



NEWSLETTER

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POE Studies Association Newsletter
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Poets and Poetry to Highlight MLA Program

Vice President and Program Chair J. Gerald Kennedy announces the following sessions on the topic, "Rethinking Poe's Poetry," for the programs sponsored by the Poe Studies Association at the 1993 convention of the Modern Language Association (Toronto). PSA members will note

that the poems of two of the speakers are represented in the *Harper Anthology of American Literature*. The topic for 1994 will be "Strategies of Power in Poe's Fiction," for which Professor Kennedy invites both traditional and theoretical approaches.

RETHINKING POE'S POETRY I

Dec. 28, Tuesday, 10:15 a.m.
Kenora Room, Sheraton Centre of Toronto
Presiding: J. Gerald Kennedy,
Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge

"Poe and the Nineteenth-Century Death Watch,"
Amy Clampitt, New York, NY
"Poe's Recoil from Reason: Poetry of the Countersublime," Chris Kearns, Indiana Univ.
"Poe's Love Poems: Race, Magic, and Remembrance," Joan Dayan, Univ. of Arizona

RETHINKING POE'S POETRY II

Dec. 30, Thursday, 1:45 p.m.
Conference Room C, Sheraton Centre of Toronto
Presiding: Liliane Weissberg,
Univ. of Pennsylvania

"Poe and the Nightmare Ode,"
Dave Smith, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge
"Still Form: Poe's Uncanny Valentines,"
Daneen Wardrop, Western Michigan Univ.
"Poe's Poetics of Desire,"
Leland S. Person, Southern Illinois Univ., Carbondale

Organizations

Recent voting for PSA officers resulted in the election of Liliane Weissberg (Univ. of Pennsylvania), President; J. Gerald Kennedy (Louisiana State Univ.), Vice President; Richard Kopley (Pennsylvania State Univ., DuBois) and Susan F. Beegel (Univ. of West Florida), Members At Large. Their terms of office will be January 1994 through December 1995. (The election announcement in the Fall 1991 *PSA Newsletter*, stating the term of office for the Spring 1991 elections, was in error. The two-year term extended through December 1993.)

The PSA sponsored two sessions, chaired by Kent Ljungquist (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), at the conference of the American Literature Association (Stouffer Harborplace Hotel, Baltimore, 28-30 May, 1993). Participants included Buford Jones (Duke Univ.), "Building Poe Bibliography: American Criticism, 1850-1870"; Burton R. Pollin (CUNY, Emeritus), "Poe and the Philadelphia Saturday Museum: New Materials for the Canon"; Barbara Cantalupo (Pennsylvania State Univ., Allentown), "The Lynx in Poe's 'Silence'"; and Richard Fusco (Philadelphia), "Poe's Quarrel with Human Perfectibility Theory: Examples in His Fiction."

At the ALA session sponsored by the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, Benjamin Fisher (Univ. of Mississippi) spoke on "Poe's Baltimore Years." At a special session on "Publishing as a Field of Study," Kent Ljungquist spoke on "'Mastodons of the Press': Poe and the Mammoth Newspapers." The first issue of *ALA Notes*, the newsletter of the American Literature Association, has been published. Inquires, abstracts, and proposals for the Poe session (open topic) at next year's ALA conference (2-5 June 1994, San Diego) may be sent to Kent Ljungquist at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The deadline for submissions is 10 December 1993.

Craig Werner (Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison) delivered the Seventy-first Commemorative Lecture of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore on 3 October 1993. For his topic, "Gold Bugs and the Spirit of Blackness: Re-reading Poe," Werner has provided the following summary:

Despite academic dismissals of Poe, his social, aesthetic, and philosophical visions continue to fascinate a wide range of artists and philosophers. This lecture examines several recent re-readings of Poe,

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Organizations

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including the rock group The Alan Parsons Set's "Tales of Mystery and Imagination," African-American novelist Leon Forrest's "The Bloodworth Orphans," mystery writer Martha Grimes' "The Horse You Came On" (set in Baltimore), and Richard Powers' "The Gold-Bug Variations."

