Chapter – III

Trajectory of Fear through Mystery

Mystery is an element in human observation as well as in literary arts that instills the sense of fear in a person. Great dramatists, novelists and even poets have employed the technique of mystery in their works. This has helped them achieve the required attention from the readers or audience. Nevertheless, mystery became the basic in prototypes of fiction especially in American hardboiled fiction. Poe combines death within the psychological framework of the character which has lost the loved one. Death and its precursors, its aftermath, the resurrection of the dead, the apparition, fear of the unknown, the mystery of light and shadows and the agony are vital components of Poe’s short fiction.

The ratiocinative, drawing-room style of Poe makes an individual, wonder as to how these occult happenings can be so uncommonly common in everyone’s life. Because death and decay are not unreal or fantasizing programs that are unfit for human reality. Death is indisputably an irreparable severity of human condition. Though the mystery surrounding death maybe a fantasy, its result is the same and unchanging. This cruel factor of human destiny, that faces an abrupt end, the fearful reality that is disguised as a mystery. Poe’s world of mysticism and the hatred for the vengeful nature of human destiny is depicted with the colours of his extensive vocabulary and music of the rhythmic language. He uses words and language to scare rather than narrate. Narration, though scary, is intelligent and persuasive in its own way. As the narrator tells:

“Ligeia” is a story with a long winding speculation of how the narrator could have met the lady named Ligeia and how he had fallen in love with
her. The narrator begins to recall the circumstances in which he had first met Ligeia. Though he is not aware that how Ligiea had become a prime subject of love in his life, he definitely remembers how he first encountered her in Germany and that her family lived in an ancient city on the Rhine. He is sure about whatever she had spoken about her family. One does not remember her last name. Despite his forgetfulness about Ligeia’s origins, he so scarcely recalls the memory of her person. Ligeia is tall, slender, and in her later years, emaciated. She treads lightly, moving like a shadow. (L 15)

Though fiercely beautiful, Ligeia does not conform to a traditional mold of beauty: the narrator identifies strangeness in her features:

The ‘strangeness’ however, which I found in the eyes were of a nature distinct from the formation or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the expression. Ah, word of no meaning! Behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we in trench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. (L 3)

The narrator recalls that Ligeia’s most beautiful feature is her hair. They seem to be unusually concealing her abundance of knowledge that Ligeia possesses and shares with the narrators. Ligeia’s understanding of the world of metaphysical studies was the most stunning of her assets that the narrator had ever loved in her.

As time passes, Ligeia becomes mysteriously ill. On her death bed, Ligeia requests him to read her a poem which she had composed about the natural tragedy of life. The poem describes a theater where angels have gathered to watch the mysterious actions of mimes, which are controlled by formless, outside presences. Suddenly, amid the drama, a creature intrudes and feeds on the mimes. As the final verses are being read, Ligeia
shrieks a prayer about the unfairness of the tragedy and dies. And as she breathes her last sighs, there comes a low murmur from her lips.

Legia’s death affects the narrator so much that the narrator moves to England, where he purchases an abbey for himself. He soon re-marries. Poe depicts the narrator’s bridal chamber as a Gothic masterpiece, which includes a large window that lets in ghastly rays, a vaulted ceiling, various Eastern knickknacks, and large gold tapestries that hang from the walls. Lady Rowena and the husband spend the first month of their marriage in this huge chamber. Slowly the narrator comes to realize that this lady is not totally in love with him. At the beginning of the second month, Lady Rowena, like Ligeia, becomes mysteriously ill. Although she recovers temporarily, she reveals a hypersensitivity to sounds and an unexplained fear of the gold tapestries, which she fears are alive. As Poe writes:

She partly arose and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she then heard, but which I could not hear—of motions which she then saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries; and I wished to show her (What. Let me confess it, I could not all believe) that those almost inarticulate breathings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. (L 9)

Lady Rowena’s health becomes worse day by day and the narrator feels sure of her death. A red fluid from nowhere appears and drops itself in the glass of wine that Rowena is drinking.

…and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid. (L 10)
The effect of the opium makes the narrator believe such incidents. Three days later, Rowena dies, and on the fourth day, the narrator sits alone with her corpse but cannot keep his mind from the memories of Ligeia. Later that night, the narrator wakes to the sounds of moaning from Lady Rowena’s death bed and to his astonishment, he observes that a tinge of color has returned to Rowena’s face.

There was now a partial glow upon the forehead and upon the cheek and throat; a perceptible warmth pervaded the whole frame; there was even a slight pulsation at the heart. The lady lived; and with redoubled ardor I betook myself to the task of restoration. (L 12)

Faced again with memories of Ligeia, the narrator, horrified, encounters another reawakening of the corpse. This time, however, the corpse moves from its deathbed and advances, shrouded, into the middle of the apartment. Aghast, the narrator mysteriously questions the identity of the corpse. Though he feels that it must be the lady Rowena, he notices the body has grown taller. Glancing from her feet to her head, the narrator discovers raven-black hair emerging from behind the shroud -- it is the lady Ligeia standing in the bridal chamber: ‘Here then at least,’ I shrieked aloud, ‘can I never -- can I never be mistaken? These are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes of my lost love of the lady of the LADY LIGEIA’ (13).

Poe employs an undying difficulty of the self, in the character of the narrator in this story. The mystery of life and death is hidden in the mind of this person. The readers are kept unaware of the reasons to the illness of Rowena and Ligeia. Both the female characters are an embodiment of fragility and unease of victimization. The modern day women of the nineteenth century faced bizarre conditions of mental illness like depression, PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome), anxiety etc. These conditions were said to be prevalent among the women of the modern era. Such symptoms and depressions were ignored by the folk of that era and so it became fatal too.
Like vapours, neurasthenia was a term used in 1829 to describe vague anxiety, fatigue, depression, and heart palpitations. The disorder became popular in the late 1800s and was often attributed to women who were viewed as weak against the stresses of modern day living. These syndromes had no proper cure and the women hence underwent such weird consequences as seen in the characters of Poe. In the case of Rowena, it is evident that the illness is caused by a confusing malady. Poe had been trying to rearrange the disheveled shelved ambiguity of the pity that the women underwent in nineteenth century America. He has tried to make the readers get absorbed in its consequence which is “death”. He wanted to instill a moral sanity in understanding the physiological conditions of women. The flaws lie not only in the alignment of a relationship but also in understanding the person from the inside out. Beauty is given the primordial position in the plot, especially in the story “Ligeia”. Simultaneously, the erroneous observation of the male lover is enhanced. The narrator in “Ligeia” is rather more absorbed in the extraordinariness of Ligeia’s beauty than of her illness:

Wanting the radiant luster of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead. And now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored. Ligeia grew ill. (L 5)

The narrator is nothing but a silent spectator of this infectious disaster in Ligeia’s life. He can see the beauty fade away slowly with time. Like the physicians of the nineteenth century, who were helpless in finding a cure for these weird diseases in women, the narrator is helpless and is a sufferer of incurable agony. The idea of losing his love right before his eyes makes him more emotional and disturbed. Poe suggests through mystical notes of illness, pain and death, the cleverness of fate that plays frivolous games in the lives of the loved ones. On the one hand, he brings out the wrath of fear in the mystery of fate; and on the other, he releases a complicated scenario of physical and mental ailments of the day.
On the contrary, there are also references and theories where critics say that Poe has made vampiric allusions to increase the mystic atmosphere in “Ligeia”. Different theories and approaches have been applied to this story, ranging from racial theories, over gender, formalism and myth criticism to feminism and many others.

