

**Poe Studies Association: 1983**

The eleventh annual meeting of the Poe Studies Association was held in the Petit Trianon, New York Hilton, during the MLA Convention (December 29, 1983), with more than sixty in attendance. Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV (Univ. of Mississippi) presided, and Vice-President and Program Chairman Kent Ljungquist (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) introduced the speakers. Professor Fisher read a treasurer's report for 1983 (to December 31) from Thomas Brown (Univ. of Mississippi) who reported dues received \$853.25, interest \$106.14, total income \$959.39, total expenses \$101.75, and a net worth of \$2065.67.

Newly elected officers are the following: Kent Ljungquist, President—2 years; David H. Hirsch (Brown Univ.), Vice-President and Program Chair—2 years; Dennis W. Eddings (Western Oregon College), Secretary/Treasurer—3 years; James Gargano (Washington and Jefferson College) and Glen A. Omans (Temple Univ.), Members-at-Large—2 years.

Other news reported: (1) David K. Jackson and Dwight Thomas have delivered the manuscript of the *Poe Log* to G. K. Hall; (2) Elizabeth Wiley's concordance to Poe draws toward completion; (3) The Jay B. Hubbell Center for American Literary Historiography, Duke Univ., now the archival repository for the PSA, welcomes all donations of relevant papers—and will recompense donors with postage, after materials are sent; (4) Richard Kopley (Pennsylvania State Univ.) invites suggestions and inquiries from those interested in a 1988 conference on Nantucket Island in observance of the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*; and (5) Kent Ljungquist requests reprints for the 1983 survey of Poe criticism in *American Literary Scholarship*.

Papers read: "Subverting Interpretation: The Lesson of Poe's Geometry in 'The Pit and the Pendulum,'" Alexander Hammond (Washington State Univ.); "Poe and the Will," April Selley (College of St. Rose); and "Poe's Symbolic Language," Eric W. Carlson (*Emeritus*, Univ. of Connecticut). A response to the three papers was provided by Joan C. Dayan (Yale Univ.).

**Other Conferences**

The *Baltimore Poe Society* and the Univ. of Baltimore sponsored a symposium, "Myths and Reality: The Mysterious Mr. Poe," October 21-23, 1983. Made possible by the Maryland Humanities Council, the program included lectures by John Ward Ostrom (*Emeritus*, Wittenberg Univ.), "Edgar Allan Poe: Finances, Drugs, and Alcohol"; Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV (Univ. of Mississippi), "Poe at Work: Poe's Methods as a Literary Artist"; Cliff Krainik (Washington, D.C.), "The Sir Moses Ezekiel Statue of Edgar Allan Poe in Baltimore"; Richard P. Benton (Trinity College), "The Women in Poe's Life"; and William T. Bandy (*Emeritus*, Vanderbilt Univ.), "Poe's Last Days and Death." Related panel discussions included the lecturers and the following participants: Stephen Matanele (Univ. of Baltimore), Lawrence W. Markert (Univ. of Baltimore), Richard Hart (Vice President, Poe Society), Adelio Macentelli (Essex

Community College), and Alexander Rose (Secretary, Poe Society).

Donald Barlow Stauffer (SUNY at Albany) chaired a session on the topic, "Poe and the City," at the 1984 meeting of the *Northeast MLA*, Philadelphia, March 29-31. Papers read: "Poe on the Beat: *Doings of Gotham* as Urban Journalism," Linda Patterson Miller (Pennsylvania State Univ., Berks); "From the 'Flaneur' to the Detective: Interpreting the City of Poe," Dana Brand (Rutgers Univ.); and "American Concepts of the City in Poe's Detective Tales," William Goldhurst (Univ. of Florida). Chairman of next year's session will be Richard Kopley (Pennsylvania State Univ., DuBois).