An Indian Chapter of the Edgar Allan Poe Society was inaugurated on 12 July 1993 in conjunction with a Poe seminar at the American Studies Research Center in Hyderabad. The seminar was organized by D. Ramakrishna (Kakatiya Univ.).

The Richmond Poe Museum conducted a "Poe Festival" from 15-17 October 1993. Invited lecturers included Richard Kopley, "Transplanting 'The Tell-Tale Heart'"; Glen A. Omans (Temple Univ.), "More Passion in Poe"; and Terence Whalen (College of William and Mary), "A Poe Cryptograph." Dan Malan, a specialist on the works of Gustave Doré, also spoke on illustrations for "The Raven" that were on exhibit in a new gallery.

The Fordham Poe Cottage has reopened after year-long renovations.

Chair for the Poe session at the 1994 NEMLA convention (Pittsburgh, 8-10 April) will be Stephen Hahn (William Paterson College).

The Fall 1993 issue of *Gothic*, the newsletter of the International Gothic Association, is devoted to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

Poe in Performance

Commissioned by the San Francisco Theater Project, Amy Freed's "Claustrophilia" depicts an evening in the life of Poe and Virginia as he tells her horror stories to cure her insomnia. They also discuss dark themes from the Gothic tradition. Poe, for example, tells Sissy: "You shudder, I observe, with that most exquisite pleasure that suffuses us when we are vicariously presented with the most hideous recountings of human torment." Freed's play was presented at San Francisco's Climate Theater in March and April 1993. The production was featured in the 7 March 1993 *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Mel Harold, a Poe interpreter from Massachusetts, offered recitations at the Richmond Poe Museum in April 1993.

Baltimore's 1992 birthday celebration for Poe included the East Coast premiere of "Poe Alone . . . A Visit to the Haunted Palace," a two-hour drama performed by David Keltz. Related performances were covered in the 16 January 1993 *Baltimore Sun*.

Steven Berkoff repeated his show, "One Man," at the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, during the summer of 1993. Comprising three monologues, including Berkoff's adaptation of "The Tell-Tale Heart," "One Man" was also produced in London in November.

Norman George brought his one-man show "Poe Alone" to Richmond in October.

POE STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

**The newsletter of the Poe Studies Association, Inc.
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The *Poe Studies Association Newsletter* provides a forum for the scholarly and informal exchange of information on Edgar Allan Poe, his life, works, and influence. Please send information on publications and completed research. Queries about research in progress are also welcome. We will consider scholarly or newsworthy notes, which bear relevance to the PSA membership. Send materials to Kent Ljungquist, Department of Humanities, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA 01609-2280. We welcome suggestions designed to make the newsletter a more stimulating and useful publication.

PSA CURRENT OFFICERS

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The *Poe Studies Association Newsletter* is published twice a year. Subscriptions, which come with membership in the Poe Studies Association, are \$8 per year. Send checks, payable to "Poe Studies Association," to Dennis Eddings, English Department, Western Oregon State College, Monmouth, OR 97361. The *PSA Newsletter* is published independently of *Poe Studies*, published at Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164, subscription \$8 per year (two issues).

Current Research and Publications

John Seelye (Univ. of Florida) has written an introduction for *Complete Stories of Edgar Allan Poe* (Knopf, \$20.00).

Edward Piacentino (High Point College) is working on an essay, "Petrarchan Echoes and Petrarchanism in Poe's 'Ligeia.'"

Forthcoming publications by Burton R. Pollin (CUNY, Emeritus) include: "Poe and Frances Sargent Osgood, as Linked through 'Lenore,'" *Mississippi Quarterly*; "Stephen King's Fiction and the Heritage of Poe," *Journal of Fantasy in the Arts*; and "Poe and the Philadelphia Saturday Museum," *American Renaissance Literary Report*.

The Mystery Review: A Quarterly Publication for Mystery Readers is published in Ontario, Canada. Among books reviewed in the Spring 1993 issue is *The Defective Detective: Mystery Parodies by the Great Humorists* (Citadel Press), which contains John Sladek's "The Purloined Butter." A previous issue of the *Mystery Review* contained a profile of Poe interpreter Norman George.