D.H. Lawrence links vampirism to this story claiming that “the narrator in Ligeia” is a vampire of the mind” (Qtd. in Carlson “Tales of Psychical Conflict: “Berenice,” “Morella” and Ligeia” 177). The craze that readers of all ages have for the concept of vampires is extensive and eternal. The wine that is consumed by Rowena is also toxicant by few drops of dark red colored liquid. For seeing through the assertions of D.H. Lawrence, it might be true that, Poe have had thought of relating a scrap of vampirism to thrill the audience. The heaviness of death and the eeriness of a vampire story would obviously captivate any reader’s mind. Various researchers have offered a wide range of such theories regarding the relationship between the narrator and Ligeia. Even the terminology used about the lady Ligeia is shadowy. According to Johanyak, the use of terminology “suggests more a ghost than a woman (67):

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulum alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad. (L 3)

Here, Poe makes a reference to the fantasy character of Sheridan, “Nourjahad”.

Frances Sheridan published “The History of Nourjahad” in 1767. The story describes Nourjahad’s life, who is tricked by the sultan Schemzeddin to believe that he has become immortal and that his period of sleep lasts several years at a time. This implies that Nourjahad is a mistakenly inhuman or maybe a superhuman character. If Ligeia
resembles a race that is something beyond human, then she should either be a ghost or maybe an apparition.

Extensive intake of Opium is one of the reasons that the narrator gets such trances and hallucinations of fairy-like character in his life. It is one of the assumptions that Ligeia might be just a spirit. It comes out of the inference of the unhealthy nervous system of the narrator. According to Katherine Darton, the dependency on opium may result in the symptoms like: “Anxiety, Delirium (which may include confusion, disorientation and hallucinations)” (Darton 7). So the extensive intake or dependency of a person completely on opium may conclude in such disorientations of vision. That is why Ligeia or Rowena may be just a construct of the narrator’s brain. Especially Ligeia is marked as a being of the spirit in the story.

Thus, the expression of Ligeia as an ill woman or a supernatural being is in both ways an aspect of thrill and fear. This fear thrusts itself in the reader’s mind to emboss the mist of mystery and start the act of convincing the effect of death in every man’s life. However, in either case, Poe wants to urge the importance of trivializing a woman’s feelings through this story. The impact, though a concrete one, is definitely rubbing the emotions of the human senses to imbibe the pains that the narrator undergoes. The pains of the women travel through the distressful words of the narrator. The reader re-lives the characters through its sounds and intensity.

The more interesting part of mystery is in the contrasting characters of Ligeia and Lady Rowena. Rowena is fair-haired and blue-eyed. Rowena does not possess any great intellectual capacity, but she speaks only through the narrator’s indirect speech and dies as a powerless means to revivification of Ligeia. Even the description of the bridal chamber is more extensive than Rowena’s physical description. This describes how a man could be more lured to fantasy than to reality. Rowena’s role becomes gradually less
powerful, as is the importance that is put on the disease. The disease starts to engulf the relationship of the narrator and Rowena. He stands there rather wondering at the dying woman than trying to save her. Poe tries to juxtapose these contradictory situations in the narrator's life, so as to induce the effect of the suspense that preludes the death of Rowena. One might guess that at some point Rowena might be saved, but in vain. Rowena remains a nonentity; she is a representative of the old, passive and submissive female, while Ligeia, the intelligent and powerful woman, has conquered the powerless bride and therefore represents the new woman.

Poe becomes a feminist in the case of Ligeia. The feminist orientations of the time certainly affected the writings of this powerful writer. Mystery had become a theatrical weapon that allows the writer to master the stage with. With its mastery Poe wipes the wave of feminist ideals onto the streets of unconquered or ignorant minds of the people. Female emancipation saw the dawn of speaking the issues of lesbianism and prostitution in the public arena. It became transparent that the modern woman is the sufferer of social evils. The opium-stricken lads with the mysterious backdrop could unveil the tragic occurrences to which the society is blindfolded.

Mystery might seem just a method to entertain or as a construction of the structure of a literary art. But the fact is that Poe with his mind - blowing style has wrought mystery and reality to bring out the consequences of fate and will. “Death” portrays fate and “drug-addiction” becomes will. In the very words of Poe, “the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world” (Poe 165).

Poe speaks of death, love, fear, and beauty, the four main factors that even threatened the very walls of Troy that were reduced to ashes in no time. Man has yielded to be enthralled by the fury of these four attributes of human nature. Without fear there is no mystery or demystification. To understand this enigma, one must assess the biology of fear. It states that,
Fear is not only anchored in stimuli, but also in behaviors. Certain sets of stimuli and behaviors covary; if they did not. We would never be able to attribute fear to other people or animals. (Ekman 169)

So, fear is an outcome of behaviour. The opium intake is itself a behavior that drags anxiety, a deep inflicted fear in any person. Ghostly images and motions behind the tapestries as witnessed by Rowena create an intense feeling of mystery and fear in the reader. The voices that she hears or the shadows that she watches are never witnessed by the narrator. Such supernatural incidents make the reader afraid of the mystery. The ebony bed, the ottomans from India, the wine goblet, the unearthly features of Ligeia, the cold face after the death of Rowena, the bride chamber and the raven-black hair are the various descriptions which are creepy enough to paralyze the intellect. Poe uses various such references to generate mystery out of nothingness. Thus, the nothingness and the strangeness are two qualities that defer the resultant fear. Everyday life is surrounded by such trifles which one might not even notice. But Poe’s ingenious talent lies in raising such lowly things to the height of arousing a mystical effect. Through words and settings he creates a gloomy atmosphere which fills the air with an uncanny feeling about the subject discussed.

The death of Rowena is also heightened making her come alive for a few seconds and then die again. This excites the mood of threat to the highest level by making the reader puzzled by such an unusual intrusion beyond nature. And the immediate arrival of the apparition of Ligeia concludes giving a tremendous shiver through the spine. The reader still has questions about the illness and death of Rowena that may haunt them all night. Rowena might have been poisoned by an unusual seizure or paralyses of a strange kind. The hidden pain of Rowena brings the picture of the incurable diseases of the century and also the agony of a modern woman in facing a defective as well as a deceitful
life. The narrator is a mere witness though he is the only one alive till the end of the story. With death, the women’s souls are regenerated to quench the thirst of a healthy life that they might have dreamt to live.

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” begins with an anonymous narrator speaking of the tale of a murder and criminal detection with a discussion of the analytic mind. Poe describes the analyst as driven paradoxically by both intuition and the moral inclination to disentangle what confuses his peers. He adds that the analyst takes delight in mathematical study and in the game of checkers, which allows the calculating individual to practice the art of detection, not only of the moves integral to the game, but also the demeanour of the opponent. The narrator argues, however, that analysis is not merely ingenuity. He states that while the ingenious man may, at times, be analytic; the calculating man is, without fail, always imaginative.

Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not infrequently, “sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes indeed absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation” (TMRM 31).

The narrator then describes the circumstances in which he met a man named C. Auguste Dupin. Both men were searching for the same book at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre, in Paris, and began to converse. Soon, they become friends and decide to share the expenses of a residence together. The narrator then relays an anecdote illustrating Dupin’s brilliant powers of analysis: one night, while walking together, Dupin describes an actor whom the narrator is pondering. Amazed, the narrator asks Dupin to explain his method. He witnesses Dupin’s capacity to work backward and observe the importance of seemingly insignificant details in order to reach ingenious conclusions. As Poe writes:
At such times I could not help remarking and admiring (although from his rich ideality I had been prepared to expect it) a peculiar analytic ability in Dupin. He seemed, too, to take an eager delight in its exercise—if not exactly in its display—and did not hesitate to confess the pleasure thus derived. (33)

Soon thereafter, the narrator and Dupin read newspaper headlines about a horrible murder in the Rue Morgue. One night at 3 AM, eight or ten neighbours of Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille, wake to shrieks from their fourth-floor apartment. The neighbours hear two voices, then silence. The neighbours and two policemen finally break into the locked apartment to find utter disorder and multiple pieces of evidence of a crime, including a blood-smeared razor, locks of gray human-hair, bags of money, and an opened safe. They find no traces of the older woman. However, the noticeable traces of boot in the room lead them to the chimney, where they find the corpse of Mademoiselle Camille. They reason that the murderer must have choked Camille to death and then thrust her body up into the chimney. As Poe describes

Of Madame L’Espanaye no traces were seen; but an unusual quantity of boot being observed in the fireplace, a search was made in the chimney and the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged there from; it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance. The body was quite warm. Upon examining it, many excoriations were perceived, no doubt occasioned by the violence with which it had been thrust up and disengaged. Upon the face were many severe scratches, and, upon the throat, dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger nails, as if the deceased had been throttled to death. (37)
Expanding the search, the neighbours and police discover the body of Madame L’Espanaye in a courtyard in the rear of the building. They find her badly beaten, with her throat severely cut. When the police move the body, in fact, her head falls off. The 4000 francs that Madame L’Espanaye had just withdrawn from the bank are still in the apartment, ruling out robbery as a motive for the grisly crime.

