

SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF
POE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

New York, December 29, 1978

J. Lasley Dameron, President of the Poe Studies Association, welcomed a group of 118 persons, the largest number yet to attend the annual meeting at MLA. After the Treasurer's report presented by Joseph M. DeFalco, Benjamin F. Fisher, Vice-President of PSA, made the following announcements: (1) John Ward Ostrom (823 Snowhill Boulevard, Springfield, Ohio 45504) seeks any information that should be included in his revised checklist of Poe correspondence; (2) David K. Jackson, assisted by Dwight Thomas, will prepare a volume on Poe in the G. K. Hall "Log series"; and (3) Joseph O. Ridgely is editing correspondence to Poe, also for Hall.

Citations

Professor Fisher then presented to the group the following citations:

Eric W. Carlson . . . As a leader of seminars and special sessions on Poe at MLA and NEMLA meetings, Eric Carlson provided much of the impetus leading to the founding of the PSA. As President of our group, he guided us through the difficult early years. One of the original four editorial advisers to *Poe Studies*, and a continuing reviewer of works on Poe and Emerson among other subjects, he has provided valuable opinions and insights. Ever ready to assist the novice as well as the experienced scholar, Eric Carlson has responded to many queries relevant to Poe and Poeiana. Past and present merge in his useful collection of critiques, *The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe*; his anthology, *Introduction to Poe: A Thematic Reader*, has led many a searcher into the world of Edgar Allan Poe, in which Eric himself continues as an active figure.

Alexander G. Rose III . . . Most of us present today as well as numerous others elsewhere, have benefitted directly or otherwise from the labors and warm courtesy of Al Rose of the University of Baltimore. Trained as an Americanist under the meticulous direction of the late Tremaine McDowell, Professor Rose has served well and long as the President of Baltimore's Edgar Allan Poe Society. From localized beginnings this group is now internationally recognized, and credit for that renown must go to Al's energetic presidency. Calling on established Poe scholars to deliver the annual lecture, Al has had published a series of these lectures, some by

members of this Poe Studies Association, for the enrichment and entertainment of Poe enthusiasts. As President Emeritus, he is now chronicling the history of the Baltimore Poe Society and editing its minutes which span more than half a century. He lends cordiality and lustre in taking a place among our Honorary members.

Richard P. Benton . . . Long an engineer, longer a professor of English and Comparative Literature, and, to boot, a published poet, Professor Benton combines the very traits which Poe deemed the constituents of a whole person: those of poet and mathematician. Beginning his scholarly career with a study of Longfellow's "Helen of Tyre," he has since published on Keats, Tennyson, Pound, Viereck, Oriental Literature, and Gothicism, as well as on Poe. His bibliographies of Poe materials have been of great value. Since its appearance in 1963, his essay "Is Poe's 'The Assigination' a Hoax?" has spurred many inquiries into the nature of Poe's irony and humor. The only one among us to serve simultaneously as editorial adviser for the old *Emerson Society Quarterly*, *ATQ*, and *Poe Studies* (one of the original four), Professor Benton has evaluated much of the significant work about Poe appearing in those journals. Still a reader for the newer *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, and, more occasionally, for *NCF* or *PMLA*, his opinions of Poe and Gothicism have benefitted readers the world over, as have his edited symposia. His most recent Poe project was the fifty-sixth annual lecture to the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore (on madness and love in the canon).

Kenneth Walter Cameron . . . Typical responses elicited upon hearing Professor Cameron's name are "Emerson," "Transcendentalism," or (because of mistaking him for Kenneth Neill Cameron, his close contemporary) "Shelley." Professor Cameron merits accolades in "our field" nevertheless because he himself has glanced from Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, T. S. Eliot, Shakespeare, as well as the history of the

Poe Studies Association Newsletter

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This issue of the PSA Newsletter was prepared by J. Lasley Dameron and distributed by the Department of English, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee 38152. Copies are available upon request.

Episcopal Church in Connecticut to produce several bibliographical and source studies of Poe. He has also published significant Poe symposia in the *Emerson Society Quarterly*, *ATQ*, and other volumes from Transcendental Books. Hospitable to established scholars and encouraging to those just emerging, Kenneth W. Cameron, functioning as a catalyst, so to speak, has furthered inestimably the study of Edgar Allan Poe's writings, as well as the knowledge of our entire American tradition of literature.