D. Ramakrishna's "The Tell-Tale Poet" was published by *SPAN Magazine* of the USIS. Professor Ramakrishna (Kakatiya Univ.) is editing a collection of essays, *Perspectives on Poe*, which will contain contributions by American and Indian scholars. American contributors include J. Lasley Dameron, Joseph Moldenhauer, Burton Pollin, Richard Fusco, Benjamin Fisher, Kent Ljungquist, John Barth, and Michael Burdick.

Robert Cagliero (Università degli Studi di Verona) has published two essays: "Edgar Allan Poe e la Decadenza del Pensiero," in *Joris-Karl Huysmans e L'Immaginario Decadente* (1991), and "His Essays and His Omelettes: Poe a tavola," in *Codici del Gusto* (Milan: Francoangeli, 1992).

The June 1993 issue of *Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Vol. 48) contains two notes on Poe: Terence Whalen (College of William and Mary), "Correcting the Poe Canon: Beverley Tucker's Anecdote on Gibbon and Fox" and John E. Reilly (Emeritus, College of the Holy Cross), "A Source for the Immuration in 'The Black Cat.'"

J. Gerald Kennedy's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and Related Tales* (Oxford World Classics) will be published in April 1994. His Twayne Masterworks volume, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym: The Abyss of Interpretation*, is also scheduled for spring 1994 publication. The latter volume will contain a review of extant criticism as well as the author's interpretation of Poe's novel.

Routledge has published *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (40 pounds) by Robert Miles.

"Some Unrecorded Reprints of Poe's Works" by Kent Ljungquist will appear in *ANQ: A Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews*.

Poe and Natural History

Two new studies suggest that Poe's ventures into the field of natural history merit a more positive assessment than the dismissive evaluations presented by his biographers.

"Poe's Greatest Hit," by Harvard University biologist and historian of science Stephen Jay Gould, is a study of the only Poe volume successful enough to be republished during his lifetime: *The Conchologist's First Book*. Without exonerating Poe from charges of plagiarism, Gould distinguishes the questionable origin of the book (i. e., its borrowings from Captain Thomas Brown's *The Conchologist's Text-Book*) from its genuine utility. While most popular books on mollusks treated animals and shells separately, Poe and his collaborator Thomas Wyatt offered an integrative and innovative approach that presented them together. Gould grants Poe special credit for translating from the French Cuvier's accounts of the animals and integrating them with Wyatt's more conventional and separate material on the shells. Gould also demonstrates how the volume was promoted to audiences on the lyceum circuit, a forum for the popularization of scientific ideas. His essay appears in the July 1993 issue of *Natural History*.

The Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences has sponsored the publication of *Flora and Fauna in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe: An Annotated Index* (Coral Gables, FL: Senda Nueva De Ediciones, 1992) by the late William C. Woolfson. The book provides an annotated index, keyed to the Harrison edition, of references and allusions to plants and animals in Poe's works. Burton R. Pollin's preface discusses the utility of such a reference tool. Members of the PSA may order the book for \$9.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling (discounted from the catalogue price of \$12.95). Write to Editorial Arenas Book Club, 1815 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, FL 33134.



Poe in Etext

Poe scholars with access to the Internet have a new research or teaching tool available to them. The growing interest in electronic texts has led a group called Internet Wiretap to scan and place a number of Poe tales on the Internet. It is now possible to obtain over two dozen tales via anonymous FTP or through the Gopher system. The texts are produced by the Internet Wiretap, of Cupertino, CA, a group which, like Project Gutenberg, is working to make etexts widely available.

These are public domain (PD) texts, which means that the texts used are out of copyright. A number of the tales available are therefore based upon the 1895 J. B. Lippincott text. I recently downloaded and printed out "William Wilson," then checked it against the text in Mabbott's *Collected Works*. It is surprisingly accurate. (In fact, in the process I discovered one typo in Mabbott.) The main departures from Mabbott's text are in British spellings of words ending in "or": "favour," "honour," etc.; in the British style of placing commas and periods outside quotation marks; and in a few other minor differences in punctuation, such as not placing commas inside parentheses.