The newspaper then recounts depositions of witnesses concerning the voices they heard. They all agree that they heard two voices: one, a deep Frenchman’s voice; and the other, a higher voice of uncertain ethnic origin, though speculated to be Spanish. The gender of the second speaker is uncertain. The same newspaper reports the findings of the medical examiner, who confirms that Camille died from choking and that Madame L’Espanaye was beaten to death with immense violence, most likely by a club. The evening edition of the paper reports a new development. The police have arrested Adolphe Le Bon, a bank clerk who once did Dupin a favour.

With the arrest of Le Bon, Dupin becomes interested pursuing the investigation and obtains permission to search the crime scene. Dupin is eager to survey the setting because the newspaper reports portray the apartment as impossible to escape from the inside, which makes the case so mysterious. Dupin suggests that police have been shocked by the atrocity of the murder. They cannot find out the motive of the murder, because the money was still in the Madame’s room. The police failed to consider that such a crime is an uncommon occurrence. Producing two pistols, Dupin reveals that he awaits the arrival of a person who will prove his solution to the crime.

Dupin names those elements of the crime scene that the police have mishandled. For example, the shrill voice remains unidentifiable in its gender and its nationality, but it also cannot be identified as emitting words at all, just sounds. He also explains that the police have overlooked the windows in the apartment, which operate by springs and can
be opened from the inside. Though the police believe the windows to be nailed shut, Dupin discovers a broken nail in one window, which only seemed to be intact. Dupin surmises that, someone could have opened the window, exited the apartment, and closed the window from the outside without raising suspicion.

Also, Dupin addresses the mode of entry through the windows. The police imagine that no suspect could climb up the walls to the point of entry. Dupin hypothesizes that a person or thing of great agility could leap from the lightning rod outside the windows to the shutters of the window. Dupin surmises that, no ordinary human could inflict the beating that Madame L’Espayane suffered. The murderer would have to possess superhuman strength and inhuman ferocity. To satisfy the confusion of the narrator, Dupin points out that the hair removed from Madame L’Espayane’s fingers is not human hair. After drawing a picture of the size and shape of the hand that killed the two women, Dupin reveals his solution. The hand matches the paw of an Ourang-Outang. Dupin has advertised the safe capture of the animal, news that he believes will draw out its owner. Dupin adds that the owner must be a sailor, since, at the base of the lightning rod, he found a ribbon knotted in a way unique to naval training.

When the sailor arrives, Dupin draws his pistol and demands all the information he knows about the murders. He assures the sailor that he believes him to be innocent. The sailor describes how the animal, grasping a razor, escaped from its closet one night and disappeared from his apartment. The sailor followed the Ourang-Outang and watched him climb the lightning rod and leap into the window. Because he does not possess the animal’s agility, the sailor could only watch the animal as it slashed Madame L’Espanaye and choked Camille. Before escaping the apartment, the animal threw Madame L’Espanaye’s body to the courtyard below. The sailor thus confirms the identity of the mysterious voices, the deep voice was his own, and the shrill shrieks were that of the Ourang-Outang.
When informed of Dupin’s solution, the police release Le Bon. The prefect is unable to conceal his chagrin at being outwitted by Dupin. He is happy to have the crime solved, but he is sarcastic, rather than grateful, about Dupin’s assistance. Dupin comments, in conclusion, that the prefect is a man of ingenuity, not analysis.

The chaotic and deathly Rue Morgue apartment symbolizes the personal tragedies involving women that afflicted Poe’s life. Poe contrasts the violent disorder of Madame L’Espanaye’s household with the calm domesticity that Dupin and the narrator experience. Poe never found, in his lifetime, this sort of household solace, and he invests this scene of domestic ruin with the poignant experiences of his own life. The creation of Dupin allows Poe not only to highlight his own remarkable cunning, but also to share in the domestic tranquility and fraternity that he long sought.

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” also relies on the role of the narrator as Dupin’s friend. Poe chooses not to use Dupin as a narrator in order to provide a sense of detachment from the workings of the mind that the story describes. The narrator’s role as a foil enhances Dupin as the detective hero. The narrator admires Dupin and prompts him to elicit his analysis, which always astounds the narrator. He allows himself to be outwitted by Dupin, thereby demonstrating that Dupin thinks one step ahead of both the police and the average reader. Accompanying Dupin to the crime scene, the narrator ostensibly witnesses the same evidence, but needs the explanations of his friend in order to see the true nature of the evidence and to understand its part in the larger puzzle.

Part of Dupin’s brilliance is his ability to separate himself from the emotional atrocity of the crime scene. The police become distracted by the sheer inhuman cruelty of the scene, but Dupin is able to look beyond the violence and coolly investigate the small details that otherwise go unnoticed. The decapitation of Madame L’Espanaye is just one ghastly example that, according to Dupin, draws the police away from solving the crime.
For all of Dupin’s rationality and cunning, though, the actual explanation of the crime is, ridiculous; the Ourang-Outang did it. It is difficult to discern whether he intended this solution to be humourous. If the story is to be construed in some way as a joke as the detective story was too young at this time to be parodied and it is a joke told with the straightest of faces. Poe’s tendency to exaggerate gets the better of him in his effort to illustrate the analytic contrasts between Dupin and the Paris police. One can argue that Dupin’s brilliance is ultimately overshadowed by the need to import a wild animal into the solution to the crime. Dupin gets the case right, but Poe may, in fact, go too far in exaggerating the power of his protagonist’s reasoning.

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 the 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 Alger, and two bags, containing nearly four thousand francs in gold” (TMRM 20). Also, in order to avoid “hoodwinking” 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” (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. (TMRM 24)

Poe provides his own idea of plot construction in his essay “The Philosophy of Composition.” Nothing is more clear than that every plot 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.

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, its one protagonist of deduction 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, Dupin is described these:

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. (TMRM 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. Dupin had, since the beginning “seemed singularly interested in the
progress of this affair” (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” (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” (33). It is instead a responsibility of the detective to prove that “these ‘apparent impossibilities’ are, in reality, not such” (33).

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” (28-29). The fact that “the problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means, “becomes the basis for Dupin to infer that the culprit was the Orangutan of a sailor “belonging to the Maltese vessel” (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. 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” (20). The rational instrument of the murder was a “besmeared razor” (20). For instance, the murder of a victim by a newly found element as super radium, is not a legitimate problem. Nor may a rare and unfound drug, which has its existence only in the author’s imagination, be administered.

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. Many testimonies were gathered which could be taken as clues. The mother-daughter’s lifestyle was “exceedingly retired… were reputed to have money” (21-22) and also kept themselves are 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” (22) in which the only words which prominently stood out were sacre, diable and once mon dieu. (23). The fact that one voice was “loud and quick-unequal-spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger” (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” (26) who had been wrongly arrested because “nothing appeared to crminate him” (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” (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” (29). This was a rational and logical decision taken by a rational detective who does not soar into “the realms of fantasy” which can result in breaking the link with reality. Dupin is diligent 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” (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.” He investigates the “means of egress” which at first seem “preternatural,” (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
materials, and escaped materially” (32). The means of egress and ingress (which were the same) become hard to discover because of a deception caused by a combined effect of “a concealed spring” (34) and a broken nail with an invisible fissure. Drawing a *fake-simile* (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” (40).

