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Letter from the Editor

Having arrived at the midpoint of my tenure as editor, I have come to realize that the post tasks my coeditor, Peter Norberg, and me to coordinate the hard work and astute judgment of many others. One invaluable group has been this journal's board of editors, whose diligence and keen insights have greatly shaped the content and the quality of what we offer. I wish to single out for praise four members of the board whose terms are about to end: Dennis Eddings, Ben Fisher, Leon Jackson, and David Ketterer. I also note with sadness of the passing of another board member, Carol Peirce, whose kindness, perception, and professionalism I will personally miss. In partial honor to her memory, I shall leave her name on the masthead until the expiration of her term. Jeffrey Savoye, secretary/treasurer of the Baltimore Poe Society, composed an excellent tribute to Carol, which appears in this issue.

Other scholars of Poe have also made significant contributions. Mary De Jong and Noelle Baker, outgoing members-at-large of the Poe Studies Association, have proved extraordinarily helpful in generating submissions. I thank outgoing secretary/treasurer, Carole Shaffer-Koros, for all her administrative help since Peter and I assumed the reigns of the journal. I shall miss the presence of all three on the Executive Board. And, of course, Scott Peebles and Barbara Cantalupo have continued to be supportive in many ways.

At Saint Joseph's University, Dean John McCall and Provost Brice Wachterhauser have proved steadfast in offering vital financial and other sorts of support. Despite monetary constraints on our budget, Thomas Malone, Carol McLaughlin, Carmen Croce, and Doug Traher of Saint Joseph's University Press have greatly smoothed the production process and have sustained the quality appearance of the journal that Barbara Cantalupo had previously so well crafted.

Richard Fusco

**“A Certain Unity of Design”:
Edgar Allan Poe’s *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*
and the Terrors of Jacksonian Democracy**

Duncan Faherty

I

In his “Preface” to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1839), Edgar Allan Poe argues that its contents are “the results of matured purpose and very careful elaboration.”¹ While the twenty-five tales that form the collection were actually written throughout the 1830s, Poe maintains that they were crafted “during a period of some two or three years.” This assertion presents the collection as composed of new works meant to facilitate Poe’s argument that “a certain unity of design” characterizes the volume (129).² Thus, the “Preface” clouds the different circumstances of each tale’s composition history to posit that the volume’s various elements share similar intent. Underscoring this point, he asserts that “these many pieces are yet one book.” In defining the book’s theme, Poe stresses the social dimensions of the assembled collection: “If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul.” Poe stipulates that he deduces “this terror only from its legitimate sources” and claims to urge it “only to its legitimate results” (129). Figuring terror not as the manifestation of external horrors, Poe defines it as the revelation of the evil contained within. In effect, he implies that his tales are not the foreign “species of pseudo-horror,” which some critics have labeled them, but instead attempts to register the domestic terrors of his contemporary situation.

The lingering perception of Poe as a solitary genius unconcerned with cultural contexts has been fruitfully challenged by a number of critics who demonstrate Poe’s engagement with political and social movements.³ Terence Whalen has asserted that “these attempts to historicize Poe falter in the face of Poe’s own ahistorical diatribes against democracy and human perfectibility.” Whalen argues that Poe actively cultivated a sense of himself as a “politically neutral author,” a move which allowed Poe to reconcile his work to the demands of either a “Whig or a Democratic” readership. Nevertheless, Poe’s accommodations to the tumultuous demands of the decidedly partisan publishing industry should not be misconstrued as an innate aversion to commenting on political and social movements. Simply put, it would be a mistake to confuse anti-*Democratic* with anti-democratic.⁴

The works of many critics have advanced our understanding of Poe's complex relationship with the emerging market revolution and the social tensions of the Jacksonian era.⁵ These discussions have engendered new considerations of Poe's career and fruitfully returned Poe to the center of critical debates about American literary development. Still, there has been little critical attention focused on how the presentation of *Grotesque and Arabesque* itself marks Poe's engagement with cultural concerns. Building upon the foundations laid by these critics, I will demonstrate how Poe's occupation with cultural mores is reflected in his presentation of *Grotesque and Arabesque*. Subject to the vicissitudes of Jacksonian democracy, the precariousness of individual identity is, arguably, the unacknowledged theme of the entire collection. By examining how some emblematic examples of the individual tales in *Grotesque and Arabesque* address social issues, I will show how the entire collection makes a deliberate statement about the "legitimate" terrors of Poe's social world.

The Jacksonian period was one of unusual uncertainty for American society, characterized by rapid and unpredictable economic change, social mobility, racial violence, and underlying fears of mobocracy and rootlessness.⁶ Andrew Jackson was continually lauded as the paradigmatic "self-made" man, and his ascendancy in 1828 seemingly opened up vistas of social mobility for an emerging middle class of merchants, skilled tradesmen, and entrepreneurs. To his critics, however, Jacksonian democracy was synonymous with what James Fenimore Cooper called "goaheadism," a state of mind characterized by unexamined action and a wholesale rejection of the past. In the wake of Jacksonian enthusiasm, which lasted well into the 1840s, many Americans were adrift in the riptides of unending change. Poe's 1839 volume traces the dark side of Jacksonian social mobility, the terror resulting from an impassioned faith in self-determination. Jacksonian ideology offered no anchor for identity formation; instead, it was predicated on the premise that each individual was solely responsible for forging his or her own identity. When self-fashioning is grounded so precariously, the possibility of being genuinely rootless—of having no place in the world—becomes an ever-present danger. Crippling economic fluctuations, rapid national expansion fueled by an improved infrastructure and mechanical developments in transportation, and a loosening of voting restrictions combined to create both a larger enfranchised population and a much more unpredictable electorate. Rampant social mobility eroded generational ties to local communities and culminated in an undercutting of the geographically informed allegiances which had shaped political practice.

As social flux altered cultural life, the tenor of American political discourse became dominated by debates over the utility of change.

Popularly termed “America’s Napoleon” and “the nursling of the wild,” the enigmatic Jackson was associated with the forces of unbridled change.⁷ The first President not native to either Virginia or Massachusetts, Jackson reinvigorated and redefined Americans myths concerning social mobility. By relentlessly promoting self-determination as an inalienable right, Jackson popularized the idea that all aspects of American cultural life were about to be refigured. Professing a deep faith in the capacity of Americans to transform the continent, Jackson figured the role of government as simply to inspire, not to regulate, that unfolding. A politics designed to prompt men’s hearts and not their minds, Jacksonian ideology preached the subordination of considered thought to decisive action.

Tapping into the cultural anxieties born from these social changes, Poe recursively returns to themes of misrule and to the fractured nature of identity in *Grotesque and Arabesque* in order to evince the unease of Jacksonian society. Disgruntled by his failure to inherit John Allan’s fortune, diminished by endless financially driven relocations, embodying certain southern antebellum attitudes toward race and class, and disdainful of the tyranny of the majority, Poe personifies the underpinnings of Jacksonian life. Deeply embedded in a publishing industry consumed by partisan debates over Jackson’s policies, Poe intimately understood the distressing ways in which Jacksonian democracy influenced cultural development.⁸ Instead of presenting Poe’s early tales as divested from political discourses, we need to recover how they survey the cultural uncertainties of the Jacksonian era. American cultural development was not about gradual progressiveness; it is more accurately characterized by continual panic over disunion and dissolution. As Poe’s “Preface” suggests, such a social climate was filled with legitimate terrors about the state of individual identity and the consequences of placing faith in unqualified leaders. The tales collected in *Grotesque and Arabesque* foreground these issues, and, as such, they provide unique windows into the chaos of antebellum American culture.⁹

As Poe drafted the final tales to be included in *Grotesque and Arabesque* and completed his arrangements to publish the volume in late 1839, the crisis over Jacksonian ideology was approaching a tipping point. The popularity of Martin

Van Buren, the architect of Jacksonian Democracy and Andrew Jackson's vice president and successor, was rapidly waning, but the fractious Whig party had not yet secured the public's confidence. Each party preyed upon the public's fears about the direction of the nation, while accusing its opposition of endangering national growth. While the Democrats maintained their rhetoric of achieving social stability through the promotion of the common man, the Whigs championed national development as a byproduct of a regulated economy and an improved infrastructure. "Democratic and Whig strategies for managing this emerging situation of American democracy," critic Theron Britt argues, "were remarkably similar and hinged on manipulating the individual's fear of being swallowed by the 'democratic' body politic."¹⁰ What constituted America was a question seemingly without an answer uncontaminated by partisanship during the 1840 presidential campaign, despite the difficulty in distinguishing between the Whig and Democratic platforms.