The texts are in ASCII format, and the files in the Classic directory indicate italics by symbols. With some manipulation by a word processor one can adjust margins, change to italics where indicated, etc., and print out a presentable copy.

To get a file via anonymous FTP, enter <ftp to wiretap.spies.com (IP address 130.43.43.43). Login as anonymous, then give your internet address as the password. Change directory to /Library/ (<Library>) then to /Classic/, then to /Poe/. Directory names are case-sensitive, so you must use capitalized words. In the Poe directory are 25 text files: assignat.poe; atale.poe; balloon.poe; berenice.poe; blackcat.poe; colloquy.poe; converse.poe; cottage.poe; descent.poe; domain.poe; eleonora.poe; goldbug.poe; hop-frog.poe; imp.poe; island.poe; king-pest.poe; mancrowd.poe; mellonta.poe; mystery.poe; purloin.poe; rue.poe; spectacle.poe; thouart.poe; usher.poe; wilson.poe.

Once you are in the Poe directory, type get rue.poe, if that is the file you want, and it will be sent to your local mainframe. Three Poe texts are separately available in the /Classic/ directory: pit.poe; telltale.poe; cask.poe.

It is also possible to access these files via Gopher, or to do a veronica search on Gopher, if that software is available. In a veronica search, give the search word "wiretap," then choose /Wiretap Online Library/ from the menu, then /Classics/, then /Tales by Edgar Allan Poe/.

The Internet Wiretap organization is seeking volunteers to scan or type, or proofread materials with expired copyrights to be placed in the electronic public domain. If interested, contact Tom Dell, dell@wiretap.spies.com.

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Poe and Byatt

Antonia Susan Byatt, author of the Booker-Prize-winning *Possession: A Romance* (1990), has been acclaimed also for her more recent *Angels and Insects: Two Novellas* (NY: Random House, 1992), another philosophical fiction of Victorian setting. Of great interest to students of Poe is the second part (*The Conjugal Angel*, pp. 185-342), which extensively uses "The Raven" and "The Philosophy of Composition." Inspired by knowledge of contemporary seances that included Tennyson's sister Emily, who was engaged to Arthur Hallam, Byatt deftly re-creates her circle of would-be communicants. All of them are familiar with "In Memoriam" and with "The Raven," whose avatar dominates their meetings as Mrs. Emily Jesse's pet bird, named Aaron. Her married name (meaning "link on a hunting bird's leg") is one of the many onomastic avian touches, for the medium is Mrs. Papagay ("parrot"), wearing a "plumed peacock-like hat" (p. 188) and ever hoping for a response from her dear husband "Arturo, drowned ten years ago, in the Antarctic, or thereabout" (p. 193) (a shade of Dirk Peters!). "Ah dear, but come thou back to me. 'Nevermore,' her mind muttered" (p. 240). As if answering her thought, Mr. Job Hawke, a constant member

of the group, a deacon in the New Jerusalem church, and a Swedenborgian, comments at length on the cawing representative at the table of Poe's "malignant spirit," who "portrays obsessive grief" (p. 241). Emily Jesse, with her "bird hands and . . . bird-sharp look" reminds Mrs. Papagay of Poe's "terrible Raven" (p. 197). She is familiar also with "the nastier tales of Mr. Poe, pits, pendulums, buried alive. Not only that, [people] . . . liked to be judged, she considered" (p. 217). Another staunch member of the flock is Mrs. Herneshaw (an old variant of "heronsew" or "heron"). Byatt explores the continuity of spiritualistic dialogue and the manifested displacement of conventional beliefs that engaged Tennyson and his following in "In Memoriam": first, the analogy of men to insects, in Part I; and, then, the avian symbols (stemming from Poe) of faint-hearted spiritualistic dreams and hopeless remembrance. In sum, she skillfully exploits the widespread Victorian awareness of Poe's tales and poems.