The fifth annual *Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, held in Boca Raton, Florida, March 22-25, 1984, included a two-part program on "The Fantastic in the Works of E. A. Poe." Chaired by Richard Kopley, the two sessions included the following papers: "The Corpse Within Us," Steven E. Kagle (Illinois State Univ.); "Fantasy Figures in Poe's Poems," Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV (Univ. of Mississippi); "Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Black Cat' on Film," Kenneth Von Gunden (Pennsylvania State Univ.); "Extraordinary Adventure and Prosaic Detail: The Antithetical Voices Within Poe's *Pym*," Joan Tyler Mead (Marshall Univ.); "The Purloined Detective: The Detective as Criminal," Joseph Francavilla (SUNY at Buffalo); and "Dupin's Ultimate Fantasy in 'The Purloined Letter,'" Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet (Eastern Kentucky Univ.).

**Recent Dissertations: January 1982-December 1983**

Richard A. Kopley, "'No Tie More Strong': Brotherhood and Beyond in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*," *DAI*, 43 (Nov. 1982), 1545A, and Joan Tyler Mead, "'An Impudent and Ingenious Fiction': Creative Process as Theme in Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*," *DAI*, 43 (June 1983), 3909A-3910A. Dissertations which touch on Poe include: Catherine Boulton Hughes, "The Detective Form: A Study of Its Sources in Late Nineteenth-Century Popular

**Poe Studies Association Newsletter**

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*The PSA Newsletter is distributed by the Department of English, Memphis State University. Copies are available upon request.*

Fiction and Works of James and Conrad," *DAI*, 42 (March 1982), 4006A-4007A; John K. Limon, "Imagining Science: The Influence and Metamorphosis of Science in Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne," *DAI*, 42 (June 1982), 5122A-5123A; Margaret E. Powers, "'The Unstrung Balloon': A Study of Narrative Devices in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," *DAI*, 41 (June 1982), 5123A; Anne French Dalke, "'Had I Known Her to Be My Sister, My Love Would Have Been More Regular': Incest in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," *DAI*, 43 (Sept. 1982), 801A; Yusur Wajeeh Al-Madani, "Errand to the Center: The Archetypal Journey Image in Thoreau, Poe, and Melville," *DAI*, 43 (June 1983), 3909A-3910A; Susan A. Garfield, "The Appearance of Reality/The Reality of Appearance: Art, Science, and Mathematics in the World of Borges and Poe," *DAI*, 44 (Oct. 1983), 1080A; and Paula H. Uruburu, "The Gruesome Doorway: A Definition of the American Grotesque," *DAI*, 44 (Dec. 1983), 1794A.

### Poe-Related Research and Publications

John T. Irwin (Johns Hopkins Univ.), whose *American Hieroglyphics* is available in paperback (Johns Hopkins), is working on a book-length study of Poe and Borges.

Kent Ljungquist will do the 1983 survey of Poe criticism for *American Literary Scholarship* (Duke Univ. Press). Send reprints to Humanities Department, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA 01609.

*Bridges to Fantasy* (Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1982), edited by George E. Slusser (Univ. of California, Riverside), Eric Rabkin (Univ. of Michigan), and Robert Scholes (Brown Univ.), contains useful discussions of Poe's affinities with fantasy writers.

*Poe and Our Times* (Baltimore Poe Society), edited by Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, will contain essays by Maurice Bennett (Univ. of Maryland), Bruce Weiner (St. Lawrence Univ.), John E. Reilly (Holy Cross College), Laura Menides (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), Eleanor Dwight (New York Univ.), and Kent Ljungquist.

Joan C. Dayan is working on a book-length study with *Eureka* as the primary focus.

Glen A. Omans is working on an essay on Poe and the American painter, Washington Allston.

J. Lasley Dameron (Memphis State Univ.) continues his research on the nineteenth-century magazine milieu and Poe's interest in popular culture.

Frederick S. Frank's *Guide to the Gothic* is scheduled for 1984 publication by Scarecrow/Grolier Press.

Eric W. Carlson (Univ. of Connecticut, *Emeritus*) is editing *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe* for the series by G. K. Hall & Co. Suggestions are welcome.

### Miscellaneous

Correction: The Fall 1983 issue of the *PSA Newsletter* includes a misprint of the first name of Jorge (not Jose) Luis Borges. The editors apologize.