Van Buren had long cultivated his image as Jackson's heir, yet, as historian John William Ward details, his opponents' strategy hinged on usurping this Jacksonian mantle. Endlessly promoting William Henry Harrison's "log cabin" origins, the Whigs were able "to convince an electorate suffering a depression that William Henry Harrison stood for, and Martin Van Buren perverted, all the virtues Andrew Jackson had represented."¹¹ Neither Harrison nor Van Buren promised very much; instead, each sought to cast himself as carrying forth the spirit of Jacksonianism. In the words of historian Ted Widmer, the campaign was "basically the cynical triumph of advertising over substance."¹² Given the interchangeable empty rhetoric of the two parties, it is useful to understand Poe's political neutrality not as an avoidance of social issues but as a rejection of the widely popular ideology that led the nation to such a crisis of leadership.¹³

In crafting a text resistant to the compulsory power of Jacksonian Democracy, Poe explores the consequences of misrule while simultaneously demonstrating the unsettled nature of personal identity during the period. Such a practice allows Poe to represent the invasiveness of Jacksonian partisanship. Poe maps the tensions underlying dominant Jacksonian structures of thought and feeling by exploring how the relentless promotion of social mobility served to destabilize cultural order. In the midst of such a boundless promotion of self-determination, Poe strives to expose the false promises of an insatiable appetite for change. Throughout *Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe moves to counter the prevailing surety of Jacksonian social rhetoric by detailing how cultural

conditions actually curtail the possibility of autonomy. Repetition of theme is not a failure of Poe's imagination, a collapse into the trope of Germanism he rails against in the "Preface," but rather it is an attempt to offer a battery of objections to the haunting coercions of Jacksonian ideology. Poe's serial investigation of the cultural impact of misrule allows him to depict how the usurpation of authority disrupts the entire social fabric. Similarly, he returns to the issue of identity construction to exhibit how the fluctuations of the market revolution undermined any chance for personal stability. If we neglect the social contexts of Poe's works, we miss the force of his argument and ignore the strength of his pointed opposition. Instead of recognizing these texts as intentional acts of social persuasion, we neglect them as unsophisticated, eventually assigning them to the status of minor tales.¹⁴ While the cultural work of *Grotesque and Arabesque* might now seem foreign and phantasmagoric, for Poe's 1839 audience the themes these tales took up were all too terrifyingly domestic and familiar.

II

By selecting "Morella" as the opening tale of *Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe foregrounds how uneasiness over the solidity of identity will be a recurring theme in the collection. In "Morella," self-determination is more ungraspable phantom than attainable model, while self-sufficiency becomes inextricably bound not to reasoned thought but to irrational mystery. Thus, from the outset Poe announces his concerns with identity construction and the terror authored by the instability of the process. As Joan Dayan argues, Poe's "Morella" essentially pushes "his reader to the point where seeming opposites [are] converted into and dismantled or replaced by each other."¹⁵ Throughout the tale, Poe obfuscates the distinctions between a variety of categories—husband and wife, lover and friend, mother and daughter—until they become utterly meaningless as markers of distinction. By underscoring the fragility of individual identity, the tale moves from abstract metaphysical speculations toward a more palpable terror embodied in Morella's shocking reanimation. When she reappears, Morella does not just haunt the narrative itself but undermines the very concept of individuality. Her return from beyond the grave proves that personal identity is far from sacrosanct. The narrator suggests that both he and Morella share a "consideration of intense interest [over] the notion of that identity, *which at death is or is not lost forever*" (235). For all his acute interest in the question, however, the narrator finds little comfort in proof of their speculations. He instead comes to understand the implications of an

immortal and lingering presence for those left behind. If some facet of identity does last beyond mortal existence, everyone is in danger of becoming (like the younger Morella) a host for another's consciousness.

Following their reading of Locke, Morella and her husband understand "personal" identity as consisting of "the sameness of a rational being" (235). This logic implies that individuality is the manifestation of experience as an idiosyncratic and discernable design. This tangible pattern distinguishes one subject from another. The horror of "Morella" is that it exposes the spuriousness of the concept of singularity, for while the narrator cloisters his daughter from any knowledge of her deceased mother, the young Morella seems to be her perfect doppelgänger: "For that her smile was like her mother's I could bear; but then I shuddered at its too perfect *identity*" (238, Poe's italics). Morella somehow revives her spirit in her daughter, shockingly implying that there is no such thing as individuality. The "sameness" of a "rational being" becomes not the expression of uniqueness but the realization that mother and daughter are created equal with no clear boundaries between them. As Jacksonian Americans anxiously embraced both the limitless possibilities of self-determination and the idea of the absolute equality of all citizens, Poe's "Morella" underscores how these two seemingly congruent ideals are in fact dangerously opposing social forces. When the narrator concludes that Morella has reasserted her identity, he grows terrified because this event suggests that total equality is not a liberating ideal but a prison house that dictates the limits of individual will. The younger Morella does not have access to the possibilities of self-determination; rather, she becomes contained by the darkest implications of total equality.

The themes of "Morella" are repeated in several tales in the volume, most notably in the doubling of "William Wilson" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" as well as in the mysterious reanimations and possessions of "Ligeia," "Berenice," "Loss of Breath," and "Metzengerstein." Each tale questions the indeterminacy of personal identity and marks the social horrors of such unstableness. Marriages are ruined, homes destroyed, and social positions lost as a result of the blurring of identities. In short, all the normative social bonds that are conducive to cultural harmony are disquietingly absent. The terror in each text resides in Poe's suggestion that an individual's capacity to determine his or her own destiny is severely limited. The characters in these tales are not free to choose their own lots in life, but rather they are subordinate to history,

to blood, and to circumstances outside of their control. Flying in the face of the dominant Jacksonian faith in self-sufficiency, Poe argues that the idea of a self-determined identity is an ungrounded fiction. Given the numerous ways in which repressed anxieties reassert themselves, the collective weight of these testimonies demonstrates a persistent, recurrent fear throughout the collection of an individual's inability to ever govern his or her own self-fashioning.

Other tales in the volume broaden the examination of personal identity by questioning the ramifications of misrule for both personal and social stability. In extending the consideration of the legitimate terror of occupying a world without rational order, these tales advance Poe's claim that the collection registers the terrors of his contemporary world. The hunger for change that defined the Jacksonian period created an unstable social world where individuals often found themselves at the mercy of cultural forces beyond their control, even as the dominant political rhetoric asserted their capacities to shape their own destinies. Fears over disunion and dissolution were constantly present, producing a cultural unease exemplified by the chaos of Poe's "King Pest." Set in a deserted urban site recognizable to any American who had occupied an eastern city during the 1830s, the motley court of "King Pest" epitomizes the ways in which dis-ease in the social compact results in an upending of natural order.

During the era when Poe's "King Pest" is set, the narrator declares that "all England, but more especially the metropolis, resounded with the fearful cry of 'Plague!'" (242). Warnings about pestilence would have been familiar to Poe's readers, as several devastating cholera epidemics afflicted the United States during the 1830s. Beginning in the east in 1832, and resurfacing across several summers, outbreaks of cholera claimed thousands across the decade. Like the affluent residents of King Pest's London, many wealthy Americans abandoned cities in the hopes of avoiding the disease. Poe's description of "Awe, Terror, and Superstition" as the solitary residents of the infected London could very easily have described New York, Baltimore, or Philadelphia during many summers of the 1830s (242). Americans had at first presumed the nation's lack of poverty and low population density would inoculate them from the worldwide epidemic. But "prosperity did not protect the nation," notes Louis Masur; "on the contrary, it made Americans vulnerable."¹⁶ The Jacksonian mania for constant mobility and unregulated exchange only served to hasten the spread of the disease. Getting and spending, trading and conquering, Americans

circulated the disease as fast as they did any other item they exchanged on the marketplace. Social leveling was both a literal result of the boom-and-bust marketplace and a byproduct of the epidemic. Under the shadow of plague, socially constructed lines of distinction were meaningless.