Burton R. Pollin
CUNY Emeritus

Editor's Note: In Byatt's *Possession* (NY: Random House, 1990), a character named Leonora Stern comments: "There are all sorts of rumors in the States. Things that have disappeared from glass cabinets in little local collections, you know, curios of particular interest, Edgar Allan Poe's pawned tie-pin, a note from Melville to Hawthorne, that sort of thing" (p. 525).

Recent Dissertations

(March 1990-June 1993)

David A. Long, "Authorial Politics: Poe and the Conservative Ethos in Antebellum American Culture," *DAI* 50 (June 1990), 3954A.

Jeffrey G. DeShell, "The Peculiarity of Literature: An Allegorical Approach to Edgar Allan Poe," *DAI* 50 (June 1990), 3950A-3951A.

Lou Ann Norman, "Romance Within a Romance: The Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe," *DAI* 51 (Sept. 1990), 853A.

James C. Campbell, "'The Heart Divine': A Study of the Critical Response to Poe's *Eureka*," *DAI* 52 (Aug. 1991), 537A.

Jonathan E. Elmer, "Poe and the Mystery of the Crowd: Reading, Affect and the Imagination of Mass Culture," *DAI* 52 (Oct. 1991), 1328A.

A. Johann Pillai, "Permanent Parabasis: Identity, Literary History, and the Temporality of the Romantic Voice in Edgar Allan Poe," *DAI* 52 (May 1992), 3918A.

Terence J. Whalen, "Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America," *DAI* 53 (July 1992), 153A.

Dean W. Casale, "Appropriating Poe: Problems in American Literary History," *DAI* 53 (Dec. 1992), 1912A.

Dissertations that touch upon Poe include:

Isaac P. Rodman, "Original Relations: Pantheism, Intertextuality, and an American Renaissance Aesthetic," *DAI* 50 (June 1990), 3955A.

Sasha A. Weinstangel, "Images from Poe for Symphony Orchestra," *DAI* 51 (Oct. 1990), 1043A.

William J. Agopsowicz, "In Praise of Fantasy: A Study of the Nineteenth-Century Short Story," *DAI* 52 (July 1991), 160A-161A.

Andrew G. Levy, "Free Fiction: Individual and Institutional Visions of the American Short Story," *DAI* 52 (Jan. 1992), 3555A.

Julia A. Stern, "Parsing the First-Person Plural: Transformations of Gender and Voice in the Fiction of Charles Brockden Brown and Edgar Allan Poe," *DAI* 52 (Feb. 1992), 2926A.

Michael A. Cooper, "Apostolary Narratives: The Protagonist in the Narrator's Desire," *DAI* 52 (May 1992), 3926A.

Suzanne A. Fodor, "Poems of Polarity: A Study of Structure in Poems of Poe, Valéry, and Bonnefoy," *DAI* 53 (Sept. 1992), 801A.

Richard R. Williams, "The Fourth Point: Representation of Nineteenth-Century Electromagnetic Phenomena From Edgar Allan Poe to Stephane Mallarmé," *DAI* 53 (Feb. 1993), 2806A.

Melissa Erwin Croghan, "Alcohol and Art in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction," *DAI* 53 (May 1993), 3905A-3906A.

Norman E. Stafford

Maureen Cobb Mabbott

The death of Mrs. Mabbott in mid-February, little short of her ninety-fourth birthday, took from us a Poe scholar to be reckoned with (despite any of her customary, self-effacing demurrals concerning such a ranking). She was also a great human being, one who encompassed within a compact frame much intellectuality, aesthetic awareness and sensitivity, and gracious social presence.

Having, as she once remarked, lived with Poe's presence in her daily life for forty-five years, she continued until the death of her husband, T. O. Mabbott—*doyen* to several generations of Poe scholars—in early 1968, to mould toward completion his monumental edition of Poe's short fiction, published in 1978. Mrs. Mabbott's impressive knowledge of

Poe is evident in *Tales and Sketches* and in *Mabbott as Poe Scholar*, as well as several other publications.