Speakers

Papers on the topic "Recent Poe Scholarship" were:

"Writing Poe's Biography," John Carl Miller, Old Dominion University. Illuminated John H. Ingram's work on Poe.

"Seeing Poe's Tales and Sketches Through the Press," Mrs. Maureen Cobb Mabbott, New York City. Addressed problems that she and Ms. Eleanor D. Kewer encountered in completing work on Volumes II and III of the Mabbott-Harvard Poe, left unfinished at his death by Thomas Ollive Mabbott.

"Surveying Poe Criticism," G. Richard Thompson, Purdue University. Discussed his experiences in editing *Poe Studies* and *ESQ* and is preparing a chapter on Poe for the *ALS Annual*.

Professor Fisher then introduced Mrs. Patricia Edwards Clyne, long-time secretary to Professor Mabbott, whose continuing support greatly assisted Mrs. Mabbott in completing the volumes of short fiction, and PSA Honorary Member Arlin Turner, who will address the association in San Francisco on Poe and Hawthorne. The general topic for the 1979 MLA meeting is "Poe and His Contemporaries."

JAY BROADUS HUBBELL (1885-1979)

An epoch closed with the death of Professor Hubbell, on February 13, 1979. Our first designated Honorary Member, Dr. Hubbell did much to encourage continued and generous attention to Poe. Founding Editor of *American Literature*, which celebrated its fiftieth birthday in March, 1979, Dr. Hubbell emphasized the importance of the South, Poe in particular, in American letters. Prior to his death, Dr. Hubbell had given his seasoned and hearty approval to two forthcoming projects of note for our members: David K. Jackson (a former student of Dr. Hubbell), Dwight Thomas's *Poe Log*, and Maureen Cobb Mabbott's monograph concerning the Poe scholarship of Thomas Ollive Mabbott. A learned, witty, and friendly counsellor, Jay B. Hubbell will be long remembered by students of our nation's culture.

NEMLA, 1980

Northeast MLA will hold its spring 1980 convention at Southeastern Massachusetts University, North Dartmouth, Massachusetts. The Poe session is soliciting papers on the topic "Poe in the Twentieth Century." The papers (8 page maximum) should deal with the impact of Poe's fiction, poetry, or criticism on writers of this century. Please submit one copy to Professor Steven

Hoffman (Chairman), Department of English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & SU, Blacksburg, Va. 24061, and one copy to Professor Kent Ljungquist (Secretary), Department of Humanities, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, Massachusetts 01609. The deadline is September 10, 1979.

POE IN PHILADELPHIA

The Philadelphia Free Library has received \$50,000 from the state and \$469,000 from the federal government to rehabilitate the Poe house on Seventh Street just north of Spring Garden. The three-story brick edifice is the only house that has survived of the four that Poe rented between 1838 and 1844. This period is the subject of a recent dissertation by Dwight R. Thomas, "Poe in Philadelphia, 1838-1844: A Documentary Record," *DAI*, 39 (September, 1978), 1578-A.

NEW POE PUBLICATIONS

Wolf Mankowitz. *The Extraordinary Mr. Poe*. New York: Summit Books (Simon & Schuster), 1978. 248 pp. \$15.