Leaping over one of the “terrific barriers” erected to divide the uncontaminated portion of the city from the plague ravaged districts, Hugh Tarpaulin and his companion Legs spring into a world of misrule. “Intoxicated beyond moral sense,” Legs and Tarpaulin descend into the topsy-turvy court of King Pest (243). Addled by drink and fleeing an unpaid bar tab, they move beyond the realm of *moral sense*, that guiding principle which Thomas Jefferson believed served as the basis for human behavior. Jefferson’s faith in an innate moral compass, which impelled men to act for the communal good, served as the cornerstone for his conception of democracy. Thus, a belief in the cultural utility of benevolence is an implicit part of the foundational framework of American society. Forsaking that moral sense, Legs and Tarpaulin trade community for never-ending chaos. In essence, they abandon a Jeffersonian world for a social order governed by a disturbingly different set of axioms that were Jacksonian in character.

When they stumble into the mock court of King Pest and his drunken revelers, Legs and Tarpaulin find themselves entering into a comic debate about property and class distinctions. In a gesture of sham magnanimity, Pest offers to share his spoils with the runaway thieves if they pledge their loyalty to his throne. In response, Tarpaulin asserts that he will never get “down upon my marrow bones to his ill-favored majesty there, whom I know, as well as I know myself to be a sinner” (250). In rejecting Pest’s overtures, Tarpaulin declares (echoing the beliefs of many Jacksonian Democrats) that he is the equal of all men and, therefore, unwilling to recognize any semblance of social distinction. Instead of bending his knee, Tarpaulin starts a revolution and proceeds to steal Pest’s purloined liquor and kidnap his consort.

Variations on this theme of misrule form the basis of such tales as “Lionizing,” “Four Beasts in One; The Homo-Cameleopard,” “Shadow—A Parable,” “Silence—A Fable,” “Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling,” and “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion.” Again and again throughout *Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe assails the usurpation of patrician positions by unqualified individuals. Cataloging the violence of rebellious slaves, marking

the destruction of the earth, ridiculing the ways in which social ineptitude results in violence, these tales demonstrate the consequences of misrule on both a personal and cosmic level. As in “King Pest,” each reversal of social order culminates in savagery, implying that with widespread enfranchisement comes disorder and chaos.

Poe’s notion of how the tales in *Grotesque and Arabesque* exhibit the “terror of the soul” is even more apparent in two tales, which comment directly about Jacksonian society. In both “The Devil in the Belfry” and “The Man that Was Used Up,” Poe examines the consequences of misrule and explores the precariousness of individual identity in a mercurial culture. Building upon the themes recorded in stories like “Morella” and “King Pest,” these two tales extend Poe’s sense of the uncertainties of the Jacksonian social nexus. Here the intermittent themes of misrule and insatiability coalesce, bridging the gap between the illusory superficiality of Poe’s more “outlandish” tales and the legitimate terrors of Jacksonian America.

From the outset, it is readily apparent that something is amiss in the tiny “Dutch borough” of “The Devil in the Belfry” (298). A remote agrarian village, Poe’s Vondervotteimittiss seems like a satiric portrait of Washington Irving’s sleepy Tarrytown. Echoing the opening frames of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle,” Poe opens his tale with a quasi-history of the bucolic settlement. On its surface, Poe’s narrative presents the village as remote and uncorrupted by modern civilization, yet, as the tale unfolds, it becomes evident that something is rotten in the state of Vondervotteimittiss. The insular community wears its nativism like a proud marker of distinction, taking umbrage at any “suggestion” that there ever was even “the slightest difference in the appearance of any portion” of the settlement (299). Stranger still, although each house has “a sun-dial” in its front yard, none of the villagers actually mark the passage of time by the rhythms of the natural world; instead, they synchronize their every movement to the manufactured beats of standardized time. Enamored with their great clock, the citizens of the entire town revere the belfry man as “the chief dignitary of the borough” (302). Nevertheless, the “respect” afforded the belfry man merely reflects the questionable practice of venerating anyone who holds a “sinecure,” which ironically is an attitude that Jackson’s presidency had initially promised to extinguish. Having inflated the value of the clock’s regulatory powers, the villagers overestimate the civil servant entrusted with its care.

When the devil invades the belfry and forces the bells to strike thirteen instead of twelve, the village finds itself in utter disarray. Time has not moved, yet the villagers are all in “a lamentable state of uproar” that an hour—which has not yet begun—has somehow passed them by (305). As they hear the clock strike thirteen, young boys declare themselves famished because they have missed lunch, housewives fret over their overcooked kraut, and old men refill their pipes puzzled by how they had been “smoked out for dis hour!” (305). Instead of trusting their own senses, the villagers habitually measure even their minutest actions against the dictates of the clock. Thus, the villagers embrace the inherent problems involved with the false promises of technology and bad leadership. The tale concludes with a call to arms, as the narrator appeals “to all lovers of correct time and fine kraut” to join him in a campaign to “restore the ancient order of things” (306). The narrator’s final plea suggests that nothing short of strong-arming the devil out of the belfry will restore normality. Like the sailors and faux-aristocrats of “King Pest,” the citizens of Vondervotteimittiss have become locked into a seemingly endless cycle of misrule. Yet, even if they succeed in ejecting the devil and restoring the old order, they will only return to the guidance of unnatural rhythms.

Poe suggestively links this comic world with his own moment. The satiric presentation of a town father as a “puffy little old gentleman, with big circular eyes and a huge double chin” perhaps pays homage to the Little Magician of Kinderhook, the short, bushy side-burned, double chinned Van Buren (301).¹⁷ Moreover, the three resolutions passed by the Van Buren-like members of the Town-Council are hallmarks of 1830s Democratic platforms. The first law, “that it is wrong to alter the good old course of things,” encapsulates Van Buren’s strategy as he campaigned to succeed Jackson in the 1836 election. The second resolution, “that there is nothing tolerable out of Vondervotteimittiss,” echoes the nationalist fervor of the Jacksonian Democratic party. The third declaration, “that we will stick by our clocks and cabbages,” is a rendition of the complex way in which Jacksonian Democrats embraced technological advancement while simultaneously cloaking themselves in rustic garb (301). Proudly nativist, emboldened by the current state of affairs, and wedded to nature by mechanical bonds, the members of the Vondervotteimittiss town council are unmistakably allies of the Jacksonian Democratic Party. Moreover their inability to remove the devil from the clock tower, might be read as an indictment of Van Buren’s own renowned failure to solve a

devastating crisis. The Panic of 1837 struck just as Van Buren took office, and the resulting depression lasted well into the third year of his presidency. While Van Buren was far from responsible for the market collapse, he was blamed by the public for not finding some way to stabilize the economy. Believing that the market would correct itself, Van Buren—like the town fathers of Vondervotteimittiss—decided to stick by his “clocks and cabbages” instead of moving to change course. Out of tune with the world, both the villagers and Van Buren suffer the consequences of letting the devil play “the big fiddle” while everything crumbled around them (306).

Whereas “The Devil in the Belfry” lampoons the problems inherent in allowing a community to be governed by misguided principles and politicians, “The Man That Was Used Up” examines satirically the troubling ways in which identity itself was constructed during the Jacksonian era. Poe’s tale about the mysterious General John A. B. C. Smith extends the concerns over the state of individual identity that are so central to other tales in *Grotesque and Arabesque*. Additionally, by focusing on how the problematic identity of a culturally significant figure influences the social order, the tale also speaks to concerns about the problems of misrule prominent in other portions of the volume. The most contemporary tale in the collection, “The Man That Was Used Up” combines many of the themes in other stories into a decidedly skeptical inquiry into the current state of American politics.

“We are a wonderful people,” General John A. B. C. Smith proclaims, “and live in a wonderful age” (310). Disdainful of the past and profoundly optimistic about the future, the fictitious General Smith of “The Man That Was Used Up” mirrors the familiar tropes of Jacksonian era politicians, journalists, and venture capitalists alike. Youth and newness were the watchwords of the day, as Jacksonians impatiently undertook the transformation and expansion of the nation. Echoing the slogans of many of his real world counterparts, Poe’s General Smith argues that all aspects of “social life” would, without fail, be improved by this “march of invention” (310). Invoking the widespread faith in the promises of technology, Smith endlessly celebrates the prospects for machines to refashion the nation’s relationship to the natural world. The tone of Smith’s pronouncements concerning the “valuable privileges we enjoy living in this age of mechanical invention” would have resonated with any reader familiar with campaign speeches, which trumpeted machines as tools to propel the nation’s westward expansion (310). Unyielding in their pursuit of change,

Jacksonian Democrats, like Poe's General Smith, ardently believed that mechanical progress would redraw the boundaries of American cultural life.