No pedantic specialist, she also published a book on Da Vinci and shorter works on *Moby-Dick* (her book "for a desert island"), on her cultural outlook in general, plus poetry and autobiographical reminiscences about her rural Missouri youth (these last at the request of her grandchildren). Her manner in presenting papers and in poetry readings won her many admirers.

Never too busy to answer queries, to share her literary delights, or to entertain with cordiality, she will be sorely missed.

Benjamin F. Fisher
University of Mississippi

Reviews

Kenneth Silverman, ed. **New Essays on Poe's Major Tales.** Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993. viii + 134 pp. \$27.95, cloth; \$10.95, paper.

A new addition to the American Novel series, this collection of essays offers an introductory critical guide that seems to be aimed at college undergraduates and high school students. The volume editor's introduction gives a five-page account of Poe's life followed by an explanation of Poe's theory and practice of the tale. The third part of the introduction, "Poe in His Tales," sets forth the biographical approach used in several of the essays. Silverman remarks that "no purely textual study of the tales can account for the widespread sense of the writer and his writing as a single thing" (p. 15). He sees a close connection between many themes in the tales and events in Poe's life.

J. Gerald Kennedy applies this approach in his essay, "Poe, 'Ligeia,' and the Problem of Dying Women," in which he asserts that "a glance at the biographical evidence and a reconsideration of relevant poetry and fiction will suggest why 'Ligeia' offers the definitive projection of Poe's tortured thinking about women" (p. 114). He contrasts the themes of blissful presence, longing, and loss of the beloved in Poe's poems to what he calls the "sheer malevolence" toward a beautiful woman's death in the tales. These motifs are connected to Poe's traumatic loss of three significant women in his own life, hardly a new theme.

Christopher Benfey, in "Poe and the Unreadable: 'The Black Cat' and 'The Tell-Tale Heart,'" analyzes the fear of love and isolation at the heart of these stories. David Van Leer's essay focuses on the Dupin tales, which, in the critic's opinion, do not offer solutions but rather mysterious reconstructions of "truth." Connections between cultural context and "The Cask of Amontillado" form the basis of David S. Reynolds' essay. One of Poe's favorite themes, the perverse, is the subject of Louise J. Kaplan's study of "The Fall of the House of Usher."

While not outstanding from the point of view of originality, this collection provides interesting, jargon-free analyses of Poe's most popular tales.

Lois Vines
Ohio University

Lois Davis Vines. **Valéry and Poe: A Literary Legacy.** New York: New York Univ. Press, 1992. 217 pp. \$35.00, cloth.

Poe's detractors—poetic and scholarly—often cannot explain the fervor of his French devotees, especially the Symbolists. These critics sometimes ignore the possibility that his canon and reputation inspired personalized readings in poets who sought an incubus (or, at least, a kindred spirit) for an artistic credo. In *Valéry and Poe*, Lois Davis Vines illuminates (with scholarship sound enough to convert the most intransigent of doubters) every significant

nuance of Poe's impact upon Paul Valéry. Her task was indeed difficult, for Valéry knew well Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's interpretations of Poe's significance. Simultaneously, however, he isolated theoretical elements, chiefly from Poe's essays, which served as catalysts in his own formulations about poetry.

Quoted by Vines repeatedly, Valéry's dictum about literary influence—"The lion is made of assimilated sheep"—seems somewhat inadequate here. He idolized Poe for being the first to explore the act of poetic creation. Thus, the analogy of a superior lion digesting an inferior sheep fails. Instead, Valéry devours his subject with the relish of a cannibal, for he believed that he consumed the intellectual essence of an equal.

Each chapter expertly traces the line between a Poe concept and the Symbolist's transformation of it. In *Eureka* and the ratiocinative tales, Valéry discovered the poetic potential of scientific thought. He cherished the self-contemplative nature of C. Auguste Dupin but not his penchant to leave his seclusion to solve his crime. Thus, in creating the philosophical Monsieur Teste, Valéry enlarged upon Dupin's deliberative tendencies but allowed his protagonist to remain in nurturing isolation. Vines minutely demonstrates other close parallels between Poe's and Valéry's texts: the links between "MS. Found in a Bottle" and "Agatha," *Eureka* and "The Young Fate," and other works are thoroughly and compellingly argued.