The author, described on the jacket as a "widely known English novelist, playwright, scriptwriter and film director," has given this work the subtitle of "a biography," although he has really concocted a piece of fiction. No one takes exception to flights of fancy freely based on Poe's life, such as the recent opera by Dominick Argento, *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe*. But why designate it thus and append a one-page bibliography of eighteen works "useful and stimulating" for "this biography"? Obviously for such a putative "life of Poe" there must be a large public unwilling to tackle informative, sober books such as those by Woodberry and A. H. Quinn. Therefore, Mr. Mankowitz justly earns the annoyance of anyone who knows the truth about Poe. First of all, he blatantly acknowledges, atop his bibliography, "the psychological insights" of Marie Bonaparte and accordingly twists and warps his subject into the craven, mother-fixated wretch familiar to us from much narrowing and tendentious criticism (see pp. 115-117, 142, and 209-210). To this orientation he adds his own "key" idea of John Allan's implacable hostility and persecutorial glee over all of Poe's early misadventures and errors, right out of melodrama. Second, since he is no scholar in any field, he accepts as gospel truth many disproved fictions and free reminiscences, such as Latrobe's about the Folio Club tales and Snodgrass's and Moran's temperance sermonizing about his death; he also accepts Poe's epistolary feints, such as the incarceration in Moyamensing prison. The dates of the genesis of major works ("The Raven," "Ulalume," and "Mellonta Tauta") are carelessly or naively given according to hearsay sources. The melodramatic tone springs from the author's theatrical métier. We are subjected to such apocrypha as Poe's twisted mouth as he walked the streets (104), his tuberculosis (146), the fact of his trip to Saratoga in 1842 (149), and his successful lawsuit against Mr. Lummis (not English!). Proper names are as mangled as truth: William J. "Parbodie" of Providence, Graham of the magazine (*sic*) as publisher of *Prose Romances* (170), S. T. "Gray" as his pseudonym, and the kitty "Catarina." Scarcely one citation from letters is accurately transcribed, and parts are omitted with no indication to the reader. Non-Poe

writing seems to be ascribed to Poe himself (Pinckney's "toast" on p. 221). The style of Mankowitz itself is intolerably slack, imprecise, and cliché-ridden: "Virginia distributed her sunshine temperament without reserve" (55); Providence was "reeling from the shock" of Poe's courtship of Mrs. Whitman (227); "Edgar Poe was sworn brother sweet" to "opium" and "tuberculosis" (82); and "Beardsley's ape is evil and decadent" (131). The book, it is true, is handsomely printed on large-sized pages and good paper with over one hundred illustrations, but for the art sketches he draws heavily from W. H. Robinson, Edmund Dulac, Harry Clarke, and Wilfried Satty, awarding fulsome praises to the mawkish pictorial commonplaces of the first two and the meretricious, unacknowledged collage of the last. The work fulfills no needs of even the general reader who may wish information about Poe's life. Clearly the British publishers (and their American outlets) are now willing to commission or pay for a breezy vulgarization of the Poe legend, confident that with profuse pictures and a gaudy dust jacket it will find numerous purchasers, probably including the graduates of the horror and comic book school of Poe presentations.

Burton R. Pollin
Professor Emeritus, CUNY

Agnes M. Bondurant. *Poe's Richmond*. Second Edition. Richmond: Poe Associates, 1978. 264 pp. \$6.95.

According to the new foreword of *Poe's Richmond* signed by Agnes Bondurant Murcusion, Dr. Bruce V. English (President of the Poe Foundation of Richmond, Va.) managed to trace Agnes M. Bondurant for the sake of reissuing this out-of-print 1942 book. Although called a second edition, it appears to contain no change at all in the paging, notes, bibliography, index, and attractive cuts by Ralph W. Lemond. The well-informed and sage advisers for the original work—Drs. Hubbell, Freeman, and Parks and David K. Jackson—had promoted a useful and appealing text in 1942. Up to the present date, there have been no significant developments in the cultural history of the area and in Poe biography to cause us to depreciate the real although frequently tangential value of *Poe's Richmond*. The plan is a good one: Poe's early years sketched against the background,