Fascinated by the General's cultural capital, the narrator of "The Man That Was Used Up" strives to unlock the "mystery" that surrounds him. Initially, the General makes the narrator anxious, a feeling that he initially dismisses as a byproduct of his tendency to be "constitutionally nervous" (307). Yet the narrator's unease stems from more than just a hereditary predisposition. Barging into Smith's private chamber one morning, he discovers that the remarkable General Smith is really a "nondescript" assemblage of manufactured parts. Paralyzed with "terror," the narrator watches as Pompey, Smith's African American valet, screws on Smith's "cork leg," reattaches his torso, bangs on his shoulders, and latches on his teeth (315). Pompey's "manipulations" are accompanied by Smith's fawning advertisements for the workmen who have produced his various prosthetics. Stunned by the final transformation, the narrator now comprehends that "Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith was the man——was *the man that was used up*" (316, Poe's italics). More automaton than man, Smith exhibits the danger inherent in the Jacksonian commodification of nature. As such, the tale is as much a jeremiad about the state of domestic praxis as it is a satire of modern progress. The Jacksonian ardor for the ideal of the "self-made" man is not entirely equivalent to Smith's manufactured frame, yet both figurations embody the idea that Americans were not restricted by circumstance. Such a redefinition of identity entailed a blurring of boundaries; a terrifying sense that *all men are created equal* meant that there was no way of telling one citizen from another. By exploring how such a faith in self-determination was wedded to the crass commercialism of 1830s, "The Man That Was Used Up" lampoons the culture's optimism about what constitutes social progress.

The Jacksonian embrace of modernization was not without its detractors, as many Americans worried about the consequences of such unbridled change. By employing General Smith as a spokesman for the widespread rhetoric of progress, "The Man That Was Used Up" registers Poe's concerns regarding how Jacksonian ideology promulgated, in the words of historian Louis Masur, a "rupture from the established rhythms of life."¹⁸ The consequences of such a break in cultural cohesion were disquieting, and, as its title suggests, "The Man That Was Used Up" demonstrates how the rush forward came at the expense of natural balance and order. The horror of "The Man That Was Used

Up” is that while Poe details how all classes of society seem to celebrate Smith as a paradigmatic American hero, he is a mechanical shell, a prototype of a decidedly unnatural construction. Reduced to the status of empty signifier because of his participation in violent conflicts with Native Americans, the decommissioned Smith becomes entirely dependant upon slave labor to function. Forced to rely on Pompey as a result of his injuries, General Smith’s prominence and his implied political aspirations sound an ominous note about the state of American culture. A mouthpiece for progress and advancement, Smith is actually a symbol of dissolution and crippling dependence. By embodying the terrors of possible misrule and the fractured state of individual identity, “The Man that Was Used Up” is the lynchpin in Poe’s volume-length argument about the legitimate terrors of his social order.

III

The surge of nationalism spawned by Jackson’s populism generated an appetite for cultural texts that reflected the unique national character of the United States. A forceful advocate of Jacksonian democracy, John L. O’Sullivan zealously launched the *Democratic Review* in 1837 on the premise that if the Democratic Party lost control of the White House, “generations” would suffer an incalculable “loss of time in national progress.” Even as he celebrated his party’s allegiance to “the original ideas of American democracy,” O’Sullivan lamented a widespread “anti-democratic sentiment,” which had infected “the young minds of our country.” The best way to combat this prevalent “anti-democratic” sentiment was through a new, nationalist literature.¹⁹ Advocating a complete reappraisal of cultural production, O’Sullivan championed American writers who employed the nation and its history as their main subjects. Like the fictitious General Smith, O’Sullivan lionized anything as long as it properly reflected his definition of the democratic spirit of America.

For Poe, the parochial zeal for promoting a national literature was a case of insular party politics overextending its reach. Poe decried this intrusion of partisanship into the realm of aesthetics as a “misapplied patriotism,” arguing that it only served to engender the “gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better, because, sure enough, its stupidity is American.”²⁰ Poe’s distaste for this naive nativism appears throughout his 1830s critical reviews, and thus it is not surprising that he moved to mock the tendency in his tales. “The Man That Was Used Up” is one version of Poe’s response to the call for authors to employ America as their subject matter. While Poe’s satire of the American political

scene is far from what cultural nationalists had in mind, the story does exemplify Poe's uneasy relationship with the Republic's dominant mores. In Poe's eyes, the hyperbolic celebration of overt nationalism necessarily resulted in mediocrity. By turning his attention in "The Man that Was Used Up" to unpacking the hollowness of contemporary political rhetoric, Poe urges his reader to question the insubstantiality of American subjects.

In the midst of this widespread urge to produce a new national literature, Poe drafted and assembled the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. Instead of celebrating the rejuvenating wellspring of democracy, the volume explores the nation's dangerous obsession with continual reinvention and the ways in which that compulsion undermined the stability of individual identity. More than just a lampoon of Jacksonian Democrats, *Grotesque and Arabesque* is part of a sustained effort by Poe to explore the social ramifications of unchecked nationalism and an unregulated market. By returning to the themes of misgovernment and fractured identities across the volume, Poe points to the terrifying instabilities of the period.

Just a few months after he completed *Grotesque and Arabesque*, Poe drafted a prospectus for *The Penn Magazine*, a periodical that would incarnate his personal editorial vision. In the prospectus, Poe makes a decidedly un-Jacksonian argument for a magazine that is unfettered by the limits of partisan politics. Instead, the projected serial would afford readers "at all times, and upon all subjects, an honest and fearless opinion." The journal seeks to offer an "independent" and "self-sustained" criticism, free from the constraints that Poe thought dominated other periodicals. Liberated from the "antique prejudices," "organized cliques," and "pseudo-public-opinion by wholesale," which orient other journals, *The Penn Magazine* will "support the general interests of the republic of letters [by] regarding the world at large as the true audience of the author." In a climate of aggressive nationalism, Poe's prospectus would have struck many as anti-Democratic. Nevertheless, Poe's opposition to narrow party politics should not be mistaken for an antidemocratic attitude. Just as the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* offered a challenge to the limits placed on identity construction by the dominant political ideology and strove to underscore the inherent dangers of misrule, so too does the prospectus for *The Penn Magazine*. By advocating the idea that an individual vision has as much place in the market as a partisan periodical, Poe's prospectus argues

that no political organ had the inalienable right to govern the subject of American literature all by itself.²¹

No less a prophet than Henry Ward Beecher described the economic Panic of 1837, a depression that ruined thousands, as a nightmarish “realization of oriental tales.” Describing the event over a decade later, Beecher recalls how quickly “a continent of inexhaustible fertility” became “filled with lamentation,” with “its inhabitants wandering like bereaved citizens after the ruins of an earthquake.”²² In Beecher’s eyes, the Panic of 1837 was an arabesque tale come to life, a divine visitation on a wicked and corrupt nation. As Beecher’s metaphor suggests, the links between seemingly foreign tales of terror and the instabilities of the Jacksonian social nexus is not as great a leap as it might at first seem. Rather than refiguring Poe as fashioning timeless tales of terror, we need to recognize how his depiction of the “terror of the soul” is also an indictment of the soulless terrors of Jacksonian Democracy.

Notes

Many thanks to Rich Fusco and Peter Norberg for their suggestions and support. I am especially grateful to the anonymous readers of this article for their careful and critical reading of the manuscript.

1. Edgar Allan Poe, “Preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*,” in *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry and Tales*, ed. Patrick F. Quinn (New York: Library of America, 1984), 130. All other references to Poe’s work (unless otherwise stated) are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically. To distinguish it from Poe’s 1845 collection, *Tales*, I will use the abbreviation *Grotesque and Arabesque* when I refer to the 1839 collection.

2. While he abandoned the plan after failing to find a publisher, Poe had intended to collect many of his earliest tales as *Tales of the Folio Club* and had drafted them with that in mind. For more information on *Tales of the Folio Club*, see Alexander Hammond, “Edgar Allan Poe’s *Tales of the Folio Club*: The Evolution of a Lost Book,” in *Poe at Work: Seven Textual Studies*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Fisher (Baltimore: Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1978), 13-44, and Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 102-106, 132-33.