There is always one motive behind the whole detection process and that is to reach to the culprit. Some logical points are 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” (20) and her mother’s corpse lay “with her throat cut… fearfully mutilated” (20). These aspects 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” (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” (41). The brutal act is a result of the “gigantic stature… prodigious strength and activity… wild ferocity and the imitative propensities of these mammilia” (41). Although the owner of the Orangutan named “Cuvier” is “cognizant of the murder” the culprit is just the Orangutan. Cuvier is innocent because he had “done nothing” which can render him “culpable” (45). He was not even “guilty of robbery” when he has all the chance to have “robbed with impunity” (45).

Dupin has to deal with various phantom opponents before confronting the ape. Le Bon, the bank clerk, is symbolically ruled out from the beginning by his name, which constitutes him as a “good citizen”; suspicion does, however, rest on certain categories of
person, which the detective has to eliminate. As Dupin stresses, the shrill voice' heard
from the stairs was universally described as that of a foreigner; a voice “in whose tones,
even, denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognise nothing familiar!”
(50). It is thus implied that the murders could only have been committed by an alien,
unfamiliar person - savage, or non-European. Dupin goes on to raise the possibility that
it might have been the voice of an Asiatic - of an African, thus anticipating the ape’s
Asiatic provenance, responsibility for the murders is thus shifted on to the other, away
from the reader's world and from the “natural” cultural universe of home and nation, even
before the agent is identified as non-human. The association of non-Europeans with
violent crime is convergent with the various instances of racist stereotyping to be found
elsewhere in Poe's work, in the representation of Native Americans and blacks “The Man
that was Used Up” and “A Tale of the Ragged Mountain,” for the ideological coupling of
non-European and non-human, one may compare *Frankenstein* (1818), where Walton's
first sight of the monster suggests 'a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island.

Thus, before the ape is identified, the crime has already been ascribed to the other,
whether a savage alien or someone mentally alienated. In fact, its author will prove to be
more alien still - 'absolutely alien from humanity' (TMRM 558). The ape, as signifier of
the non-human is, as William Carlos Williams ('Edgar Allan Poe', 1925) points out, a
'recurrent image' in Poe's fiction, usually associated with 'extreme terror'. Elsewhere in
the tales, reference to apes signifies the reduction of the human to object or quasi animal
status; thus in “Tarr and Fether” the tarred and feathered keepers look and act like
'Chimpanzees, Ourang-Outangs, or big black baboons in “Hop-Frog” (1849) the king and
courtiers are made to impersonate Eight Chained Ourang-Outangs, before being burned
to death. Alternatively, the ape may symbolize stupidity, or the absence of intellect or
meaning. Thus, in “Four Beasts in One” (1836), the god Ashimah proves to be a baboon,
a fit symbol for a city ruled by Antiochus the madman; and in “Mystification” (1837), a pseudo-profound text turns out to be a coded version of a most horribly absurd account of a duel between two baboons. Similarly, the ape's noises are presented as non-linguistic “devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabifications” (558) and therefore meaningless. The ape thus becomes a symbol of unmeaning; its “fiendish jabbering” (568) is contrasted with the rationality of the French language, or, indeed, of all the European languages that the witnesses mistake the ape's noises for examples of. The terror induced by the ape is thus that of the nonhuman and the non-linguistic. The alien object signifies the discourse of the other; the possible interpretations of the ape's otherness will be considered below.

The Ourang-Outang has been subjected to the most diverse interpretations. For Bonaparte (1933) it externalizes the child's oedipal fears; the 'savagely potent father' is the prototype of the Ourang-Outang, the ravisher-murderer-castrator of the mother. Lemay sees the ape in more general terms as corresponding to repressed anti-social tendencies in the subject. Its escape symbolises the outbreak of repressed libidinal urges, while the sailor's confinement and whipping of it correspond to the normal social repression and control of sexuality. In Wilbur's reading (1967), the ape is seen as the base or evil force within, the brute or fiend in. In all three cases, the Ourang-Outang is read as externalising certain tendencies within the human subject, although for Wilbur that externalisation is definitive and desirable.

More sociological readings are offered by Harry Levin in his “The Power of Blackness” (1958), for whom the ape represents the Southern fear of miscegenation and by Vincent (1975), who, taking up the ape-god association from “Four Beasts in One” sees the grand-singe fauve, with its force surhumaine, cruauté, langue non-humaine et terrifiante as the Old Testament God, Dieu-l'assassin. Bonaparte, Lemay and Vincent
readings all, in various ways, link the ape to the structures of patriarchal culture. Whether, however, the ape should be read as a symbol of the authoritarian principle in itself (the Father or God) is dubious; it appears more correct to follow Lemay in reading the ape as signifying that which authoritarian culture represses. At the end of the story, Dupin reconstitutes himself as subject, having apparently expelled any abnormal tendencies; the ape's extreme sadism points, not to the normal functioning of patriarchal culture, but to the pathological disturbance caused by the return of the repressed. To read the post-ape Dupin as a symbol of modern rational humanity is to take his apparent coherence at face value.

The ape represents, not the familiar figures of authority, but the unfamiliar, alien forces which disturb the cultural order from within. Levin's connection of the ape with slavery has a certain credibility, given the African reference in the text, the Ourang-Outang disrupts Parisian society, as the fear of miscegenation threatened the coherence of the Southern order. The ape's violence may be seen as symbolising, like the inmates' revolt in “Tarr and Fether” the possibility of a slave insurrection; as a humanoid animal, it converges with the blacks seen ideologically as animal old humans, and like a runaway slave it has escaped from its master. The theme of slavery may, besides, be linked with that of imperialism; the ape's Bornean origins suggest that its violence may be a symbolic act of revenge on the part of the exploited.

The ape will be read as signifying the Other -- both the Other within (the unconscious) and the cultural other-- the foreign and the “savage.” It is this otherness which produces that effect of extreme terror of which Williams speaks. The ideology of criminality constructed in the story is, essentially that crime is always committed by the other. There is no continuity whatever between the normal, respectable citizen and the evil alien Subhuman criminal is symbolically represented by the non-human ape. This
ideology is presented in an extreme form by having an animal commit the crime; a wedge is thus driven between detective and criminal, seen as belonging literally to different species. At the same time, the murders are dehistoricised and desocialised. Since there is no human agent, Panek stresses that the reader is spared 'the discomfort of arrest and punishment while Lemay similarly sees the identification of the ape as a source of relief for the reader.

Knight, who also stresses the absence of punishment, suggests that the murders are not a real crime at all, but a freak occurrence. There is a critical consensus that the absence of a human criminal tends to have a reassuring effect on the naive reader; apparently, Dupin and therefore the narrator, and therefore the reader can all rejoice in their discontinuity with crime and violence. Superficially, then, the story constructs an unbridgeable gulf between Analyst and Ape, and thus affirms Dupin as full subject. However, this ideology of discontinuity is subverted by the materiality of the text. Objectively, the text constitutes a series of relations of doubling which negate any attempt to quarantine off the ape.

