needs to skillfully overcome. Poe, and in one way Dupin discards the exclusive use of three areas, that is mathematics, law and axioms and state that assumptions proved merely on these three fields cannot always be wholly logical, reliable and applicable to all cases. These may seem areas sufficient enough for logical discoveries, but they have their shortcomings. Research scholar Charity Lea Givens writes in the article *Poe's Poisoned Pen: A Study in Fiction as Vendetta*: “Poe valued analysis above what he referred to as mere calculation- mere mathematical ways of solving equations.” (Givens, 30) Therefore, Mathematics is not a fully trustworthy branch for Dupin's analysis. While analyzing the case of Marie Roget, Dupin realizes that “we make chance a matter of absolute calculation. We subject the unlooked for and unimagined, to the mathematical *formulae* of the schools.” (Roget, 80) But this should not be the case because “no *matter of fact* can be mathematically demonstrated; though it may be proved in such a manner as to leave no doubt on the mind.” (Whatley, 264)

Whatley's idea emphasizes the disuse of mathematics as well because:

...this character of necessity, ascribed to the truths of mathematics, and (even with some reservations to be hereafter made) the peculiar certainty attributed to them, is an illusion; in order to sustain which, it is necessary to suppose that those truths relate to, and express the properties of, purely imaginary objects. (Whatley, 279)

Although it is a “well-digested idea of centuries” that “the mathematical reason has long been regarded as the reason par excellence” (Letter, 115) but in the case of Minister, it is not so. Hence, Dupin flouts the idea by means of a general experience and explanation. Although mathematics “is an art worthy a better cause” (Letter, 116) yet, it is not being applied in such a way. Dupin says that the mathematicians, starting from the French as “the originators,” “have insinuated the term ‘analysis’ into application to algebra.” (Letter, 116) This sets Dupin totally against “the reason adduced by mathematical study.” (Letter, 116)

Exclusive use of mathematics in the application of logic to bear fruitful results is a faulty method according to Dupin. There are various instances where he talks against it. Quoting examples from *The Purloined Letter* as well, will contribute to the idea. Dupin believes that:

The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called pure algebra, are abstract or general truths. (Letter, 116)

“There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of relation.” (Letter, 116) Even the formulas with fixed results have exceptions and are not true in all the cases:

In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that  $x^2+px$  was absolutely and unconditionally equal to  $q$ . (Letter, 117)

It is not so because there can always be exceptions which no mathematician is ready to believe.

If there is mere mathematical deduction in a case, re-checking becomes a must. Mingling of all the factors stated above never make a detective investigate a step twice. In fact, Dupin passes from one step to another satisfactorily:

The faculty of re-resolution is possibly much invigorated by mathematical study, and especially by that highest branch of it which, unjustly, and merely on account of the retrograde operations, has been called, as if *par excellence*, analysis. Yet to calculate is not in itself to analyse. (Rue Morgue, 9-10)

Mathematics and Science have axioms. When solely used, even they are not dependable. “Mathematical axioms are not axioms of general truth” (Letter, 116) believes Dupin. The use of mathematical axioms is more discarded because “axioms are not the foundations or first principles of geometry, from which all the other truths of the science are synthetically deduced” where Whatley gives the example of “the laws of motion and of the composition of forces in dynamics, the equal mobility of fluids in hydrostatics, the laws of reflection and refraction in optics, are the first principles of those sciences” to support his thesis. But Whatley states that axioms are “merely necessary assumptions, self-evident indeed, and the denial of which would annihilate all demonstration, but from which, as premises, nothing can be demonstrated.” (Whatley, 237) Hence, it becomes necessary as well as not, to make use of mathematical axioms. This also supports the reason why Dupin is also not in favor.

Dupin believes that “In chemistry also the axioms fails,” because “in the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united,

equal to the sum of their values apart.” (Letter, 116) Definitions are a part of chemistry and all sciences but not wholly dependable as propositions. Dupin knows what to believe and what not to rely on.

It is acknowledged that the conclusions of geometry are deduced, partly at least, from the so-called Definitions, and that those definitions are assumed to be correct representations, as far as they go, of the objects with which geometry is conversant. (Whatley, 279)

It can safely be concluded:

Now we have pointed out that, from a definition as such, no proposition, unless it be one concerning the meaning of a word, can ever follow; and that what apparently follows from a definition, follows in reality from an implied assumption that there exists a real thing conformable thereto. This assumption, in the case of the definitions of geometry, is not strictly true. (Whatley, 279)

Therefore, “there exist no real things exactly conformable to the definitions” (Whatley, 279) and require more factors to contribute in accurate results.

Law is the third area discarded by Dupin when he says that “it is the mal-practice of the courts to confine evidence and discussion to the bounds of apparent relevancy.” (Roget, 80) While making the inferences in *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, Dupin talks to his reader conveying that he is definitely against law and tells them that he knows, “You will say, no doubt, using the language of law,” that he may be doing all that just “to make out a case.” (Roget, 80) But the genius detective has an answer to this: “I should rather undervalue, than insist upon a full estimation of the activity required in this matter. This may be the practice in law, but it is not the usage of reason.” (Roget, 80) Dupin also comments:

He has thought it sagacious (wise) to echo the small talks of the lawyers, who, for the most part, content themselves with echoing the rectangular precepts (rulings) of the courts. I would here observe that very much of what is rejected as evidence by court, is the best of evidence by the intellect. (Roget, 75)

The court always keeps “guiding itself by the general principles of evidence-the recognized and *booked* principles- is averse from swerving at particular instances.” (Roget, 75) If Dupin starts to fix his ratiocination power based on this line of thought, he will surely fail. Evidences need to be sorted out very carefully “and this steadfast adherence to principle, with rigorous disregard of the conflicting exceptions” (Roget, 75) will bear results of no worth. Dupin is well aware that law is “the practice, in mass,” and “is therefore philosophical.” (Roget, 75) Poe

talks of this “vast individual error” (Roget, 75) where the mass completely relies on law, as quoted from *The Mystery of Marie Roget*:

A theory based on the qualities of an object, will prevent its being unfolded according to its objects; and he who arranges topics in reference to their causes, will cease to value them according to their results. Thus jurisprudence of every nation will show that, when law becomes a science and a system, it ceases to be justice. The errors into which a blind devotion to principles of classification has led to common law, will be seen by observing how often the legislature has been obliged to come forward to restore the equity its scheme has lost.- Landor (Roget, 75-76)

Such are the qualities, the blend of which results in Dupin’s ceaseless victory in any case that he takes up. It is a truth that Dupin featured first in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and never after *The Purloined Letter*. But these three stories were enough to establish him as a figure in which a reader sees ‘ratiocination personified’.

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