



NEWSLETTER

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POE STUDIES ASSOCIATION MEETING

San Francisco, Calif.
December 29, 1979

President J. Lasley Dameron called to order the seventh annual meeting, with about sixty persons attending during the two-hour session.

The program, "Poe and His Contemporaries," chaired by B. F. Fisher IV, featured these speakers:

John E. Reilly, College of the Holy Cross—"Sarah Helen Whitman as a Critic of Poe"

Kent P. Ljungquist, Worcester Polytechnic Institute—"Poe and Frances Osgood"

Arlin Turner, Southwest Texas State Univ.—"Poe and Hawthorne"

The Business Meeting followed. A motion to increase dues to four dollars (\$4.00), beginning with 1980 dues, passed unanimously. President Dameron offered the Secretary-Treasurer's report, in the absence of Joseph De Falco.

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Helen Ensley, Ottavio Casale, and Dwight Thomas, in consultation with Richard P. Benton, presented this slate of Executive Committee members: President, B. F. Fisher IV; Vice-President and Program Chairman, Kent P. Ljungquist; Members-at-Large: G. R. Thompson and Helen Ensley. No further nominations coming from the floor, these persons were unanimously elected.

Professor Dameron then turned over the remainder of the business meeting to Professor Fisher, who announced that

- (1) the topic for the 1980 PSA meeting, in Houston, Texas, is "Poe and the Story of Detection and Mystery." In consultation with the Executive Committee, the Program Chairman has arranged to invite speakers;
- (2) John Ward Ostrom's revised checklist of Poe correspondence is scheduled for the May 1980 number of *SAR*;
- (3) Mrs. Maureen C. Mabbott reports that Harvard Univ. Press will issue in paperback the *Poems* volume of the *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, minus appendices;
- (4) B. F. Fisher IV and Thomas H. Brown, Univ. of Mississippi, have prepared for publication an edited reprint of the 1843 *Saturday Museum* sketch of Poe's life and work; and
- (5) Stuart Levine, Editor of *American Studies*, asks that

persons writing about Poe and American studies send papers to his journal for consideration.

A hearty ovation went to Arlin and Thelma Turner for the more than forty years' work underlying the new biography of Hawthorne (just published by Oxford Univ. Press). Professor Fisher paid tribute to Professor Dameron's successful presidency of our Association during the past two years.

POE SESSION AT NEMLA

Southeastern Massachusetts Univ.
No. Dartmouth, MA
March 20, 1980

The program, chaired by Kent Ljungquist, Secretary, in the absence of Steven Hoffman, consisted of papers by Laura J. Menides on T. S. Eliot's and William Carlos Williams' views of Poe; Benjamin Fisher on Poe's impact on Stephen King and John Dickson Carr; Maurice J. Bennett on Poe and Jorge Borges. Officers elected for 1981: Chair, Kent Ljungquist, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Secretary, Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, Univ. of Mississippi. The 1981 meeting will be held in Quebec City.

POE IN PHILADELPHIA AGAIN

In anticipation of the opening of the Poe House, a seminar was held on February 29 at the offices of the Independence National Historical Park. Participating were

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Seymour Adelman and Professors Daniel Hoffman, Robert Regan, Burton Pollin, and Eric Carlson. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Poe societies of Baltimore, Richmond, and New York; Howell J. Heaney of the Free Library; Martin I. Yoelson, Chief Park Historian, who served as moderator; and others.

In our Fall 1979 Newsletter we described the proposed restoration of the Poe House on N. Seventh Street as having encountered serious obstacles. In fact, the work was then substantially completed. We called the restoration "a severe 'remodeling' . . . with removal of period hardware, improper covering of wall surfaces, and destruction of masonry." We have since learned that the hardware removed has been preserved for return to the house, that the improper resurfacing of the interior walls will be corrected, and that the repointing of exterior walls, which we described as "destruction of masonry," did not affect the Poe House. Repointing there was carried through in the style of the 1840s, but the funds provided, though substantial, did not permit the same procedure to be followed in the case of the adjacent buildings, neither of which was occupied by Poe and one of which was built after he left Philadelphia.

The G. K. HALL EDITION OF POE

Beginning in 1980 with the long narratives of Edgar Allan Poe (*PYM*, "Hans Pfaall," and "Julius Rodman"), G. K. Hall Corporation of Boston will publish the complete writings of this author save for those already issued by the Harvard University Press. Under the editorship of Burton R. Pollin (or collaborating editors chosen for specific volumes), this new edition, with a thorough critical apparatus, textual notes, and commentaries, will include all of Poe's ascribed writings, all his unsigned and uncollected works, and whatever unpublished manuscripts and lecture-reports are available. His editorial and critical materials in magazines such as the *Broadway Journal* and *Graham's Magazine* will be part of this multivolume edition, which will also make use of the extensive materials left by the late Professor Thomas Ollive Mabbott.

NEW POE AND POE-RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Poe's Helen Remembers, edited by John Carl Miller, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1980. 528 pp. \$24.95.

Edgar Allan Poe: Journaliste et Critique, by Claude Richard. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1978. 962 pp. 25.82 fr.

Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 3: *Antebellum Writers in New York and the South*, edited by Joel Myerson. Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1979. 383 pp. (Sixty-seven essays on authors whose major work appeared between 1820 and 1860, including a 40,000-word essay on Poe by G. R. Thompson.)

Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, by Arlin Turner. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. \$22.00.

Emerson's Literary Criticism, edited by Eric W. Carlson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979. 301 pp. \$21.50.

Bedlam Patterns: Love and the Idea of Madness in Poe's Fiction, lecture by Richard P. Benton. Edgar Allan Poe Society, 402 E. Gittings Ave., Baltimore, MD 21201. 17 pp. \$2.75 plus 30¢ postage.

ATQ (American Transcendental Quarterly: A Journal of New England Writers), No. 39, Summer 1978, six articles including Edward Pitcher on "Usher" and Stanley J. Kozikowski on "The Cask of Amontillado"; No. 40, Fall 1978, nine articles, including David R. Saliba on "Ligeia."

REVIEWS

Leona Rasmussen Phillips. *Edgar Allan Poe: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Gordon Press, 1978. \$60.00.

Surely Poe never perpetrated a hoax as audacious as this new contribution by L. R. Phillips to the "Gordon Press Bibliographies for Librarians Series." Its price makes it perhaps the most expensive piece of illiteracy and incompetence ever printed in this country. The 139 pages include all the front material (8 pp.) and a blank page at the back plus a misquoted Poe epigraph. What is left for the 127 pages of typed, ragged-line, facsimile-print: Poe's "Life Line" (4 pp. of Chronology); "Writings" grouped as Tales, Verses, Articles, Miscellaneous Writings, without dates save for the twenty-four (*sic*) poems; an eight-page Introduction by Jill M. Phillips, perhaps the editor's high school daughter ("Because his foster parents fussed over him . . . , does not mean . . . real affection"; a section "On his Madness" starts with a quotation of Cervantes from *Man of La Mancha!*); "Annotation" of books on Poe (brief essays), including W. C. Brownell's "book" with the wrong date, Robert L. Gale's *Approach* (Barron's), and collections of essays (Regan and Woodson), but not Jacobs' or any of Mabbott's books or Dameron's bibliography. The sole edition discussed is that of "The Wheeler Pub. Co., Denver and San Francisco, 1902" in 10 volumes; an essay on "Poe in Cinema"; a list of "Further Source Material Regarding Mr. Poe" ("Biographies" and the "Critical Literature") and a three-page list of various "Collected Works, ending with Beaver's "Penquin" (*sic*) *Science Fiction*. To borrow from *Hamlet*—the "boldness" is all.

Burton R. Pollin
Professor Emeritus, CUNY

John Ball, ed. *The Mystery Story*. San Diego and Del Mar: Univ. of California, San Diego with Publisher's, Inc. 1976. \$10.95

Seventeen essays (two principally bibliographical) written by aficionados of mystery fiction make this book appealing to all concerned with Poe, Gothicism, and, more generally, themes and forms of mystery tales. From the "Preface" onward Poe's centrality crops up, if ever so tersely in spots, reminding us that his tales of detection

("ratiocination" he would prefer) continue to bear burgeoning progeny. Time's passage may lull present-day readers into forgetting that "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is the original locked-room detective tale, and it is good to have Donald Yates's reminder about it—and about Le Fanu. Yates also implies Poe's affinities with John Dickson Carr, and notes bonds between Poe and Doyle, a resemblance also mentioned by Robert Briney. Hillary Waugh also mentions extensions of the term "mystery," his information supplementing remarks by others in *Poe Studies* several years ago detailing Poe's use of the term. Dickens, too, might be examined from this angle, taking Hillis Miller's application of "mystery" to *Bleak House* and analyzing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* along similar lines.

References to Poe appear in other essays, calling attention to his works as examples of popular culture, a feature often muted by those eager to hunt solemnity and symbols in overabundance in this fascinating body of fiction.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV
University of Mississippi

Elizabeth Phillips. *Edgar Allan Poe: An American Imagination—Three Essays*. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1979. \$12.50.

There are hints of good ideas in these three essays. Certainly we need to know more about the reality of life in America as seen and as used by Poe, about his views on landscape as natural and as formal beauty, and about his views of mental aberrations, including the results of alcoholism, as narrative content and as an influence upon the author himself. Professor Phillips, having read widely both in English and French criticism, valiantly tries to reveal Poe in his contemporaneous setting and his harsh and bleak personal milieu. But this has been attempted before in numerous studies. Her contribution scarcely justifies the long passages of speculative analogies that are not demonstrated to relate to Poe. For example, out of the 129 pages of text, she devotes pp. 13-47 to contrasts and parallels imputed to Alexis de Tocqueville's