The incidence of doubling in the story will now focus specifically on the case of doubling of the ape. It may be noted, first of all, that the ape's violence is doubled by that of the anonymous representatives of “normality” in the text; its penetration of the room and sadistic attack on the women is replicated by the way the police and neighbours enter the house: “the gateway was broken in with a crowbar ... the door ... was forced open” (TMRM 537). The phallic crowbar is later declared by the gendarme to have been, in fact, an even more suggestive bayonet violent entry into a female space is not only the ape's prerogative. The episode symbolically suggests that under certain circumstances, the ape's violence may be reproduced by the guardians of the patriarchal order.
Besides, the ape doubles the sailor, indeed imitates or apes him. The text refers to the 'imitative propensities' of Ourang-Outangs (559), and, accordingly the ape is seen to imitate the sailor's act of shaving incidentally doubling itself too, by looking in the mirror: “Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master” (565). The sailor's relatively unrepressed sexuality, as signified in the cudgel, is doubled in extreme form in the ape's razor stolen from him, which symbolizes the phallus as instrument of destruction: “so dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious, and so well able to use it” (TMRM 565). In the ape, the sailor confronts his own sexuality and hedonism in exaggerated and distorted form.

But if the ape apes the sailor, Dupin apes the ape. Dupin has already revealed his own imitative propensities by counterfeiting the night just before identifying his adversary he shows the narrator a little sketch I have here traced upon this paper. It is a fake-simile drawing of the “indentations of finger nails, upon the throat of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye” (558-59). Dupin thus doubles the animal by drawing its traces; by imitating the ape, he not only identifies it but identifies with it. The term fake-simile implies, through its etymology that Dupin is thus making himself similar to the ape; by making a visual reproduction of its grip on the victim's throat, he is putting himself in the ape's position and to that extent of becoming like it. One may compare “The Gold- Bug,” where Legrand's sketch of the bug doubles Kidd's drawing of the death's head, and thus effectively doubles scientist and pirate. Besides, at the end Dupin doubles the ape in the terms of his triumph over the Prefect: “in his wisdom there is no stamen. It is all head and no body” (568). By symbolically beheading his rival, Dupin follows on the footsteps of the decapitator of Mme L'Espanaye. The ape's “animal” sadism is thus latent in the “civilised” Dupin.
There is, then, something of the ape in Dupin, even after the apparent exorcism of the brute. The ape-madman connection, too, points back to the characterisation of Dupin and the narrator as madmen. The text effectively undermines its own ideology of normality, presenting Dupin and ape, detective and criminal, as doubles, a certain continuity between normal and abnormal is thus established in the teeth of the textual surface. It may be suggested that the potential identity of hero and criminal is a submerged theme of the tale.

Nonetheless, the text insists on the non-human character of the murderers. Dupin sees them as “altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action” (557), and of “a grotesquerie in horror absolutely alien from humanity” (558). The narrator declares: “this is no human hair” (558) and “This... is the mark of no human hand” (559). The text goes out of its way to imply that no human being could have committed the murders.

Similar crimes of mutilation and murder appear in every large city newspaper nearly weekly. The means of entry and the strength of superhuman may themselves point to the non-human, but the notion of sadistic murder and sexual assault itself is demonstrably not alien to humanity. Lemay even suggests that up to the identification of the ape, the first-time reader will probably assume the murderer was an all-too human sex-maniac. In a sense, then, the text is lying, for ideological ends; by presenting the murders as a non-human act, it encourages the reader to see real sex-murderers as animals. The notion of the criminal as animal or subhuman is paralleled in other nineteenth-century texts.

Frankenstein is of particular interest here, since it takes the cliché of the criminal as monster. For instance, after the murder of his brother, Victor Frankenstein comments: “Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child” (Frankenstein 132). Here, the text is lying; child murder is scarcely unknown in the annals of crime. The ideological
effect is, here too, to characterise as subhuman the criminality embodied in the non-
human monster. The central contradiction of Mary Shelley's novel lies in the tension
between Frankenstein's rejection of the monster as animal and diabolic and the textual
indications of his actual continuity with it. Thus he calls it the fiend that lurked in my
heart, and my own vampire, my own spirit, let loose from the grave'. The monster
becomes his creator's double, in the words of David Punter in his *The Literature of Terror*
(1980), “the embodiment of Frankenstein's desire;” the scientist's perception of his
creation is coloured by a marked element of projection, with the murder corresponding to
his own split-off sadistic and criminal tendencies. Nonetheless, the ideological effect of
the text, on a superficial reading, is to present crime and fear, through the mysterious
monster, as a pathological disruption of the social fabric by alien forces. As Franco
Moretti in his *The Dialectic of Fear* (1978) puts it: “The monster ... serves to displace the
antagonisms and horrors evidenced within society to outside society itself” (254).

In “The Masque of the Red Death,” a disease known as the Red Death plagues the
fictional country where this tale is set, and it causes its victims to die quickly and
gruesomely. Even though this disease is spreading rampantly, the prince, Prospero, feels
happy and hopeful. He decides to lock the gates of his palace in order to fend off the
plague, ignoring the illness ravaging the land. After several months, he throws a fancy
masquerade ball. For this celebration, he decorates the rooms of his house in single
colors. The easternmost room is decorated in blue, with blue stained-glass windows. The
next room is purple with the same stained-glass window pattern. The rooms continue
westward, according to this design, in the following color arrangement: green, orange,
white, and violet. The seventh room is black, with red windows. Also in this room stands
an ebony clock. When the clock rings each hour, its sound is so loud and distracting that
everyone stops talking and the orchestra stops playing. When the clock is not sounding,
though, the rooms are so beautiful and strange that they seem to be filled with dreams, swirling among the revelers. Most guests, however, avoid the final, black-and-red room because it contains both the clock and an ominous ambience.

At midnight, a new guest appears, dressed more ghoulishly than his counterparts. His mask looks like the face of a corpse, his garments resemble a funeral shroud, and his face reveals spots of blood suggesting that he is a victim of the Red Death. Prospero becomes angry that someone with so little humor and levity would join his party. The other guests, however, are so afraid of this masked man that they fail to prevent him from walking through each room. Prospero finally catches up to the new guest in the black-and-red room. As soon as he confronts the figure, Prospero dies. When other party-goers enter the room to attack the cloaked man, they find that there is nobody beneath the costume. Everyone then dies, for the Red Death has infiltrated the castle. Darkness and Decay and the Red Death have at last triumphed.

In January 1842, Virginia was bleeding from her mouth when she sang. She was in the early stages of tuberculosis. Virginia's illness took Poe very hard and he made everything he could to help her. Every cough from her made him shudder. His marriage to Virginia had meant a lot to Poe. It managed to keep him calm and kept him from drinking, and living isolated with his close relatives, like Dupin and the Ushers, made it possible for him to be in the center of attention.

While watching over Sissy, Poe wrote two Gothic tales that were published in *Graham's Life in Death* about a painter and his sick wife, whom strongly resembles Virginia. The painter refuses to see that his bride is dying as he paints her portrait. “The Masque of the Red Death” is about Prince Prospero who tries to save his diseased country from this figure called The Red Death. Poe writes that “The Red Death held illimitable dominion over all” (TMRD 32) which shows an attitude that is very rare in Poe's work, because death is not normally a terminal thing for him.
Virginia's condition went up and down, and with it Poe's spirits. He tried to help her, the best he could, and in search for a healthy environment they moved a couple of times in the spring of 1842. Poe suffered badly from seeing Virginia so weak and he turned to drinking again. Some people said he drank huge amounts while others, including Poe himself, said that he was intolerant to alcohol and a single drink intoxicated him. The truth is probably a combination of both he got drunk after just one glass and simply could not stop drinking. The amount he drank was more than he could take, and it cost him a lot of money. Money he did not have.

“The Masque of the Red Death” is an allegory. It features a set of recognizable symbols whose meanings are combined to convey a message. One can read this story as an allegory about life and death and the powerlessness of humans to evade the grip of death. No matter how beautiful the castle, how luxuriant the clothing, or how rich the food, no mortal, not even a prince, can escape death. In another sense, though, the story also means to punish Prospero’s arrogant belief that he can use his wealth to fend off the natural, tragic progress of life. Prospero’s arrogance combines with a grievous insensitivity to the plight of his less fortunate countrymen. Although he possesses the wealth to assist those in need, he turns his wealth into a mode of self-defense and decadent self-indulgence. His decadence in throwing the masquerade ball, however, unwittingly positions him as a caged animal, with no possible escape.