treated in separate chapters, of "industry," "law and politics," "education," "libraries and books," "the church, theatre, and other amusements," the periodical press, and "home environment and friends," plus "Poe and Richmond" or his direct use of local figures, places, and events. It is true that much of this could scarcely have entered Poe's burgeoning awareness. For example, the plays and lectures presented while he was in England or a very young boy in Richmond and the numerous instances of "probably," and "must have seen" and "no doubt" and "would have been" show the author's desperate striving to justify conjecture and indicate unproved connections. She read widely and delved deeply in new materials such as the Mordecai manuscripts in Duke University and tried to convey the fullness and variety of life in the small capital city housing the sensitive, perceptive young genius. She is occasionally aware of the impropriety of ascribing solely to his early environment source-elements for his creative works that could more easily have come later from surroundings in the North, e.g., the more varied theater and literary associations. In short, the whole book must be read as an extreme instance of special pleading, which needs to be set, in the reader's mind, against the claims of "Poe's New York" and "Poe's Philadelphia." Since there is too much trivia even now in several chapters, we need not regret omissions, such as that of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* from the assumedly complete list of contemporary journals, of numerous allusions in Poe's criticism to Richmond and Virginia non-Richmond writers and other "notabilities" or of major subjects, such as "architectural styles." The author shows a convenient laxity about Poe's maturing interests and different levels of interest in his surroundings during the long period of his rearing in Richmond. There is too much reliance upon the research of Hervey Allen and upon statements in the press of Richmond, especially in *The Enquirer*, but she did go to authentic sources and sought out far-flung letters before John Ostrom brought them conveniently together. Students of Poe will therefore welcome the chance to own this early and significant contribution to Poe studies, published in a well-presented, reasonably priced edition.

Burton R. Pollin
Professor Emeritus, CUNY

The Poe Studies Association and its *Newsletter* are independent of the journal *Poe Studies*, published at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99163, subscription \$3 per year (two issues, June, December).

NEW MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL FOR 1979

I wish _____ do not wish _____ to continue receiving *PSA Newsletter* (May, November).
 (check one)

Enclosed is my \$3 check for dues and subscription for the calendar year 1979. (Check should be made out to "Poe Studies Association" and mailed to Joseph M. DeFalco, Dept. of English, Marquette University, 635 North Thirteenth St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233).

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ZIP or home address:

G. Richard Thompson, ed. *Romantic Gothic Tales 1790-1840*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. 337 pp. \$2.95.

The fifteen tales, the substantial bibliography, and the 54-page introduction make this book a valuable companion to Poe studies. Irving, Hawthorne, British writers (especially those in *Blackwood's*), and continental Gothicists appear. Poe is represented by "The Fall of the House of Usher" as the culmination of Romantic Gothicism in the brief prose tale, beginning here in 1797 and arranged chronologically. The dramatic irony and ambiguities in "Usher" are anticipated in the earlier selections. Thompson outlines recurrent themes and types in the Gothic tradition, taking care to illustrate each of his choices. His analyses are thoughtful, terse, and illuminating. This fairly inexpensive book will serve a great need in courses on the Gothic proper and tangential areas as well: mystery, detective, and fantasy fiction. One caveat: M. R. James (p. 19) is primarily a twentieth, not a nineteenth century writer.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV
The University of Mississippi

Tales of Mystery and Imagination by Edgar Allan Poe, illustrated by Arthur Rackham. Weathervane Books, N. Y., a division of Imprint Society. New York: Crown Publishers, n. d. (Copyright 1935 by George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.)

As a trade-book reprint, this volume has nothing to recommend it except heavy paper, large print and margins, and 29 illustrations by Rackham, 12 in color, 17 in line, and a good selection of 25 tales. No editor, no introduction or preface, and no notes or editorial apparatus of any kind.

Eric W. Carlson
University of Connecticut

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Members of the Poe Studies Association:

Having, in these late years, fallen upon "the sere and yellow leaf" and entered rather deep into the woodland of Weir, I venture infrequently from my home and never spend a night away from it. Your kind request that I attend the MLA and participate in the special session of the PSA I am obeying by proxy, asking my former colleague, Richard P. Benton, to represent me, uttering in my name, however, no scholarly opinions about Poe that might diminish my credibility in the profession! Because, during my years with the *ESQ* and the *ATQ* I relied upon his judgment regarding most of the Poe articles which we published, I consider him entitled to half (but no more) of any gold medal which the United States Government may feel inclined to award me, and one half (but no more) of any other honor which Poe scholars may be inclined to bestow.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak a word of gratitude to you severally and collectively for all you have done to build up and support the *ESQ* and the *ATQ* through the years. Whatever eminence they may be perched upon in our troubled times has, in large part, been built up by the substantial scholarship of your membership. Because I am certain that the "best is yet to be," let me wish you the old greeting shouted to a newly consecrated bishop, "Ad multos annos!"

Gratefully,

Kenneth W. Cameron
Christmas, 1978

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