Democracy in America. Poe never mentions this work or this author, but he "must have known" him. How else could the author spin a fragile thread about "the air of democracy" and "man's imagination" into a full essay? In the second, "The Imagination of a Great Landscape," Poe's view of Rome in "The Coliseum" is lengthily compared to Cole's notes and picture of the ruin (pp. 65-71) although Poe never mentioned Cole or his work. Moreover, the particularities of Poe's scene are shown to differ from Byron's in *Manfred* and Cole's sufficiently to blunt or negate the thesis, that Poe viewed the American landscape in a distinctively American way. Irrelevantly, Baudelaire's poem, "Rêve parisien," that depends upon "Dreamland," the writer says, is compared with Poe's for landscape imagery. Poe's habit of walking leads to an improbable analogy with Rousseau's *Rêveries*. Chateaubriand on American landscapes would have been more in point. The handling of the French is, indeed, sensitive. Analogy is less harmful in the third essay entitled "Mere Household Events: The Metaphysics of Mania" (III), largely about the view of Dr. Benjamin Rush and Dr. Isaac Ray on insanity, neither of whom Poe ever mentioned. The author should also have surveyed magazine and newspaper material for the view of alcoholism as a disease and mania as an environmental consequence or as genetic. Moreover, "Metaphysics" in the third section is never defined or clarified.

There is wide reading behind the book but it is reading which often becomes unmanageable, as in citations from Williams and Stevens. It is the third essay which casts a bit of light on a major problem in Poe scholarship.

Burton R. Pollin
Professor Emeritus, CUNY

David Ketterer. *The Rationale of Deception in Poe*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1979. \$17.50.

David Ketterer portrays Poe in this study as an idealistic visionary. He focuses on Poe's "strategies of deception," interpreting them as an assault upon

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NEW MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL FOR 1980

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

Enclosed is my \$4 check for dues and subscription for the calendar year 1980. (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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limitations of the human condition and understanding that inhibit transcendental vision. According to Ketterer, Poe believed that such vision could be achieved, not only in some future state but here and now, by adopting the right point of view, by looking at the world through "the half-closed eye"—Poe's metaphor for a synthetic imagination that fuses the deceptive distinctions apparent in our world and to our reason into a holistic reality. Ketterer sees a development in Poe's art, moreover, from a preoccupation with the deceptions of reason and reality (the "grotesque"), to the use of deception as a means of imaginative fusion (the "arabesque"), to a climactic synthesis in the tales of ratiocination and *Eureka*, in which reason and imagination combine as "intuition" to reveal a transcendental world.

The visionary that emerges from Ketterer's study, however, is problematical. Pursuing the holistic Poe, Ketterer is dogged by the "schizoid" Poe, who exults in the divisive reasoning he scorns, who draws back in horror from the transcendence he seeks. Ketterer acknowledges that Poe found himself "in a better position to attack the false reality than to reveal the true" and realized his "arabesque intimations" of a supernal world "may themselves be a deception," but these doubts, Ketterer argues, are "secondary to his faith in ideality." To see Poe as Ketterer sees him, we must half-close our eyes to the polarities in his canon. From this perspective, "the arabesque concept subsumes the grotesque," death means transcendence, horror is the "corollary" or "disguise" of idealistic vision. The terrifying falls of Poe's characters into pits or whirlpools are "fortunate," the collapse of Roderick and Madeleine Usher is "healing," and the raven's "Nevermore" is only a deception of the intellect of Poe's narrator, who could have his lost Lenore back here and now if he would maintain "the perspective of the half-closed eye." To those who contend that the horror and equivocation in Poe's art are the measure of his doubts about transcendence, Ketterer answers that the skepticism is theirs, not Poe's. Yet, when he resolves the ironies and contradictions of *Eureka* into an expression of both transcendental unity and Poe's "own alienated

condition," we cannot help wondering whether the visionary idealism Ketterer affirms throughout is Poe's or his own. Nevertheless, this provocative study deserves careful attention because it demonstrates how pervasive Poe's strategies of deception are and offers a serious challenge to darker readings of the vision that informs them.

Bruce I. Weiner
St. Lawrence University

Robert L. Caserio. *Plot, Story, and the Novel: From Dickens and Poe to the Modern Period*. Princeton, N.J.; Princeton University Press, 1979. \$15.00

This study is based on the assumption that in fiction a positive sense of plot and story represents "an intellectual and moral narrative reason" grounded in the "morality of action." The chief value of narrative reason comes from plot reversal, as in Dickens, whose recognition scenes imply moral concerns. By contrast, Poe does not believe in significant peripety; in straightening out the plot line—so the argument goes—he has suppressed reversal, as in "The Man of the Crowd." "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is another dazzling example of Poe's (Dupin's) distrust of "undue profundity" (ingenious, complex plot, reversal, etc.). As role-playing author, Poe is seen as deliberately factitious in his "purely fictive tricks," as in the ending to *Pym*. Poe's new kind of story line is method for its own sake; the tales are marked by "wit and mastery" and by "brilliant repetitions and redundancies" without meaning; plot elements do not function as forms of revelation. Caserio attributes this disbelief in reversal to Poe's "sense of life as simultaneously a process of death," the difference between life and death being illusory. Here Caserio falls far short of an adequate understanding of Poe's perspective, as set forth in his letters, essays, and *Eureka*. Settling for "comic self-parody" as the essence of Poe, Caserio fails to comprehend the tales of psychic conflict and the serious symbolic-Gothic narratives.

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