The rooms of the palace, lined up in a series, allegorically represent the stages of life. Poe makes it a point to arrange the rooms running from east to west. This progression is symbolically significant because it represents the life cycle of a day: the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, with night symbolizing death. What transforms this set of symbols into an allegory, however, is the further symbolic treatment of the twenty-four hour life cycle: it translates to the realm of human beings. This progression
from east to west, performed by both Prospero and the mysterious guest, symbolizes the
human journey from birth to death. Poe crafts the last, black room as the ominous
endpoint, the room the guests fear just as they fear death. The clock that presides over
that room also reminds the guests of death’s final judgment. The hourly ringing of the
bells is a reminder of the passing of time, inexorable and ultimately personal.

As in many Poe stories, the use of names contributes to the symbolic economic
context of the story and suggests another set of allegorical interpretations. For example,
Prospero, whose name suggests financial prosperity, exploits his own wealth to stave off
the infiltration of the Red Death. His retreat to the protection of an aristocratic palace
may also allegorize a type of economic system that Poe suggests is doomed to failure. In
the hierarchical relationship between Prospero and the peasantry, Poe portrays the
unfairness of a feudal system, where wealth lies in the hands of the aristocracy while the
peasantry suffers. This use of feudal imagery is historically accurate, in that feudalism
was prevalent when the actual Bubonic Plague devastated Europe in the fourteenth
century. “The Red Death” embodies a type of radical egalitarianism, or monetary
equality, because it attacks the rich and the poor alike.

The portrayal of the masquerade ball foreshadows the similar setting of the carnival
in “The Cask of Amontillado”, which appeared less than a year after “The Masque of the
Red Death”. Whereas the carnival in “The Cask of Amontillado” associates drunken
revelry with an open-air Italian celebration, the masquerade functions in this story as a
celebratory retreat from the air itself, which has become infected by the plague. The
masquerade, however, dispels the sense of claustrophobia within the palace by liberating
the inner demons of the guests. These demons are then embodied by the grotesque
costumes. Like the carnival, the masquerade urges the abandonment of social conventions
and rigid senses of personal identity. However, the mysterious guest illuminates the
extent to which Prospero and his guests police the limits of social convention. When the mysterious guest uses his costume to portray the fears that the masquerade is designed to counteract. Prospero responds antagonistically. As he knows, the prosperity of the party relies upon the psychological transformation of fear about the Red Death into revelry. When the mysterious guest dramatizes his own version of revelry as the fear that cannot be spoken, he violates an implicit social rule of the masquerade. The fall of Prospero and the subsequent deaths of his guests follow from this logic of the masquerade: when revelry is unmasked as a defense mechanism against fear, then the raw exposure of what lies beneath is enough to kill.

Poe’s story takes place in seven connected but carefully separated rooms. This reminds the reader of the past significance of the number seven. The history of the world was thought to consist of seven ages, just as an individual’s life had seven stages. The ancient world had seven wonders; universities divided learning into seven subjects; there were seven deadly sins with seven corresponding cardinal virtues, and the number seven is important in mysticism. Therefore, an allegorical reading of this story suggests that the seven rooms represent the seven stages of one’s life, from birth to death, through which the prince pursues a figure masked as a victim of the Red Death, only to die himself in the final chamber of eternal night. The prince’s name suggests happiness and good fortune, and the prince, just like all beings uses happiness to wall out the threat of death. Prince Prospero’s masked ball or dance reminds us of the “dance of death” portrayed in old paintings as a skeleton leading a throng of people to the grave, just as the prince leads his guests to the Red Death.

The significance of time in this story is seen in the symbol of the “gigantic clock of ebony” (9) which is draped in black velvet and located in the final room. Although the clock is an object, it quickly takes on human aspects. The author describes it as having a
face and lungs from which comes a sound. It is “exceedingly musical” but “so peculiar” that the “dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand,” in a momentary rigor mortis that anticipates the final one (22-23).

The relationship between the Red Death and time is a key to understanding the symbolic meaning of the story. The seven rooms are laid out from east to west, reminding us of the course of the sun which measures our earthly time. These rooms are lighted from without, and it is only in the seventh room where the colour of the windows does not correspond with the color of the room. Instead it is “a deep blood color” (26) through which light illuminates the western chamber of black, with an ebony clock on its western wall. In creating this room, Poe links the colours red and black with death and time. As he writes:

Scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim indicate the presence of the Red Death. Blood, the very substance of life, becomes the mark of death as it bursts through the pores. Death, then, is not an outside antagonist, to be feared and walled out as Prince Prospero attempts to do; but instead it is a part of each of us. Its presence is felt in our imaginations as we become aware of the control that time has over our lives. We hear the echoes of the ebony clocks that we carry within. Prince Prospero tries to escape death by walling it out, and by so doing, creates a prison out of his sanctuary. However, the Prince learns that no one can escape death. Death holds “illimitable dominion over all. (32)

Supposedly, the seven coloured suite is an allegory of human life. Each room, in other words, corresponds to a different stage of human life, which its color suggests. The first clue that the suite is allegorical is that the rooms are arranged from east to west. East is usually the direction associated with “beginnings,” and birth, because the sun rises in
the east; west is associated with end and death. Accordingly the blue room, which is
furthest to the east, represents birth. The colour suggests the “unknown” from which a
human being comes into the world. The next room is purple a combination of blue (birth)
and red (associated with life, intensity) suggests the beginnings of growth. Green, the
next colour, suggests the “spring” of life (youth), orange the summer and autumn of life.
White, the next colour, suggests age – white hair, and bones. Violet (a combination of
purple and blue, or purple and grey) is a shadowy color, and represents darkness and
death. And black, obviously, is death. Poe wanted to save the colour red in this story
especially for its association with blood, fear, and death. That means it always goes with
black, just like the Red Death and the darkness go together at the end of the story, and red
and black go together in the seventh room. If there were a red room, it would confuse the
color system and obscure the meaning of red.

Another interesting thing about the allegorical reading of the rooms is that it gives
an added meaning to other bits of the story. The fact that the revelers don't go into the
black room indicates their fear of death. But besides that, the Red Death walks from the
blue room to the black room. It walks the course of life, leading from birth to death.
Prospero follows that course when he chases it: he runs from the blue room to the black
room, where he dies. His followers also rush into the black room to unmask the Red
Death, and also die. So the course the characters walk in the story is both literally and
metaphorically the course from life to death.

The big black clock is located in the black room, and it's meant to be a symbol of
death. More precisely, it is a symbol of the passing of “the Time that flies” (5), and the
inevitability of death. Its eerie chiming on the hour is a regular reminder to the revelers
that their lives are drifting away with the time, and that death is approaching. The effect
is enhanced even more by that way the clock has of stopping all the dancing and music,
in short, all the life of the party, and making everyone laugh nervously. The abbey is a place of confinement. It is cut off secluded and hidden away where no one can find it. Beyond that, its doors are welded shut from the inside which means everyone's trapped. no one can get in or out. The sense of confinement is crucial to giving the story its threatening atmosphere.

Big, dark, and gloomy castles are classic settings for Gothic fiction. The abbey is a symbol of worldly power, standing above the peasants being ravaged by the Red Death. As a castle and an abbey, it could represent both the state and the church. The Red Death is a spectacularly gruesome form of death, probably calculated by Poe for maximum freak-out appeal. Though as an image, there is something strangely stylish about it. After all, it is not as if the victims are drenched in blood. Judging from the Red Death's appearance, it is more delicate than that: the victims are sprinkled all over with it, almost “decorated” by it.