3. See, for instance, the essays collected in *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); *Romancing the Shadow*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Additional scholarship in this vein includes Joan Dayan, *Fables of Mind: An Inquiry into Poe's Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Jonathan Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit: Affect, Mass Culture, and Edgar Allan Poe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); and Terence Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: the Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

4. Whalen, 27, 29.

5. For a deeper sense of the range of scholarship which seeks to locate Poe within a historical context, see (in addition to the work of Elmer, Dayan, and Whalen): Katrina E. Bachinger, "Peacock's Melincourt and the Politics of Poe's 'The Sphinx,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 42.2 (1987), 217-225; Theron Britt, "The Common Property of the Mob: Democracy and Identity in Poe's William Wilson," *Mississippi Quarterly* 48.2 (1995), 197-210; Monica Elbert, "The Man of the Crowd' and the Man outside the Crowd: Poe's Narrator and the Democratic Reader." *Modern Language Studies* 21.4 (1991), 16-30; J. Gerald Kennedy, "'A Mania for Composition': Poe's Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-building," *American Literary History* 17.1 (2005), 1-35; Maurice S. Lee, "Absolute Poe: His System of Transcendental Racism," *American Literature* 75.4 (2003), 751-781; and Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1830-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

6. The best works on the cultural impact of Jacksonian politics remain John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953) and Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). See also Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), Louis Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2001), and Ted Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2005).

7. Ward, 78, 183.

8. Perry Miller's *The Raven and the Whale* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) provides an unrivaled introduction to the complexities of the antebellum publishing industry. Meredith McGill's *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1830-1860* and Terence Whalen's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* build upon Miller's foundations to register the complex ways in which literary production was affected by the emerging market revolution.

9. *Grotesque and Arabesque* was compiled in late 1839, a few years before what J. Gerald Kennedy has intriguingly called Poe's "American turn." More recently, Kennedy has argued that "Poe's first significant foray into the terrain of national myth and iconography came in 1839" when Poe composed "The Man that Was Used Up," one of the last tales he wrote as he was assembling *Grotesque and Arabesque*. While Kennedy makes compelling arguments in *The American Turn of Edgar Allan Poe* (Baltimore: Edgar Allan Poe Society, 2002) about the settings of Poe's tales, I believe that we have to probe beyond the surface settings of tales to accurately chart Poe's representations of American cultural mores. Without question, Poe's "Preface" encourages a consideration of even his unworldly tales as registers of domestic structures of thought and feeling. See J. Gerald Kennedy, "A Mania for Composition," 8.

10. Britt, 198.

11. Ward, 93.

12. Widmer, 136.

13. For more information on the tumultuous Election of 1840, see Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1990), and Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

14. Philip Fisher argues that we need to "recover and name the work" of texts aimed at interrogating social problems and that we need "to understand the capacity of popular forms to accomplish just this self-terminating work of the imagination." Moreover, as Fisher suggests, if we "forget" the work performed by these cultural texts, our capacity to appreciate complexity is diminished.

See *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 7.

15. Dayan, 134.

16. Masur, 204.

17. Ted Widmer's recent biography of Martin Van Buren draws our attention to the catalog of nicknames (including the Little Magician, the Enchanter, and the Master Sprit) which were popularly deployed to represent the cagey elusiveness of Van Buren's political persona. Widmer's text also displays Van Buren's neglected importance in shaping American development during the 1830s, and is the best source for information about the intimate connections between Washington Irving and Van Buren, another level of Poe's satire of Van Buren in this tale. See Ted Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*.

18. Masur, 181.

19. John O'Sullivan, *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 1 (October 1837), 10-11. For a detailed account of the influence of O'Sullivan and of the *Democratic Review*, see Ted Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

20. Edgar Allan Poe, "Joseph Rodman Drake—Fitz Greene Halleck," in *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 506. For a detailed examination of Poe's evolving relationship with various proponents of literary nationalism, see McGill.

21. Edgar Allan Poe, "Prospectus of *The Penn Magazine*," in *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews*, 1024-1025.

22. Henry Ward Beecher, *Lectures to Young Men* (1849), as quoted by Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 37-8.

C. Auguste Dupin and Charles S. Peirce: An Abductive Affinity

Paul Grimstad

But it is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary, that reason feels its way, if at all, in its search for the true.

—Edgar Allan Poe

The invention of a good middle term, that was the ingenious idea.

—Umberto Eco on Aristotle's
Posterior Analytics

Scholars widely acknowledge Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) to be the first modern detective story. The tale contains a remarkable number of the characteristic devices that future writers imitated over the next century and a half, including (1) the eccentric and somewhat perverse ratiocinative mind at the center of an epistemological drama in which policemen toil mechanically in search of a solution available only by a leap of insight and (2) the "locked-room" mystery, a sub-genre of the detective story in which the plot hinges on a perpetrator's egress from a seemingly secure chamber.¹ In symbolic parallel, Poe's inaugural tale itself employs a neatly partitioned room to represent the mysterious grammar of a new genre.

The mechanics of Poe's new literary genre anticipate the three modes of logical reasoning put forth by American logician and semiotician Charles S. Peirce. Born in 1839 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, into a Brahmin intellectual elite, Peirce was the son of renowned Harvard mathematician Benjamin Peirce. The son is reported to have mastered both Archbishop Richard Whatley's *Elements of Logic* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* by age 12, and his famous father accordingly pronounced him a prodigy. While dissolute and erratic in personal conduct, insufferably arrogant and never able to find a stable academic position, Peirce was nevertheless a prolific polymath and often brilliant thinker. He made undeniably major contributions to the fields of mathematics, logic, chemistry, astronomy, and geodesy, coined the term "pragmatism" (subsequently popularized by one of Peirce's few devoted friends, William James), and is thought to have founded the discipline of semiotics. He was also an enthusiastic reader of Poe and occasionally cited him in his writing.

Using Peirce's triadic taxonomy of logical inference, I intend to suggest a way of explaining how a radically new genre becomes registered and accounted for within prescribed hermeneutic habits.² For Peirce, different methods of logical reasoning are described and classified in a quasi-Aristotelian way as different syllogistic combinations of "rules," "cases," and "results." Rules are generally accepted working principles, axioms, or established schemas of intelligibility; cases are observed facts or some specific state of affairs; and results are produced by a particular calculation or inference. Within this classificatory matrix, "deduction" describes the inference of a result from the thinking of the particularity of the case in accordance with the prescribed generality of a rule. On the other hand, "induction" describes the derivation of a rule from a case. Put slightly differently, in logical deduction one already possesses the rule by which to understand the particular case, whereas in induction one infers or extrapolates the rule as a ratio derived from the specificity of a particular case, such that this new rule agrees logically with already established axioms.³

However, Peirce introduces a third modality of logical inference called "abductive" or "retroductive" reasoning: "[Abductive reasoning is] the first starting point of a hypothesis and the entertaining of it [which will include] a preference for any one hypothesis over others which would equally explain [some state of affairs], so long as this preference is not based upon any previous knowledge bearing upon the truth of the hypothesis."⁴ This is not simply the act by which an observer formulates a reasonable hypothesis in order to explain the specificity of a case (for this would be no different from induction) but an intuitive—indeed, at times aesthetic or creative—"preference" for a certain hypothesis in the absence of any previous knowledge. Nancy Harrowitz describes this aesthetic-logical operation as "the process [by which] a subject, in order to explain [some state of affairs], needs to *come up with* a law [...]. Abduction is the instinctive perceptual jump which allows the subject to guess an origin."⁵ In abduction, preference takes the form of an "instinctive perceptual jump" or "guess" at a middle term that links a result to a rule.

Moreover, it is not just a middle term that gets fashioned in an abductive inference. According to Umberto Eco, what makes an abductive inference a genuinely "new" thought is its capacity for introducing an entirely new Rule: "[For Peirce,] the real problem is not whether to find first the Case or the Rule, but rather how to figure out both the Rule and the Case *at the same time*, since they are inversely related, tied together by a sort of chiasmus—where the middle

term is the keystone of all inferential movement [in abduction] the law must be *invented ex novo*.”⁶ If deduction shows that something must be the case and if induction ascertains the value of a ratio in relation to the specificity of a case, then abduction would be the wager of a hypothesis, calculated from “preference,” in which something previously unavailable to consciousness might still be correctly guessed. This process would occur as an improvised intervention into a prescribed categorical schema, which an observer could modify according to taste. If in induction a rule is realizable from an inference *a posteriori*, in abduction one must imagine an axiom that would not be part of any preestablished premise. Put differently, abduction is taking a first step into the unknown.

