



NEWSLETTER

Volume X
Number 1
Spring, 1982

Published at Memphis State University
Memphis, TN 38152

NINTH ANNUAL MEETING: POE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

New York City, December 28, 1981

More than eighty persons attended the ninth annual meeting of the Poe Studies Association during the MLA Convention in New York on 28 December 1981. President Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV opened the meeting with a welcome to everyone assembled. During the short business meeting, a rousing hand of applause was given to Dr. Thomas H. Brown, our Secretary-Treasurer, for straightening out the books and for "regularizing" the cashing of dues-payment checks. His financial report was read by Professor Fisher. As of 9 December 1981, the PSA had sixty-six members, with assets of \$1007.32 in a money-market fund; \$378.20 in savings at Oxford, MS; and \$154.83 in checking. The report was accepted as read. A second matter of business was the election of officers. The following slate was nominated and elected: President, Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV; Vice-President and Program Chair, Kent Ljungquist; Members-at-Large, Bruce I. Weiner and Dennis W. Eddings—all for two-year terms. Professors Donald B. Stauffer (Chair), Richard P. Benton, and James W. Gargano comprised the nominating committee. Professor Stauffer also announced that he would again prepare the *ALS* (*American Literary Scholarship: An Annual*) chapter on Poe, requesting that off-prints be sent to him.

Next, citations were read for two new Honorary Members: Richard Wilbur and Frederick Dannay ("Ellery Queen"). (See Citations.)

Professor Fisher then turned over the program to Vice-President Kent Ljungquist, who introduced the speakers, Richard Wilbur and John T. Irwin. At the end of their talks, President Fisher invited announcements from the audience. Burton R. Pollin spoke about his work on a word index to Poe's fiction, as based upon the Mabbott Edition of the tales and Professor Pollin's own *Imaginary Voyages*. Katherine Macauley, of the Fordham Poe Cottage, spoke briefly about the Cottage, its program, and visiting hours. Richard Kopley mentioned the annual conference on Fantasy, to be held in Boca Raton, Fla., March 10-13, 1982. In the Poe section, March 11, speakers will be Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV and Kent Ljungquist. Professor Fisher closed by requesting a hand of applause to Professor Ljungquist for putting together so fine a program.

Citations

Professor Fisher presented to the group the following citations:

Richard Wilbur . . . Twenty years ago, when I first read *The Beautiful Changes and Other Poems*, I little dreamed

that one day I would be sitting in the company of its author. Although two items in the contents of that book—eggplant and its purple color—do not number among Poe's recorded favorites, Beauty does. Thus, although his "quarrel" with Poe has recently occasioned critical notice, Richard Wilbur's affinities with the earlier writer mute any fractiousness in that engagement. Unlike many others who write about Poe, Mr. Wilbur has taken on the tales, *Pym*, the poems, and the critical writings, providing thereby a broad view of his subject. His essay "The House of Poe" enjoys particular distinction as a leader in prompting reconsiderations of Poe's tales. In this critique they become works of serious, symbolic art. Such an approach puts the torch to the shabby warehouses of shopworn Gothicism that Poe's tales are often claimed to be by their detractors. As Richard Wilbur has brought great distinction to the field of Poe studies, we welcome him as an Honorary Member, small return of thanks for his significant contributions to Poe criticism.

Frederic Dannay . . . I'll begin by designating our second Honorary Member as Mr. X, a name he would appreciate. Like Poe, Mr. X performed a full stint in editorial offices. Like Poe, too, he turned out many works of short fiction, and he has been responsible for some of the best critical writing in "his field." Altogether, Mr. X could be teamed with Poe as an outstanding "magazinish." Such an epithet is fitting in a broader sense. Mr. X has devoted many a page of periodical space to the promotion of Edgar Allan Poe. He has, most notably, placed Poe upon a high pedestal in ranks of detective literature and reprinted several of the ratiocinative tales, no less. Such sound judgment continues, of course, in the encouragement of writers who maintain Poesque traditions, like Frederick Irving Anderson—whose stories have also been published, reprinted, and, deservedly, applauded—and other writers of detective fiction, established or newly-initiated. Let us salute the labors of more than forty years by

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Mr. X, known to some as Frederic Dannay, but known to many more as "Ellery Queen."