Special offer: Through a special arrangement with the publisher, subscribers to the *PSA Newsletter* can purchase the forthcoming Library of America Edgar Allan Poe volumes at the discounted price of \$18.50 each, (\$16.50 + \$2.00 for postage and handling), a 40% savings off the retail price of \$27.50. Volume I entitled *Poetry and Tales* (1424 pages) is edited by Patrick Quinn; Volume II entitled *Essays and Reviews* (1536 pages) is edited by G. R. Thompson. Order from The Library of America, 14 East 60th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.

Dramatic reading: Bill Hargreaves, a professional actor, gave a dramatic reading of selected tales and poems of Poe at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, in November, 1983.

Poe in New York: April, 1984, marks the 140th anniversary of Poe's arrival in the city of New York. The Bronx County

Historical Society honored his arrival during the annual Poe week celebration on April 8 through April 14, 1984.

Conference on Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*: The organizers of the *Arthur Gordon Pym* Research Conference, an event to be held on Nantucket Island in May, 1988, invite the submission of abstracts and papers concerning *Pym*. Abstracts of 200 words or papers suitable for presentation in twenty minutes should be sent by April 15, 1985 to

Richard Kopley

Coordinator, *Arthur Gordon Pym* Research Conference  
Department of English

The Pennsylvania State University/DuBois Campus  
College Place  
DuBois, PA 15801

All papers must focus on some aspect of *Pym*. The referees encourage authors of papers to pursue a variety of scholarly and/or critical approaches to Poe's novel, including, for example, sources and textual studies, comparative literary studies, linguistic and stylistic analyses, critical evaluations, and surveys of criticisms. Referees will be Richard Benton, Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, James Gargano, and Kent Ljungquist.

### Reviews

*The Naiad Voice: Essays on Poe's Satiric Hoaxing*. Dennis W. Eddings, ed. Port Washington, New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1983. Pp xii-175. \$18.

This collection of essays by diverse hands published between 1954 and 1977 (except for the editor's excellent concluding essay printed here for the first time) both reminds and further convinces the reader of the significance of hoaxing to Poe's art. What is perhaps most impressive about these essays is that each defends the polysemous integrity of Poe's text as it delivers its own well-considered value judgments. And although I quibble with the inclusion of certain pieces on general irony which tend to blur the book's major focus on hoaxing (Eddings does try to justify their inclusion in his Introduction), the essays' collective and healthy respect for Poe's teasing modulation of tone serves to disarm the possibility of oversimplified or reductive readings. Indeed, Poe himself (as one essay recalls) in a note to "Hans Pfaall" comparing his own tale to another was well aware that hoaxing could betray both a satiric and a serious purpose: "Both have the character of *hoaxes* (although one is in a tone of banter, the other of downright earnest)" (91).

This is not to say, however, that the essays fail to take provocative divergent positions. Almost every piece deals with the significance of reader response to and participation in Poe's fictional world, and almost every piece posits the existence of two projected classes of readers, the common reader who is the butt of the joke and the uncommon reader who, to a degree, is in on the joke. As Robert Regan nicely puts it, Poe "is in effect making a division of his readers into passing and failing categories—into the elect and the reprobate—by a test which admits no halfway covenanters" (84). But, reflecting a debate voiced increasingly in recent criticism, these essays disagree over whether Poe's hoaxing finally implies a disintegrating or a harmonic universe. The two most articulate voices in this profound disagreement are J. Gerald Kennedy's and Eddings' own. Kennedy maintains that "the reader's encounter with a treacherous text mirrors the narrator's encounter [in *Pym*] with a duplicitous world, and both experiences point toward a realization that man's search for truth and meaning culminates not in transcendent harmony but in cognitive confusion" (124). Eddings, on the other hand, contends more inclusively that theme and satiric hoaxing merge "in an aesthetic unity representative of the unity of God's universe. It is up to us, as readers, to see this unity by playing Dupin to Poe. If we do, we see into the very unity of all creation. If we do not, we are victims of Poe's deception, demonstrating in that very fact his contention

that erroneous methods of perception make man prey to duplicity" (165).