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A form of abductive reasoning appearing as an aesthetics of intuitive preference characterizes the arrival of Poe’s new genre. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” begins with a somewhat elaborate, quasi-scholarly meditation on the difference between “analysis” and “calculation”:

To calculate is not in itself to analyse. [...] In [the game of chess], where the pieces have different and bizarre motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex is mistaken (not an unusual error) for what is profound [...] In draughts, on the contrary where the moves are *unique* and have but little variation, the probabilities of inadvertence are diminished, and the mere attention being left comparatively unemployed, what advantages are obtained by either party are obtained through superior *acumen*. (2: 528-529)⁷

“Acumen” here would name an attention to that which exceeds the formalities of the game as closed and rule-bound, an attention free to associate and to improvise. Elaborating upon this freely surveying “acumen,” Poe then shifts to a similar comparison between chess and the card game “whist”:

When I say proficiency [in whist], I mean that perfection in the game which includes a comprehension of *all* the sources whence legitimate advantage may be derived.

These are not only manifold but multiform, and lie frequently among the recesses of thought altogether inaccessible to the ordinary understanding. (2: 529)

In Peircean terms, chess calculations would be deductive or inductive in so far as the rules of the game are comprised of variable premises to which individual cases (moves in the game) correspond to predicated middle terms, ultimately leading to the result of checkmate. In draughts, however, the rules are not really the issue because every move operates according to the same logic, and so a player must resort to an analytical “acumen” linked to a mode of cognition “inaccessible to the understanding.” Such “deviations from the plane of the ordinary” amount to the wandering empiricism that would lead to the “invention of a law (or rule) *ex novo*”—that creative leap into the epistemological unknown which characterizes Peircean abduction. For Poe, access to an *a priori* axiom is not going to help a player win at draughts or whist. Additional experimental strategy is required.

From this “preference” for analysis, which privileges abduction over deduction and induction, Poe takes the first tentative steps into the unknown territory of the detective story. The narrator excuses his comparison of chess with draughts and whist with the following disclaimer: “I am not now writing a treatise, but simply prefacing a somewhat peculiar narrative by observations very much at random.” Poe acknowledges the novelty of this “peculiar” new generic logic in his own experimentation with the “rules” of storytelling, for his scholarly meditation likely disoriented those antebellum readers who expected only a murder intrigue. “Making observations very much at random” would thus facilitate a thought process closer to the guesses of abduction in lieu of any methodical approach that adhered to a book of rules. If calculation is a matter of making *a priori* deductions from established givens or of uncovering preestablished rules from particular cases, then analysis for Poe is that wandering empiricism (“observations very much at random”; “deviations from the plane of the ordinary”) whereby new cases and rules might be conceived. The opening paragraphs of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” thus offer a series of “random observations,” which together express a totally new rule—that is, the narrative shape of the detective story.⁸

For Poe, the first steps into this new genre are then precisely a matter of making associative jumps from the intelligible to the “random.” These logical leaps

make possible an empirical receptivity to “qualities”: “[I]t is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is evinced. He makes, in silence, a host of observations and inferences. So, perhaps, do his companions; and the difference in the extent of the information obtained lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the *quality* of the observation” (2: 530, my emphasis). Quality here fuses the logical with the aesthetic, in that a type of inference “beyond the limits of mere rule” moves toward the perceptual, toward pattern recognition, and toward judgments of taste. In Peirce’s triadic phenomenology, a “quality” corresponds to what he calls “firstness”—a presemiotic, or even prefigural register of perception.⁹ Firstness is the qualitative immediacy of a here and now not yet governed by any categorical schema. Dupin’s analytical acumen thus anticipates firstness, as his openness to those contingencies of sense data which exceed the rule-bound protocols of the police.¹⁰ Indeed, reading and perception are dramatically conflated in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and the tale accordingly becomes the literary agency through which Poe configures his audience’s receptivity to new generic sensations. Thus, as a receptivity to firstness, abductive reasoning becomes the process by which new knowledge accumulates through flights of imaginative, improvisatory, or associative interpretation. Amid such unknown epistemic-aesthetic territory, Poe presents Dupin—the first fictional private detective—who will employ a ratiocinative method that synthesizes empirical observation and a willingness to make adventurous leaps of inference.

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Immediately following the opening commentary on the art of “analysis,” Dupin begins to think abductively, where an intuitive sense of phenomenal patterning—the physical environment, the narrator’s facial expressions, his body posture, and his whispers—is combined with more conventional deductions to produce the illusion of mind reading. In a famous episode, Dupin uncannily completes his companion’s thought after a long silence during an evening stroll: “He is a very little fellow that’s true, and would do better for the *Théâtre des Variétés*.” (2: 534) In Dupin’s elaborate explanation of his methodology, Poe depicts the ratiocinative powers of the detective in abductive terms. While nuances of deduction remain—where “subjects discussed not very long ago” and topics “about which the two have often conversed” could serve as “rules” to test inferences—most of Dupin’s performance hinges on the acumen of an intuitive guesser.

From this experimental acumen Dupin formulates an abductive series, first as a move from “riveted blocks” in the pavement to discreet patterns of signification, where “stereotomy,” as a style of street patterning is rendered into alphabetic “atomies.” Again, if reading and perception are conflated in the tale, then the introduction of Dupin’s method, which is to become part of the recognizable template of that new genre the “detective story,” is here allegorized as a type of observation in which perceptual qualities—the patterning of the pavement—become so many discreet “atoms” to be associatively interpreted. It is as if Poe is teaching his reader how to read the new genre in a manner analogous to Dupin’s teaching the narrator how to read phenomena. Such reading (and reasoning) patterns are elaborated upon in an associative leap to the “noble cosmological guesses” of the “atomist” Epicurus (a guess confirmed by the narrator’s own upward glance), inspiring an alphabetic inference from [O]rion to [U]rion, a letteral slide triggered by a quotation from Virgil. The Latin line tellingly translates as “the first letter has lost its ancient sound,” and so the “noble guesses” of ancient scientific conjecture can be read as emanating from a time when letter signification mattered. The last of Dupin’s own guesses allows him to recall the *Musée* piece in which the Latin line appears, which permits an associative leap to the cobbler-turned-actor Chantilly. His companion’s straightening of his posture convinces Dupin that it is the thespian’s height that is specifically at issue in the narrator’s mind. This concatenation of inferences is a matter of hypothesizing an associative chain of middle terms, connecting cases, and ultimately rules from the result of the narrator’s “drawing himself up to his full height.” Dupin possesses only this result, but from it he abductively fashions a chain of middle terms to account for its appearance.¹¹

This scene depicts the dynamic by which qualities and particularities of perception become the middle terms that bridge results with new rules of thought. At the same time, the imaginative logic by which a singular case becomes through reiteration a rule is expressed in a device whose own sensational newness will characterize detective fiction. These abilities are repeated within “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in the disentangling of its murder mystery, and thus abduction became the primary methodology of this new genre.

From the contents of a locked room, Poe’s detective infers the solution to the murder of a mother and her daughter. Through Dupin’s reasoning, we transfer

the abductive lessons we learned from game playing and from the mindreading episode to postulate the middles terms and rules of a violently singular crime. Dupin's intuitive leap from human to ape in his solution of the crime marks a "deviation from the plane of the ordinary" that surpasses any syllogism based upon well-trodden rules of police work—that murders are committed by only one kind of being and that murderers always have "motives." Conversely, Dupin's reason "feels its way" toward the truth precisely in the errant, improvisatory drift of a "deviation." As we learn to circumvent outmoded and insufficiently flexible rules of calculation, we must at the same time learn to recognize the contours of a new genre. When a move is made outside the "locked room" of a plot formula, when we confront that which is "absolutely alien from humanity," when we are asked to comprehend that which is "devoid of intelligible syllabification," when the "horror" of "that which has never occurred before" becomes palpable—abductive reasoning is required to resolve the mystery. What is finally and profoundly uncanny in Poe's tale is its calling into being a readership that must imaginatively confront the unknown in the tale's subject matter, as well as in the textual form itself.

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"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" begins with "random" observations on the relation of "calculation" to "analysis," cuts abruptly into a vignette depicting a scene of abductive mind-reading, and then finally moves on to a murder plot, the solution for which is intuitively recovered from the pages of an anatomy textbook. These narrative components demark the rule-defying arrival of the detective story in the pages of *Graham's Magazine* in March 1841. The rule that Dupin abductively guesses at is ultimately the literary rule that Poe himself invents—the recognizable boundaries of the "detective story" as we know it and as it has been reiteratively modified from Doyle, Leroux, and Futrelle, through hard-boiled fiction and *film noir*, to *Law and Order*. Peirce would have called this series of nuanced revisions a "community": "In sciences in which men come to agreement, when a theory has been broached, it is considered to be on probation until this agreement is reached. [...] We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, in the *community* of philosophers."¹² It is only as a group consensus or agreement that a given abductive inference might crystallize into one of those established epistemological patterns we call "knowledge." In this sense, we might say we have a community of readers who collectively

recognize a given literary singularity as fitting into a certain generic taxonomy. In the case of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” such a consensus forms around the abductive leap Poe made in creating the detective story.