But as far as symbolizing something goes, the Red Death is just a slightly revamped image of plain old Death. The story shows how it can't be escaped, and how Prospero's attempt to escape is doomed. It is a question why Poe chooses red as a color to be associated with death, rather than just the more obvious black. If he had chosen black, he could have just gone with the Black Death, instead of having to invent his own plague. The suspicion is that it is because red is a brighter and more dramatic colour than black. It tends to increase black's own freak out effect when the two are put together as in the red and black room. The story is bright and dramatic with its colored rooms and its wild, whirling, costumed revelers. The effect of the imagery is almost dizzying. The red-black combo is really loud so it fits well into that crazy aesthetic, which Poe may have used for a couple of different purposes.
One might also wonder whether Poe bases the Red Death on any real disease. Just like Poe's Red Death, it devastated the countryside of Medieval Europe beginning in the fourteenth century, and occasionally caused people to shut themselves up for protection from the contaminated. But the symptoms of the diseases bear little relation to each other, besides the fact that they're both fatal. For all we know, the Red Death is entirely fictional, conjured up by Poe, inspired by his own life.

The masque is one weird scary dream. There are the blaring, over-the-top colours of the suite and the off-kilter alignment of the rooms. There are also the masqueraders themselves, dressed up in all kinds of bizarre costumes, forming a truly mad collage of images. There are arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There are delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There is much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. All of this seems too fantastic to be real. It is like the product of a twisted imagination, or a very strange dream. Poe's description of the writhing dancers or of the swelling music, or the “giddiness” (5) suggests a frenzied, dizzying scene. It is chaotic, uncontrolled, and all mixed-up.

The Red Death coming “like a thief in the night” is a really famous line from The Bible. It is from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians 5:4, in which Paul refers to the Last Judgment. According to him, Jesus will come when the world is least expecting it to judge sinners for all of eternity. If a man is caught unprepared, he might be in trouble. So it's better to always be expecting the judgment, and focused not on the pleasures of this world which have a tendency to be sinful but on the promise of the next.

Poe takes Paul's phrase about Jesus and applies it to the Red Death. In doing so, it might look as if he makes the Red Death into an apocalyptic figure, a figure which
symbolizes the end of the world. Like the sinners, Prince Prospero and his friends foolishly ignore the inevitable end of life's pleasures that lies at the end of the road, and like them, they pay the price for it. The “pleasures of this world” don't fare too well in “The Masque of the Red Death.” But what is different is that, instead of judging sinners like Jesus is supposed to, the Red Death just kills everybody. The inevitable end Poe envisions in his story is not one of judgment and eternal salvation or suffering.

This interesting story can be deepened by exploring the ways in which the masquerade at the heart of Poe's story might be a symbol for the world. In apocalyptic literature, the world is usually a negative word: it refers to the base, evil, and profane kind of life we live as opposed to the higher life with God. The world just before the judgment is often depicted as topsy-turvy, chaotic, violent, frenzied, grotesque, and thoroughly absorbed in decadent sin. The mystery of the deaths reveal the aftermath of pain and trauma. The loss of loved ones and the consequence of such a loss is what makes the story gloomy and deeply thoughtful. The reader is absorbed in a world of awe for death itself. It is death in its grandest form. It is death in its magnanimity. It is the cruelty of death painted as a canvas. The various images unveil the masked mystery of such a reddish black portrait. It might be painted in red. But the words and tone are pitched black.

In “The Mystery of Mary Roget,” all of Paris is talking about the disappearance of musical comedy star Marie Roget, who has been missing for ten days. Henri Beauvais, the French minister of Naval Affairs and a close friend of the Roget family, threatens to demand the removal of police inspector Gobelin if she is not immediately found. Gobelin calls medical officer Dr. Paul Dupin onto the case, then is informed that a woman's body has been found by the river. Although the dead woman's face has been mutilated, Beauvais states that the body's characteristics match those of Marie. Gobelin and
Beauvais then go to the Roget home to tell Marie's younger sister Camille and her grandmother, Madame Cecile Roget, and they believe they have found the actress' body. Just then Marie returns home, but refuses to state where she has been. Later, Camille and Marcel Vigneaux become engaged. In private, however, Marcel and Marie are lovers, and the engagement is simply part of their plot to murder Camille. Dupin is then called to the Roget home by Cecile, who offers the physician 50,000 francs to escort Camille, who is set to inherit 1,000,000 francs the next day, to a party at the De Luc home, as she fears her granddaughter will be murdered there. Dupin declines at first, but when he meets the beautiful Camille, he changes his mind.

At the party that night, Beauvais tells Marie that he knows of her affair with Marcel. Later, Marie argues with Marcel when he hesitates to kill Camille as planned. Soon thereafter, Marie disappears. Divers are sent into the river near the De Luc home, and once more the body of a faceless woman is found. Before Dupin can examine her, however, Beauvais orders his men to take charge of the body. Later that night, Dupin sneaks into the morgue and removes the brain from the second unidentified body. When Gobelin hypotheses that Cecile used her pet leopard to kill Marie, Dupin takes the police inspector to the De Luc home, and shows him the gardening tool used to disfigure the second body. Later, Dupin identifies the second dead body as Marie, but Cecile refuses to allow a further medical examination of the body or a search of the Roget home for Marie's diary. After Cecile tells Camille about Marie's murderous plan, Marcel confesses to killing Marie, but says he did so to save Camille.

At Marcel's arraignment hearing, Beauvais demands that the charges be dropped, and is supported by Dupin, much to Gobelin's bewilderment. Afterward, an angry Marcel, who believed that he would be found not guilty, challenges Dupin, to a duel. That night, Gobelin learns from Scotland Yard that the first dead body is that of Marcel's English
wife, who has recently come to Paris to find her husband. Later, Dupin and Gobelin rush to the Roget home when they learn that both Beauvais and Marcel have escaped police surveillance. Dupin tells Gobelin that he had openly accused Camille of having Marie's diary, which he knew did not exist, knowing that the murderer would attempt to retrieve it. They arrive at the Roget home just in time to stop Marcel from killing Camille, and Gobelin shoots the murderer dead as he runs across the Paris rooftops. Later, Gobelin learns that Beauvais had actually been secretly helping Dupin all along. “In Murder for Pleasure,” Howard Haycraft writes,

This longest of Poe's three major excursions into detective literature is, unhappily, the least deserving of detailed attention. It might be better called an essay than a story. As an essay, it is an able exercise in reasoning. As a story, it scarcely exists. It has no life-blood. The characters neither move nor speak. They are present only through second-hand newspaper accounts.... Only a professional student of analytics or an inveterate devotee of criminology can read it with any degree of unfeigned interest.

(108)

What Poe has accomplished with this story is nothing short of brilliant and has given rise to a whole school of detective fiction. The arm-chair detective solves cases from newspapers or second-hand accounts alone. He seldom visits the scene of a crime in order to investigate. In addition, it is the first work of fiction that purports to solve a real crime -- the murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers of New York City.

Poe has already established his detective character the Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” which is entirely fictional. Poe writes in the third paragraph of “The Mystery of Marie Roget.” I endeavored about a year ago, to depict some very remarkable features in the mental character of my friend, the Chevalier C.
Auguste Dupin, it did not occur to me that I should ever resume the subject” (TMMR 1).
Since he has already established that Dupin lived in Paris, it is convenient to change the
name of Mary Rogers to Marie Roget and to transport the events which actually took
place in New York to Paris. Then he quotes voluminously from actual newspaper
accounts as published in the New York newspapers.

Although Poe changes the names of the newspapers he quotes from, footnotes
indicate the actual names of the specific papers, as well as actual names of the people
who appear in the narrative. He sticks close to the actual case although John Walsh, one
of the critics of Poe, indicates that Poe added a half-dozen newspapers’ “quotes” which
he fabricated. One presumes he manufactures these to support his own conclusions and to
fill in the gaps to make the story more cohesive. Most of the quotes are derived from the
actual newspaper accounts. Although Dupin analyzes the newspaper accounts and never
leaves his arm-chair to investigate, Poe actually visited the scene of the crime. Dupin's
(and Poe's) analysis is superb and he actually employs science to dispel myths and
falsehoods that some newspaper accounts promulgated, so one can add “scientific
analysis” to the list of firsts for this story.