The implications of this critical debate seem to be that, whether we see mud or stars, our search for universal meaning is finally self-reflective. In "The Man of the Crowd" the reader follows the narrator who follows the old man who follows the crowd which follows the directing hand of Poe who follows the reader following himself, each chasing his own tale. Whether Poe's hoaxing sound and fury ultimately signify nothing or something, the collective insights of *The Naiad Voice* permit his art to be read better and thereby expand the ranks of his uncommon readers.

Mark M. Hennelly, Jr.  
*California State University, Sacramento*

Donald A Ringe. *American Gothic: Imagination & Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Lexington, Ky.: The University of Kentucky Press, 1982. Pp. vii-215. \$17.00.

Donald Ringe's contribution to the study of the Gothic mode in American fiction is to examine its European sources, his aim being to demonstrate "that a distinctively American mode developed out of the British and German roots" and that the Gothic, "far from being the peurile form it has so frequently been considered, became, in the hands of the Americans, a suitable vehicle for the development of serious themes" (v). The claims are not new, but the effort to substantiate them provides some needed historical perspective on the American Gothic.

Ringe's historical approach tends to confirm the familiar observation that American Gothic fiction is more psychological than its European sources. He finds in the British and German traditions an interest in character psychology (in the delusions or misapprehensions of reality usually giving rise to Gothic terror) that is often subordinated to the experience of terror itself and the subsequent explanation of it as naturally rather than supernaturally induced. The Americans, on the other hand, make the problems of perception and the workings of reason and imagination primary. Although diverse in aim and treatment, American Gothic fiction is distinguished in Ringe's view by its use of Gothic incident, imagery, and effect as a means of conveying serious psychological themes.

Ringe's ability to illuminate these themes, however, is hampered by his distrust of modern psychological criticism. Thus the "distinctiveness" of American Gothic fiction often seems more a matter of emphasis than substance. Although

he discusses some neglected writers—Neal, Paulding and Dana—there is not much new in his treatment of Charles Brockden Brown, Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne. Some readers will balk at the abrupt dismissal of Melville from the Gothic ranks, the absence of Twain, and the summary treatment of Howells, Bierce, and James as writers whose ghostly tales are of "only minor importance in the history of American Gothicism" (189). Ringe argues that American writers after the Civil War were committed to the aesthetics of realism, but even early in the century, as he shows, the Gothic mode in America was shaped by common-sense realists who distrusted the delusions of Gothic imagination and demanded "rational fictions." It is hard to see why Irving's "sportive Gothic," in which Ringe finds common sense affirmed, is a more significant development than James's experiments later in the century.

Poe is credited with developing more fully than Godwin, Maturin, or Brown "the relation between details of the Gothic setting, especially enclosures, and the disturbed minds of his characters" (151). Ringe finds in Poe's use of the Gothic mode a consistently developed theme of "psychic survival." Poe's characters are motivated by a fear of annihilation and a desire to preserve their sanity and identity. Their Gothic settings are symbolic of their efforts to hold off the inevitable, either by shutting out the reality of death or by perversely challenging its dominion. Despite his illumination of this theme, however, Ringe's synoptic discussion of Poe's tales is stale and sometimes unresolved. In reading "Ligeia," for example, he would have us take literally the revivification of Rowena's corpse by the spirit of Ligeia, arguing that it was not Poe's practice, like so many of his Gothic forebears, to explain away the supernatural in his best tales. The resulting ambiguity, Ringe recognizes, makes possible other interpretations, particularly the one that views Rowena's reanimation as a delusion of the narrator, but once again he dismisses psychological readings that remove us from the "historical context." Yet, proceeding to the significance of Gothic rooms in Poe's tales as symbols of the characters' psychological distress, Ringe fails to account for the fact that the room in which Ligeia apparently works her supernatural will is the narrator's creation.

Although his readings are seldom novel or exhaustive, Ringe does provide a generally reliable and worthwhile introduction to the Gothic mode in nineteenth-century American fiction.