Notes

1. While Doyle has his own set of variations on the locked room mystery, this subset of the detective story is given its most extravagant treatment in Jacques Futrelle’s 1906 story “The Problem of Cell 13,” in *The Thinking Machine* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), and Gaston Leroux’s 1907 novel *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1960). For a taxonomy of the various modes of the locked-room tale (reflexively narrated from “within” the hermetic enclosure of a detective tale), see John Dickson Carr’s “The Locked Room Lecture,” where Carr calls Leroux’s locked-room mystery “the best detective tale ever written.” See Howard Haycraft, *The Art of the Mystery Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 278.

2. Peirce is himself to some extent the “inventor of a genre” in that he is responsible for the neologism “pragmatism,” and is its main intellectual engineer (along with the earlier philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and the later William James).

3. Put in Aristotelian terms, “induction” is the *inference* of the “major premise” of a syllogism.

4. Charles Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Charles Sanders Peirce* (New York: Dover, 1955), 151. Ilkka Niiniluoto describes abduction as “reasoning *a posteriori* to a physical hypothesis, or inference of a cause from its effect.” See “Defending Abduction,” *Philosophy of Science*, 66.supp. (1999), 436. Peirce often uses the terms “abduction” and “hypothesis” interchangeably.

5. Nancy Harrowitz, in Umberto Eco, *The Sign of Three* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 181-2.

6. Eco, 203.

7. All references to “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” will be cited in the text using *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 3 vols., ed. T. O. Mabbott et al. (Cambridge: Belknap, 1969-1978).

8. Joseph Riddel describes the relation of the comparison of “calculation” to “analysis” to the beginning of the genre like this: “The ‘preface’ that introduces ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ literally proposes a game played within the rules of Hoyle that is won only by going beyond the conventions of the book. The writer prefers the model of ‘whist’ or ‘draughts’ to a game of chess, because chess is a game played within the restraints of fixed values and rules of logic [...] The ‘preface’ to the ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ suspends the authority of the ‘book’ [ie, “rules of logic”] and opens the [abductive] game of writing.” See *Purloined Letters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 142-143.

9. Peirce, 74-97

10. This perceptual receptivity to firstness was something William James began to call, in his later essays, a “radical empiricism.” See William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

11. For an alternate take on how to read this scene “abductively,” see Eco, 188-192.

12. Charles Peirce, “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” in *The Essential Peirce*, eds. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 29.

Poe and Ray Bradbury: A Persistent Influence and Interest

Burton Pollin

A few years ago, as I was preparing a talk on “Poe as the Father of Science Fiction,” I read a poem by Ray Bradbury, popular for his science-fiction writings, who termed himself the “son of Edgar [Poe] and Emily [Dickinson].” I used it as a “finale” to my presentation and resolved to follow up the Poe-Bradbury nexus in the future. That moment arrived only when I read Andrew Leonard’s fine “Book Review” in the *New York Times*, 24 July 2005, p. 23, of *The Bradbury Chronicles* by Sam Weller. It sent me into a search through the book itself for a treatment of Bradbury’s deep and continuing interest in Poe’s works and life. While Weller and other Bradbury scholars have touched upon the subject, there has been no exhaustive study of this subject. Nevertheless, the theme of Poe’s place in Bradbury’s development has been touched upon during a career lasting over sixty years. An early instance is the 1976 article by Hazel Pierce, “Ray Bradbury and the Gothic Tradition.”¹ Had I become aware of this literary influence sooner, I might have considered including a thirteenth chapter in my recent book on *Poe’s Seductive Influence*.

Indeed Weller justifies such a project by highlighting the recommendation by Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, to President Bush, for bestowing the Medal of Arts upon Ray Bradbury (November 2004): “Ray Bradbury is the greatest living American writer of science fiction. His singular achievement in this genre is rooted in the imaginative originality of his works, his gift for language, his insights into the human condition, and his commitment to the freedom of the individual.”² This observation admirably maps out the very broad province of a man notable for his poems; his dramas for stage, film and television screen; his Gothic tales, novels and prose writings of psychological intensity; his numerous interviews, and his many, far-flung inspirational lectures on writing and writers. Over seven hundred pieces of poetry and prose, published in over 200 million copies in numerous languages—all attest to the worldwide popularity and the boundless energy of Bradbury, eighty-five on 22 August 2005 and still producing.

My hurried survey of Poe’s presence in Bradbury’s prolific works cannot be strictly organized by categories or by chronology, for this author sometimes builds novels out of previously published tales and recycles his works for later publication, as did Poe. Sometimes he fails to indicate the exact time sequences

of his own adaptations. Therefore, I will employ square brackets and end notes to indicate the temporal publishing data after providing a terse assessment of relevant Poe content. As will be evident Bradbury's interest in Poe did not flag from early years to the present. Since Weller's biography remains the most thorough treatment—which required four years of research and was authorized by Bradbury himself—it provides a good start for tracing my theme.³

In 1928, as an omnivorous reader at eight years of age, Bradbury discovered Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* in a family bookcase along with a chance volume of Hugo Gernsback's new magazine *Amazing Stories*, which was founded deliberately to reprint the "science fiction" (Gernsback's newly coined term) of Poe, Jules Verne, and H. G. Wells [SW 42-43].

In high school, ambitious and eager to write publishable tales, Bradbury began by imitating those of Conan Doyle, Poe, and P. G. Wodehouse (SW 81). Light humor and satire proved to be part of Bradbury's methods and skills, which also comprised many other elements and approaches. In his excellent analytic commentary on Bradbury's works in *Ray Bradbury* (Twayne, 1983), David Mogen overstates the continuing imitateness of the author's earliest period and suggests his abandoning it without allowing for a more purposeful and lasting influence from these and other writers, as well as Poe.⁴

At fourteen, having moved from Waukegan, Illinois, to Los Angeles, Bradbury joined the nascent Science Fiction Society where he met new authors who published in the expanding crop of fanzines and sci-fi magazines. His scope of reading broadened as he took in other models, such as Thomas Wolfe, Henry James, John Steinbeck, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Sherwood Anderson, whose books he sought out in the main library—his "university," as he termed it. Bradbury was now turning out "overwritten prose," which he later called "baroque." But he was soon mentored by the sage and experienced Robert Heinlein and the well-established pulp writer Henry Kuttner, who weaned him from the purple passages and horror-ridden styles he had affected. They also gave him entrée into magazines that would accept his edited stories. During the late 1930s, he also became a member of the Wilshire Players as actor, editor of scripts, and general helper, an experience that contributed to his later mastery of pithy, striking, and natural dialogue (SW 99-105).

In December 1949, Bradbury was preparing his novel *The Martian Chronicles* for publication, several chapters of which were partially based on his earlier

work. His reliable editor, Walter Bradbury [no relation], questioned the narrative relevance of the long chapter “Usher II,” which concerns a man who, inspired by Poe’s tale, lengthily builds a second old-style mansion among the earthlings on the planet Mars, where they have taken refuge from the atomic wars destroying Earth (SW 161). Incidentally, they later gather mournfully to witness the total extinction of Earth, fissioned to mere fragments in November 2005—“the shape of things to come?”

In August 1950, the reputable magazine *Tomorrow* published a glowing review by its new editor, Christopher Isherwood. Bradbury had managed to give him an autographed copy of *The Martian Chronicles*. This highly favored intellectual then wrote: “Poe’s name comes up almost inevitably in any discussion of Mr. Bradbury’s work; not because he is an imitator (though he is certainly a disciple) but because he already deserves to be measured against the greatest master of his particular genre” [SW 164, 169-70]. The young author became more confident and ambitious through the encouragement of Isherwood’s friends, Aldous Huxley and Gerard Heard.

The 1951 British edition of *The Martian Chronicles* provoked much editorial and authorial consideration of “Usher II,” which was omitted as lacking unity with the basic theme of the novel (SW 182). But it remained in the American edition. Weller has told me that Ray Bradbury now rues the English edition’s omission of this chapter.

The similar cultural and reading background of both Bradbury and Hugh Hefner, which includes familiarity with the works of Poe, led the latter to secure the serial rights to the anti-McCarthy novel *Fahrenheit 451* for his new *Playboy* magazine (December 1953). The title derives from the temperature at which book pages burn (SW 229).