Scholars will find few new insights about Poe himself in this volume; nevertheless, I recommend it to all who wish to comprehend the pervasiveness of Poe's international reputation. In our need for more explorations of individual reactions to Poe, Vines has composed an invaluable contemporary model for future scholarship.

Richard Fusco
Philadelphia, PA

Michael L. Burdick. **Grim Phantasms: Fear in Poe's Short Fiction.** New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992. xix + 152 pp. \$25.00, cloth.

There already exists a book entitled *A Psychology of Fear: The Nightmare Formula of Edgar Allan Poe* (1980) by David R. Saliba. Do we really need another book on fear in Poe? If we do, it is not Michael Burdick's. In fact, as we shall see, *Grim Phantasms* is not genuinely a book at all; its thin thesis might have been more effectively presented at article length. The psychology behind Saliba's four-stage "formula" is Jungian. For Burdick, the clue to "Poe's literary game plan" (p. xiv) or "fear formula" is the exploitation of what Stephen King in *Danse Macabre* (1981) calls "phobic pressure points" (quoted p. xiv). Burdick argues that King's quite obvious theory was anticipated by the Philadelphia physician Dr. Benjamin Rush in his *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind* (1812), a work which Poe may have read. Although Burdick points out that "Nowhere in his letters, stories, reviews, or essays does Poe mention Benjamin Rush by name" (p. xiv), that

does not prevent Burdick from asserting in his concluding chapter that "*Diseases of the Mind* provided [Poe] with a theory concerning the human reaction to dread" (p. 127). He then relies on his readers to insert the "may have."

The therapeutic purpose that Burdick ascribes to Poe's tales of fear is quite misguided. Burdick argues that Poe looks forward to King in writing horror stories in order "to stress the value of the norm" (p. 27). And hence the further relevance of Rush who "presents a scientific basis for the theory of fear as anodyne." While some writers may use "fear as a type of inoculation" (p. 32), Poe does not. It should be emphasized that nothing in his writings suggests a cathartic theory of fear. Consequently, Burdick's conclusion that "In all likelihood," Poe "wanted his audience to realize that in order to enjoy a healthy mental and physical life, all persons must face the spectre of fear" and "mentally master it" (p. 129) is simply wrong. To some extent Poe focused on the fearful to exploit (and satirize) a market demand. To some extent he focused on the genuinely fearful, that is, a state of affairs that he hoped was not, but suspected might be, true.

The bulk of *Grim Phantasms* simplistically applies the "phobic pressure points" theory (fear of death, insanity, horses, slave rebellions) to twenty-one of Poe's short stories in chronological order (for no particular purpose), including "The Fall of the House of Usher" in which reference is made to "the grim phantasm, FEAR" (quoted p. 3). Too many of these analyses consist of little more than plot summary, misinterpretation (if one can still speak negatively of such), and commonplaces. Burdick's reading of "The Assigination" is particularly biased as the following oxymoronic statement reveals: "As the tale concludes we receive no indications that the lovers will meet once they have entered eternity" (p. 53). And it is almost the opposite of the truth to assert that "The Pit and the Pendulum" "demonstrates the ability of rational thought to transcend the fear produced by intense suffering" (p. 90). A more interesting analysis of "Hop-Frog" as an allegory warning against slave rebellion in the U. S. totally discounts Poe's apparent sympathy for the eponymous dwarf. As for commonplaces, do we need to be told that the gondola in "The Assigination," being "like some huge and sable-feathered condor" (quoted, p. 50), "thereby" resembles "a large bird of death" (p. 50)? In the following instances Burdick makes use of commonplaces to support his theory that Rush was Poe's source: "Reacting physically to his condition, and in a manner that recalls Benjamin Rush, he [the protagonist in 'The Pit and the Pendulum'] breaks out in a cold sweat" (p. 91); "The reader should note Rush's statement that the madman [such as the narrator of 'The Tell-Tale Heart'] often possesses a savage cunning that disarms people around him" (p. 94).