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## NEW MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL FOR 1984

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

Enclosed is my \$5 check for dues and subscription for the calendar year 1984. (Check should be made out to "Poe Studies Association" and mailed to Dennis W. Eddings, Poe Studies Association, English Department, Western Oregon State College, Monmouth, Oregon 97361).

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*The Other Poe: Comedies and Satires.* David Galloway, ed.  
New York: Penguin Books, 1983. 256 pp. \$3.95.

This medium-quality paperback contains nineteen of Poe's best comic and satiric tales. With the exception of "The Man That Was Used Up," the text is simply identified as "the Scribner edition of the Works (N.Y. 1914)," which is actually a reprint of the Stedman and Woodberry edition of 1894-95. The first and subsequent publications are identified but no collation of textual variations is included. Fifteen pages of notes helpfully explain topical and literary allusions. To Galloway these tales do not rise above the topical to the universal today, but Poe is credited for satirizing and at times even "grimly" challenging the literary establishment of his time—its vanities, petty quarrels, and inflated reputations. Beyond that, some of these comic stories are said to tap deeper levels of implication regarding "man's spiritual condition," the distrust of "military technology," as in "The Man That Was Used Up," and "the potential therapeutic function" for Poe of "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether." In Galloway's view, the comic is so integral a part of Poe's fiction that to ignore these works is to lose important insights into some of Poe's other, "classic" tales. Thus "The Cask of Amontillado," a "savage comedy" of deadly revenge, becomes a turning point when compared with the earlier "The Tell-Tale Heart," with its theme of murder-will-out. Similarly, "King Pest" is treated as anticipating later tales on man's spiritual condition. All told, in claiming the comic fiction to be a context and guide for reading Poe's serious tales, Galloway overstates his case by elevating the secondary to the primary, the minor to the major.

Eric W. Carlson  
(Professor Emeritus)  
University of Connecticut

Marion Montgomery. *Why Poe Drank Liquor.* La Salle, Illinois: Sherwood Sugden & Company, 1983. 442 pp. \$19.95.

Marion Montgomery takes the title of the second volume in his trilogy on "The Prophetic Poet and the Spirit of the Age" from a speech by Flannery O'Connor in which she counselled students of literature to avoid peripheral issues:

"Why Hawthorne was melancholy and what made Poe drink liquor and why did Henry James like England better than America?" The issues that Montgomery raises in this fascinating and infuriating book are hardly peripheral, since his ambitious project is to consider the philosophical-religious context of the twentieth-century writer. His "ranging" encompasses literature from Chaucer to Allen Ginsberg, philosophy from St. Thomas to Husserl, and cultural criticism from Hobbes to Eric Voegelin. One memorable paragraph (pp. 145-6) touches upon worker revolt in Poland, the eruption of Mount St. Helens, O'Connor's metaphor of spiritual hunger, Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and Stalin's rebuke of religious authority. Such broad scope, in the eyes of some, may qualify Montgomery as the scholarly world's foremost name dropper; his wide coverage reflects, rather, the diffuseness of purpose that ultimately makes this volume a disappointment to the serious student of Poe. While injecting a note of welcome levity into a discussion burdened by weighty philosophical questions, Montgomery's title suggests his condescension toward Poe. Serving as Montgomery's convenient foil in a campaign to ascertain the validity of a Christian vision, Poe emerges as a false prophet, a harbinger of twentieth-century maladies offering a direct contrast to O'Connor, the proponent of forgotten but essential truths.

As Montgomery systematically endorses O'Connor's artistry at Poe's expense, the nineteenth-century author serves as a case study of arrested vision while his twentieth-century counterpart wins the mantle of authentic prophet, one who bears witness through her visionary fictions. Somewhat mercifully, Montgomery allows Poe to disappear from the discussion for several chapters to make way for ruminations on Heideggerian philosophy. Giving Poe credit for raising the quality of magazine publishing in America, Montgomery could not damn with fainter praise: "I do not think any American writer of 'major' reputation has written so much bad literature" (p. 115).

Students of Poe have had to confront the animadversions of T. S. Eliot, Henry James, and Yvor Winters among others. With this learned and opinionated book, Montgomery joins the ranks of Poe's most articulate debunkers.

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