POE IN THE BRONX

"Edgar Allan Poe Fortnight," a program organized by the Bronx County Historical Society and held April 3-18, 1982, included a premiere performance of a chamber opera in one act based on "The Cask of Amontillado"; "Poe in Person," performed by Conrad Pomerleau; and "What Makes Poe a Classic?" a lecture by Alfred Dorn, professor of English at CUNY.

PUBLICATIONS

ATQ: American Transcendental Quarterly: Issue No. 41, Winter 1979, contains 4 articles on Emerson, 2 on Melville, 1 on Hawthorne, and 1 each on Lowell and Whitman. Issue No. 41, Spring 1979, contains 3 articles on Melville, 2 on Dickinson, 1 on Hawthorne, and "The Sonnet and the Schoolroom Poets" (Longfellow, Bryant, Lowell, and Whittier).

UMSE: University of Mississippi Studies in English: A special Poe issue, scheduled for the end of 1982, will include essays by Richard Wilbur, Donald Stauffer, Kent Ljungquist, James Gargano, W. T. Bandy, and others.

In addition to the *PSA Newsletter*, the Department of English at Memphis State University publishes the following: *INTERPRETATIONS: A Journal of Idea, Analysis, and Criticism*. Published twice annually by the Department of English at Memphis State University. For information, write Henry H. Peyton III, Editor in Chief, Department of English, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee 38152. *MEMPHIS STATE REVIEW*: Poetry and fiction published twice annually by the Department of English at Memphis State University. For information, write William Page, Editor, Department of English, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee 38152.

REVIEWS

G. R. Thompson and Virgil L. Lokke, eds. *Ruined Eden of the Present: Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, Critical Essays in Honor of Darrel Abel*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1981. \$15.75.

According to the editors of this festschrift, *Ruined Eden of the Present*, Darrel Abel, a well known critic of American literature, believed that literary criticism can provide us, much like Nathaniel Hawthorne's art, with a momentary realization of universal and eternal truths. Abel viewed the language of criticism, in other words, much as Hawthorne viewed the language of fiction: it is at once the measure of man's fallen condition and the means of his partial redemption. The sixteen essays collected here in Abel's honor may not redeem us finally, but they do enrich our understanding of the texts and contexts of Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe.

Abel's influential essay "A Key to the House of Usher" (1949) establishes the subject of four of the five essays devoted to Poe. Of special interest is the critical debate between Patrick F. Quinn and G. R. Thompson about the role of the narrator in "The Fall of the House of Usher." Quinn gets in the first and last word, disputing Thompson's

argument—put forth in *Poe's Fiction* (1973) and elaborated here—that the key to the tale is the unreliable narrator, who succumbs gradually to the terror and unreason he encounters and who becomes, in effect, the double of his ailing friend. By undermining the narrator's credibility, Thompson claims, Poe ironically mocks the uncertainty of human understanding. Quinn maintains, to the contrary, that we can trust the narrator's account, although his reason is severely tested. Quinn is less willing than Thompson to draw a conclusion about Poe's theme. He seems to hold with Abel that the tale is about Usher's madness, not the narrator's. Thompson may be right about the complex, epistemological theme of Poe's tale but Quinn has a point too. The narrator remains curiously obtuse and alien in the House of Usher, even as his participation and terror increase—his consciousness is somehow distinct from Usher's. The theme of the tale may reside finally not in the ultimate identification of Usher and the narrator, culminating for Thompson in their "dual hallucination" of Madeline's return from the tomb, but in the antithesis (or symbiosis?) of their peculiar visions. On a lighter note, Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV suggests that "Usher" may be read as a parody of Gothic sensibility. On another subject but equally interesting is "Poe's Unnecessary Angel: 'Israfel' Reconsidered" by Barton Levi St. Armand, who extends his study of the Gnostic strain in Poe's works by arguing that "Israfel" in "going beyond the timid philosophizing of Emerson's 'Uriel,' . . . calls for a true *gnosis*, a poetry of power . . ." (p. 300).