In spite of the fact that the twenty-one tales that Burdick discusses include the six that Saliba treats,

Burdick engages not at all with Saliba's book, an engagement that might have given his more substance. *A Psychology of Fear* is represented only by a glancing reference in one note (p. 19). Burdick appears to be primarily engaged with the criticism of Benjamin Fisher, the editor of the series in which his volume appears. Although Fisher's valuable work has little to do with fear, Fisher is cited more often than any other scholar.

Finally, among the several typos/errors, is one especially egregious example in this sentence: "When he describes his years at Eaton and Oxford, Wilson reveals the specific nature of his weakness" (p. 77). Needless to say (?) Poe does not have William Wilson attending a Canadian department store for his education (even if it did exist in Poe's time).

David Ketterer
Concordia University, Montreal

Esther Rashkin. *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992. 206 pp. \$29.95, cloth.

In her introduction to this brilliant, clearly written critical work, Rashkin suggests that "this book is a study of the haunting effects of family secrets on characters in narrative." Although her remark does not seem particularly novel, she modifies it to suggest that Freudian analysis never really confronts these family secrets; such an approach merely reduces analysis to vague, ambiguous words such as "narcissism" or the "uncanny."

Rashkin claims that literary analysis remains an "occult" activity; it is never certain about the origins of the "occult" or the "phantom." She explores clearly the psychoanalytic and linguistic theories of Abraham and Torok, who maintain that texts—including case histories—are rarely decoded in a way that does justice to "secrets" embedded in the texts. These analysts maintain that all texts—especially those dealing with the "phantom"—conceal meanings. Thus close readings must, in effect, pay attention to words not spoken or written, to cryptograms hidden in verbal structure.

If Hamlet serves as a test case for all kinds of interpretation, certain questions inevitably emerge: What does he read into the ghost's message that paralyzes him? What does the ghost know that he doesn't know? Although we assume that Hamlet learns about Claudius' murder of the king, we are informed by Abraham that this misinterpretation (deliberate) obscures the secret that the ghost actually reveals. Rashkin summarizes these issues as follows: "The unspeakable secret suspended within the adult is transmitted silently to the child in 'undigested' form and lodges within his or her mental topography as an unmarked tomb of inaccessible knowledge."

Rashkin's splendid reading of "The Fall of the House of Usher" revitalizes "classic" interpretations. She successfully challenges Rosenzweig's easy psychoanalytic

Poe Miscellany

Works by the post-Romantic composer Joseph Holbrooke (1878- 1958), including orchestral interpretations of "Ulalume," "The Bells," and "The Raven," appear on a recent recording issued on the Marco Polo label. The Leopold Stokowski Society has issued a recording of Arcady Dubensky's orchestral setting of "The Raven."

Passport, the magazine of Sabena Airlines (April 1993), contained "The Bronx: Poe's Last Retreat."

The 28 April 1993 *Baltimore Sun* contained a discussion of the theories of Kay R. Jamison, who argued at a Johns Hopkins University medical symposium that Poe was manic-depressive.

The spring auction of the Swann Galleries included an edition of *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, which sold for \$3300.

"Ravens" was the choice of 6,367 participants (out of 21,626 total responses) in the *Baltimore Sun's* Name-That-Team survey for a possible NFL expansion team in that city. Second choice: the Bombers.

Reviews

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reading and Riddel's deconstructive reading of the abyss. She asks a series of apparently easy questions: Is Madeline simply the "secret sharer" of Roderick? Does she know more or less than he does? What is the significance of the poem and tale within the story? Why have words such as "suppositious" and "porphyrogene" never been adequately studied? Such questions demonstrate not only her adventurous reading; they also illustrate her graceful movement from philology to psychology and back. (At one point she mentions a "to-and-fro method" of reading.) In sum, Rashkin's book—and her reading of Poe—offers a fresh way of looking at narrative and epistemological phantoms.

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