Mr. Walsh reveals that Poe's “The Mystery of Marie Roget” was to be published in
three installments. The first two installments were published, but then the police had
announced that they had solved the case. It appears that Poe is onto something but that
his conclusion is at variance with the solution the police arrived at. Walsh adds that Poe
suppresses the final installment which delays its appearing in print for another month. But
it was already set in type, and Poe evidently made a few minor changes to align his
solution with that announced by the police. Mr. Walsh includes Poe's entire story with
notes and annotations indicating precisely where the textual changes were made.
After Poe died, the story was collected along with others and published in *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. A concluding footnote makes the following claim:

> Upon the original publication of *Marie Roget*, the foot-notes now appended were considered unnecessary; but the lapse of several years since the tragedy upon which the tale is based, renders it expedient to give them, and also to say a few words in explanation of the general design. A young girl, Mary Cecilia Rogers, was murdered in the vicinity of New York; and, although her death occasioned an intense and long-enduring excitement, the mystery attending it had remained unsolved at the period when the present paper was written and published (November, 1842)

Under the pretence of relating the fate of a Parisian gristle, the author has followed in minute detail, the essential, while merely paralleling the inessential facts of the real murder of Mary Rogers. Thus, all argument founded upon the fiction is applicable to the truth: and the investigation of the truth was the object. “The Mystery of Marie Roget” was composed at a distance from the scene of the atrocity, and with no other means of investigation than the newspapers afforded. It may not be improper to record, nevertheless, that the confessions of two persons, (one of them the Madame Deluc of the narrative) made, at different periods, long subsequent to the publication, confirmed, in full, not only the general conclusion, but absolutely all the chief hypothetical details by which that conclusion was attained.

Haycraft, another critic of Poe’s works says that the murder is never solved, contrary to popular misconception. But Walsh disputes this. Haycraft categorizes “The Mystery of Marie Roget” as a “mental” detective story because there is no story, no development of plot, and no action. It is all pure analysis of the newspaper accounts. It is a steppingstone to the next stage in the development of the detective, crime, and murder mystery genre.
The name in the story has been fictionalized as “Marie Roget… daughter of Widow Estelle Roget” (TMMR 52). A brief background throws light on two disappearances of Marie with a gap of five months and it is the second from which she never returns. Her corpse is found on “the fourth day” of her disappearance “floating in the Siene, near the shore” (53). The suspense is attached to the whole incident. 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, 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” (53).

Many rules 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 and gets a chance to match his wits with only one rationalistic detective 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” (53). In such 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 the clues to the mystery” (TMMR 53). This calls for the active participation of the reader in the case. In this story too, phrases like “Let us examine,”( 66) “let us proceed,” (79) “let us reflect,” ( 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.

The next aspect is the plot of the story. “The Mystery of Marie Roget” is a mingling of the factual and the fictional where under the 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 (TMMR 49). “The Mystery of Marie Roget” is interesting both historically and structurally. 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 murderer, 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 a low-ranking French nobleman C. Auguste Dupin” (TMMR 50). The success that Dupin achieves in revealing the Orangutan as the culprit has made him grow “into a household word” (51). Research Scholar Charity Lea Givens, in on 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” (TMMR 53). 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.

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 “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” (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” (TMMR 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,” (62) owner of a roadside inn, and also “two small boys, sons of Madame Deluc” (62) gave their testimonies. The lady had heard “screams of a female in the vicinity” (63) while her sons had discovered a thicket at the Barriere du Roule, “a supposed scene of the assassination” (86) which gives birth to “an excellent reason for doubt” (87). According to Dupin’s intellectual powers and strong reasoning faculties, this “highly artificial arrangement of the articles” (90) is created so as to “redivert the attention” (87) from the real crime. Dupin addresses his friend “to proceed methodically” (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”(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. (83)

This is combined with the fact that the time lapses between the two elopements of Marie which is the same as the “cruises of our men-of-war” (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” (97).

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 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” (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” (55). Newspapers like “L’Etoile,” “Le Commerciel (The New York Journal of Commerce,)” “Le Soleil,” (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” (65) and “Marie Roget who is missing” (65). Achieving success at this, Dupin also decides to “satisfy” (79) himself “by personal enquiry” (79). This leads Dupin to “discard the interior points of this tragedy, and concentrate… attention on the outskirts” (80). Therefore, Dupin assures that “corroboration will rise upon corroboration and the murderer will be detected” (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” (TMMR 53). “St.Eustache fell especially under suspicion” (57). Marie was also supposed to have become “a victim of one of the numerous bands of blackguards” (82). Dupin is sure that it is “the solitary murderer” (94) none other than the naval officer, “much noted for his debaucheries” (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 disclaimer with which C. Auguste Dupin qualifies his analysis of the mystery of the “Marie Roget” imposes itself at the outset of any attempt to apply psychoanalytic principles to the reading of literary texts. It will be recalled that in the case of the murder of the beautiful Segar girl, Dupin neither visits the scene of the crime nor interviews any of the principals, but bases his analysis on a comparative study of what Poe calls ‘the public prints’: the available newspaper accounts of the killing. What makes Dupin’s crave at particularly compelling for the literary critic, therefore, is that exposition of “The Mystery of Marie Roget” is nothing less than an explication de texte. But this is not all,
for Dupin’s reading, ingenious as does not completely solve the mystery. Indeed, one might say that his reading reveals rather how the mystery came about, how it constituted itself as mystery, as enigma. Thus, Dupin is able plausibly to reconstruct the manner in which the murder was committed, by interpreting the inconsistencies in the written accounts of the crime. He is even able, by the same means, to deduce how of the body of the victim was subsequently disposed off, but he nonetheless remains unable positively to identify the actual murderer, still less to bring him to justice, while his analysis of the motivation for Marie Roget’s behavior leading up to the crime also remains, of necessity, speculative.

The public prints that formed the basis for Dupin’s investigation, made no overt claim to be read as literature, although the perennially unresolved question ‘what is literature?’ must threaten the legitimacy of even so carefully measured a statement as this. Indeed, the manner in which Poe’s story obliterates the distinction between literary and ‘non-literary’ texts is not the least mysterious aspect of Marie Roget. But whether or not self-declared literary texts are constitutionally enigmatic in a way that reporting, be it of an enigma, does not claim to be, it nonetheless behooves the literary critic to approach her material with at least the degree of reticence that Dupin adopts when reading the newspapers.

Poe in all his stories tries to derive nothing but to exhibit. He exhibits the scenario of pain, death, chaos, horror, and destruction. The motive is not to teach but to analyse. The reader is taken towards the pedestal of being a transcendentalist rather than learning transcendentalism. Poe’s dislike for such a concept could be easily detected by witnessing the realistic array of events that unfold to transcend reality through fiction. The words are designed to motivate such a gruesome narrative that he employs in all his works. “The Raven” is a typical example. The genre is but only a different tool for Poe. But his
dealing with mystery and enigma takes different shapes like the ghosts of different pasts. “Ligeia”, “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Mystery of Marie Roget” are all not just stories but explicitly decorated evidences of the contemporary social crimes and horrors. The chapter witnesses all the various outcomes of Poe’s narrative to unveil the mystery that was wrapped up in human memory. Poe is a disguised vigilant of social order. His literary fervor went up to excavating the past and future of the fate of mankind who can prepare one to be bold enough to face the apocalypse. His words are but codes that are encrypted to disentangle the generations to come to observe, analyze and detect for themselves a solution to withstand death, nor decay; strength or failure; construction or demolition.