The essays in *Ruined Eden of the Present* are the product of mature and probing scholarship. Every student of the American Renaissance should read them.

Bruce I. Weiner
St. Lawrence University

Burton R. Pollin. *Word Index to Poe's Fiction*. New York: Gordian Press, 1982. \$25.

In adding this valuable research tool to an already distinguished series of books by and about Poe, the Gordian Press has maintained its customary high quality in both publishing format and scholarly detail. Exhaustive in scope—though not strictly a concordance in that line contexts are omitted—this index lists the sources for 28,000 words in Poe's fiction, using the two volumes of the tales and sketches in the Mabbott-edited Harvard edition and the Pollin-edited *Imaginary Voyages* in the G. K. Hall edition (1981). Frequency and page-line locations are given for every word with a frequency count through 50; to save space, for words with higher frequencies (to 336), no locations are given. But the high-frequency words and their locations will be made available in computer-printout form at selected large libraries throughout the country. The basic-text page, 8 x 10 inches, consists of 65 lines divided into two columns, 489 pages in all, plus an introduction describing the technical aspects of its construction and its uses for the scholar. Two supplementary sections consist of (a) a list of hyphenated words alphabetized by the latter element (e.g. *storm-tormented* is under *Tormented*) and (b) a frequency list of all words. Serious Poe students will find this index an indispensable reference work.

Eric W. Carlson, Professor Emeritus
University of Connecticut

Stephen Peithman. *The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981. \$35.

This collection of Poe's tales is a very handsome volume with large, well printed double-column pages (624), displaying over one hundred pictures and bearing an aura of intense devotion to Poe. The author demonstrates great expertise in the introductory and annotative materials. It is well organized even in its five-part introduction, which includes three illustrations and a section of thirteen critical comments (twelve of them appear in Eric Carlson's *Recognition of Poe*, unmentioned), and in its grouping of sixty-one tales under four categories: "Terror of Soul" (oddly including "Assignation," "Oval Portrait" and "Hop-Frog"), "Mysteries," (including "Oblong Box"), "Humor and Satire," and "Flights and Fantasies." (The book excludes the heavenly dialogues for no stipulated reason.) It even has a one-page bibliography of seventeen items, signalized on the title page, which includes non-Poe books by Jung, Ann Douglas, L.T.C. Rolt, and G. A. Walker, but omits many indispensables, such as Davidson, Ostrom, and Woodberry. The numerous notes (e.g., over fifty apiece for "Usher," "Gold-Bug," "Wilson," and "Ligeia") are full of details about sources, parallels, texts, word-play and etymologies, authors influenced, implications of passages, and alternate readings—provocative and enlightening, one might say.

Mr. Peithman, we learn from the dust jacket, has long cherished his "idea for a book on Poe" while doing "editing and public relations work" and presumably while finishing his dissertation on Poe's narratives at Davis, California in 1973. Occasionally, but rarely, is there attribution to the authors of specific discoveries, opinions, contributions to Poe scholarship. Most of the short headnotes and annotations bear striking resemblances to the headnotes and comments in Mabbott's edition of the tales and, less often, to notes and articles in *American Literature*, *Poe Newsletter*, and *Poe Studies*. Mabbott's edition, embodying his four decades of ceaseless inquiry and accumulated erudition, does receive mention in the bibliography as "the most comprehensive examination of Poe's texts" and "the only place to go" for "alternate versions."

Certainly it is convenient to have all the notes printed near the text, in their own column, but which version of the text is being used? Mr. Peithman's answer does not really

explain: "The versions of the tales used are those with which most readers are familiar" (p. ix). The notes sometimes cite passages omitted from versions used and the headnote always gives the first printing; presumably this is adequate. The text pleasantly uses smaller type for the notes and a clear boldface for the note numbers. The book seems well planned and detailed and meticulous. But a glance through its heavy-stock pages reveals "Marie Cleom" (p. xii), "varient" (22), "apprently" (23), "hypnogogic" (ascribed by error to Poe himself, 60), "alos" for "also" (226), "accustation" (254), "tile" for "title" (290), "L'Omellette" (329), "conversal" (407), "comparitively" and "abstact" (478), and *Coumus* (651). Errors of fact are not uncommon: a reference to Poe's essay on "Fancy and Imagination" (63), a mixup about the identity of Dr. Percival, long settled by Harry Warfel (65), a confusion of the verbal origin of "arrondees" (from "arronder," 91), the use of a false picture notorious amongst Beardsley forgeries (150), a reference to Mrs. Osgood's brother (really Mrs. Ellet's, 174), the meaning of "Mynmidone" (236), the British meaning of "bug" ("bedbug," not "louse," 262), and a reproduced "unknown" picture (clearly marked "Coburn" on 298). This last is strange since the editor elsewhere prints most of F. S. Coburn's four dozen pictures (which have been countlessly reprinted from the New York-Boston 1902 ten-volume set). These highly literal, melodramatic sketches of the Smudgy charcoal type reproduce badly on the smooth finish paper of this volume. A little more successful are the Albert Sterner illustrations here ascribed to the *Century Magazine* (but used also in the earlier Woodberry-Stedman edition of 1894). Other illustrations are also used, some quite charming, unpretentious, and more suitable, being simple line drawings taken, I suspect, from unidentified British nineteenth century magazines. The Quantin volumes of 1884, widely reprinted (by Harrison as well), yield many tedious, humdrum pictures by Vogel, Laurens, and Herpin, as well as a few good ones, such as Ferat's "Pit and Pendulum," but for all pictures only the artist's name and the century are furnished.

There is, unquestionably, a great deal of fact and opinion in this bulky book for that "general reader" who does not object to split infinitives (81) and "a period of prostrate grief" (xi), side comments on Jung (122), on the worth of C. B. Brown (123), on John Bellairs' modern Prospero (114), on a tale by Wilkie Collins of 1855 (119), on the sound of "Hop-

The Poe Studies Association and its *Newsletter* are independent of the journal *Poe Studies*, published at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99163, subscription \$4 per year (two issues, June, December).

NEW MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL FOR 1982

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

Enclosed is my \$4 check for dues and subscription for the calendar year 1982. (Check should be made out to "Poe Studies Association" and mailed to Thomas H. Brown, Poe Studies Association, Box 994, University, Mississippi 38677).

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Frog's" gnashing teeth (178), on a moralizing view of "Maelström" (109), and on the etymology of sometimes familiar English words. As Mr. Peithman says, at the end of five paragraphs of assorted interpretations of "Pit and Pendulum," "Poe seems to offer something for everyone" (133). Is the careful, knowing, assiduous student of Poe to be included among his broad readership?

Burton R. Pollin
Professor Emeritus, CUNY

John Carl Miller, ed. *Edgar Allan Poe: Marginalia*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981. \$11.95.

Through an apparently phenomenal spurt of editorial energy in his last years, Professor John Carl Miller (1916-1979), prepared three valuable Poe books, two of them published posthumously. Perhaps he had originally planned to add critical apparatus to this one, but even as a bare text of the "Marginalia" it is a valuable contribution. Miller's brief introduction justly lauds these brief essays as showing the amazing scope of Poe's ratiocinative mind, even though a large number of the two hundred ninety-one items, ranging from a few lines to a few pages, are merely excerpts from his reviews. Poe clearly intended these seventeen "installments" (1844-1849) to be revised and collected into one volume such as we have here, in a sense. Harrison's omission of five entries in two of the containing installments of 1846 and 1849 was noted by E. H. O'Neill in the November 1943 *American Literature*, but the entire series can be read far more easily in this well printed volume. It is almost without flaw and "useful to the common reader and the scholar," as the Preface claims. Miller added no glosses or notes to the text, but the unascribed excellent index of topics and names may have been his work. We all would prefer that the entries be numbered for convenient reference, and, granted more time, Professor Miller might have verified the text again to detect a half dozen minor errors in the transcription of accidentals that, in spite of their presence, do not blemish this attractive, useful, and reasonable addition to Poe materials.

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Address Correction Requested

Michael L. Cook, comp. *Monthly Murders: A Checklist and Chronological Listing of Fiction in the Digest-size Mystery Magazines in the United States and England*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982. \$49.95.

If this mammoth bibliographical book does not center upon Poe, it certainly demonstrates that his image has flourished among writers of detective tales in this century. The index offers twenty entries under Poe's name, and the citations to reprints of "The Premature Burial," "The Masque of the Red Death," "Diddling," and "Ligeia"—even "MS. Found in a Bottle"—remind us that Poe's image is not one solely of the arch-priest of the Gothic or the creator of subtle allegories of disintegrating selves. Six of these reprintings appear in the *Blackwood's* of detective-mystery fiction, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, although the wide range of journals featuring Poe reprints—none listed in Mabbott's *Collected Works*—sheds light upon "shadowy places," or the less familiar publications in which reprints of Poe have appeared. Apart from the alphabetical listing of magazines, information concerning Poe crops up in the author index (e.g., in the Bloch and Bradbury entries). John Dickson Carr's maintaining the locked-room tradition originated by Poe, as well as Carr's own fine pastiche, "The Gentleman from Paris"—which here is linked with *EQMM* (1977)—receives just dues, and implicitly reminds us of yet another piece of the greater mosaic created by Edgar Allan Poe and later adopted by "detectionists."

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV
University Of Mississippi

MISCELLANEOUS

John Ostrom informs us that in his "Revised Checklist of the Correspondence of Edgar Allan Poe" (*Studies in the American Renaissance* 1981) the reference number under Gilman—106a should be 160a. It is correct in the main check list under 160a (p. 188). If any other errors are found among the major entries, they should be reported to John Ostrom, 823 Snowhill Blvd., Springfield, Ohio 45504.

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Kathleen McAuley. *Edgar Allan Poe—A Short Biography*. New York: Bronx County Historical Society, 1982. 10 pp. \$3. As is true of the immediately preceding listing, this pamphlet is intended for the general audience of visitors to the cottage. A history of the Poe Cottage is being prepared by Jay Filan for summer 1983 publication.

FILE OF POE PAPERS SINCE 1975

Reviving a custom of some years ago, the editors invite copies of articles, lectures, and monographs for deposit in a Poe File to be maintained for members of the Association. There is an acute need for such a De-Poe-sitory (as one wit would have it) of the Poe-pourri output of the PSA, both

published (offprints) and unpublished (typescripts). Following the practice of the American Literature section of MLA, please submit with each paper a summary of 200-300 words for publication in this *Newsletter*, as space permits. Please also indicate whether the paper, if in typescript, has been submitted for journal publication, and if not, whether you grant permission to have copies made on request from PSA members. Mail papers to Prof. Eric W. Carlson, English Department, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268.

The editors are especially interested in publishing 200-300 word abstracts of addresses, speeches, or lectures which (1) were delivered before a literary society or a scholarly gathering, and (2) which will *not* be published in a journal or any other form of publication unavailable to members of the Poe Studies Association.



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