While *Fahrenheit 451* first appeared in shorter form as “The Fireman” in a 1950 issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction*, its full avatar as a satire on censorship and provincial Congressional narrowness appeared in 1953. However, it did not contain references to Poe as one of the great writers until Bradbury composed a “Coda” in 1979 and an “Afterword” in 1982. In the latter, he speaks of his increasing love of the books available in libraries and his endeavors to fill out their store of “stories, novels, essays and poems about writers: Melville, [. . .] Emily Dickinson, [. . .] Hawthorne, Poe, Edgar Rice Burroughs, etc.” In the “Coda,” he deals with the abridgment of literary masterpieces by

“butcher/censors” to fit them into one volume anthologies so that “Twain read like Poe read like Shakespeare read like Edgar Guest.” Through nearby libraries, Bradbury had been acquiring a tremendous store of literary memories and other interests, including a growing appreciation of classical music. Regarding his incredible memory, he has often joked about remembering his sensations right before and after the moment of birth.⁵

In December 2002, Bradbury wrote an introduction to a “grand collection” of his tales *Bradbury Stories, 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales* (New York: William Morrow, 2003), hereafter cited as *BS*. He charmingly explains the germ, motif, and circumstance that “seized upon me, [...] compelling me [...] to put [the tales] down on paper before they went away. [...] I persisted—the need to write, to create, coursed like blood through my body, and still does. [...] I always dreamed of someday going into a library and looking up and seeing a book of mine leaning against the shoulder of L. Frank Baum [...] and down below my other heroes, Edgar Allan Poe, H. G. Wells, and Jules Verne. And my wild love for them [...] kept me invigorated with passion” [*BS* xiii, xvi]. This anthology yields a few traces of Poe’s presence, which I shall briefly record below along with pertinent publication data.

“The Exiles” [*BS* 331-343], originally “The Mad Wizards of Mars” in *MacLean’s* (15 September 1949), is a fantasy tale employing the three witches from *Macbeth* to shoot down dangerously uninitiated and newly arrived earthlings fleeing in rockets from Earth to Mars. Poe, as a character, collusively leads the authors in his separate rocket ship, hoping to avoid the book burning rampant on earth. In essence, the themes and details of *Fahrenheit 451* and also chapters in *The Martian Chronicles* are involved in the lengthy fantasy, involving other writers—such as Dickens, Bierce, and Machen, all fighting for their lives and books—and using details from Poe’s tales to entrap and demolish the newly arrived nonreaders and materialists.

“At Midnight, in the Month of June” [*BS* 343-351], which first appeared in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* (June 1954), cites Poe’s “The Sleeper”: “The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep! Which is enduring, so be deep!” These lines signify the murderous end of the sequel to the story of the captive character Lavinia in the first tale of the new collection, “The Whole Town’s Sleeping,” about the serial psychopathic killer [*BS* 1-15].

“The Smiling People” [BS 490-498], published originally in *Weird Tales!* (May 1946), closely follows the theme, pattern and plot of “The Tell-Tale Heart” but does not mention Poe.

“April 2005: Usher II” [BS 668-682], originally “Carnival of Madness” in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, April 1950, borrows extensively from “The Fall of the House of Usher” and many other Poe tales. The entire text was later inserted into *The Martian Chronicles*.

“Bright Phoenix” [BS 738-745], first printed in *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (May 1963), in its burning of books of imaginative literature, presents a smaller version of *Fahrenheit 451*. Here, however, appears: “As the burning progressed [...] I called back, and whether it was “Mr. Poe!” or Freud[,] still no crowd gathered to watch the commotion” [BS 743].

“Last Rites” [BS 865-872], originally appeared in *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* of December 1994. In this story, an inventor of a time-travel machine decides to revive two dead authors—Melville and Poe—to assure them of their undying fame with the latter given a litany of several of his works that finally merge into the conclusion of “The Cask of Amontillado.”

“All on a Summer’s Night” [BS 881-888], published first in *Today* (Philadelphia *Inquirer*, 22 January 1950), tells the story of local-town librarian Miss Leonora Welkes [possibly named after Poe’s “Eleonora” or “Lenore”]. She charms ten-year old Douglas (obviously Ray Bradbury’s fictionalized self) by reciting the poems of Poe, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, and William Shakespeare and by talking with his Grandpa about Longfellow, Whittier, and “Mr. Poe all the way to the Elite Theater” [BS 888].

A newer collection of his short stories, *The Cat’s Pajamas* (NY: Morrow, 2004), presents Poe both at the start and at the end. His introduction indicates that he has never envied his “great loves like Fitzgerald, Melville, Poe, Wilde” but that he merely wanted “to join them on the shelves of libraries” [xvii].

His “Epilogue” is a long “story poem” subtitled the “Forever Orient Express,” dated 1996-1997 [*Cat’s Pajamas*, 227-234]. It is written in the couplets of Pope and postulates Bradbury’s own delightful posthumous train ride with his literary favorites. It includes many Poe passages: “Seen distantly his broad pale brow’s a moon / That sinks at daybreak but to rise at noon.” “While Poe,

subsided, scowling, frets their hats / To mend their politics or bend each mind.”
 “While Poe grows quieter the more they storm, / His snowy moon brow pale,
 his tongue lukewarm [...] the Black Cat hid. His head a pendulum, his breast a
 Pit [...] in mute Poe’s eyes dire Usher sink.” Bradbury invokes the “Cask of
 Amontillado” for a metaphor about walling up each contentious author, about
 snatching his book from a fire, his “dark heart drums beneath our carriage
 floor,” and about “taping Melville’s “Whale” and “measuring Poe” but never
 “tossing him prize.” “At Land’s End Lost Time Station” Poe “grips my hand in
 silence, does not say / ‘farewell’ or ‘Nevermore’ but glides away.” At the end,
 with a tinge of “Annabel Lee” Bradbury says: “But this sure thing I know by
 sounding sea:/Their deaths diminish, words replenish me [...] I open wide their
 books and there they are!”

It is not only in this light verse that he confronts his “idol” Poe. In the
 introduction to *They Have Not Seen the Stars: The Collected Poetry* (Stealth
 Press, 2002), Bradbury tells about writing poems every day for fifteen years
 and calls them “hairball explosions or revelations that came to me in instants”
 and “a history of my secret self” [xvi-xvii]. Certainly we should expect to
 confront Poe there. For example, “I have a brother, mostly dead/And angels
 curled upon his head; Most of my life, mostly unseen,/And yet I feel with him
 I’ve been/A cohort playmate friend of Poe /Who tours me where live friends
 can’t go/[...]/And so my brother, dead, you see /Is wondrous literate company.
 /Thus if my Muse says: Nevermore! /I hear a tapping at my door” [*Collected
 Poetry*, 160].

In a poem with a Nietzsche-like title, “We have our arts so we won’t die of
 Truth,” he introduces a devil with a Fool’s crown, jingling “blood-rust bells
 and rattle groans and ‘attic bones’ before the word artists who can save us
 mortals, including ‘Emily D.’” “And Poe divining tides of blood / [who] Builds
 Ark of bone to sail the flood /[...]/Though Monarch Worm devours our heart”
 [*Collected Poetry*, 164-165].

His twenty-six line, tetrameter couplet poem locates his literary genealogy:
 “Out of Dickinson by Poe, *Or* The Only Begotten Son of Emily and Edgar.”
 “And all of Edgar’s nightmares mine/And Em’s dust-heart my valentine /Thus
 mute old maid and maniac/ Then birthed me forth to cataract /A sigh of polar-
 region breath/[...] Em could not stop for Death, so Poe/Meandered graveyards
 to and fro” [*Collected Poetry*, 195-196].

“The Shakespeare Banquet, The Kipling Feast” starts: “My grandma kept a boarding house of Time.” Bradbury identifies the first inmate as “[t]his one, in plain disguise, was probably wild Poe.” He later writes: “On tops’l heights, our attic, where drunk Poe admires / Himself in broken glass, and on the brink /Of staircase sees grim Usher sink down through our cellar /Past our wine” [*Collected Poetry*, 238-239].

In “The Infirmities of Genius” Poe has a very brief place amongst all competing poets: “There mad poet Poe inhales his vasty draughts of morbid snow” [*Collected Poetry*, 269-271].

One reference to Poe offers a disparaging view. In Bradbury’s mystery novel *Death is a Lonely Business* (New York: Knopf, 1985), the psychiatrist-murderer, one “Shrank” (a diminished shrink), reminds the narrator-detective of “Poe! The famous photographs, the somber portraits of Edgar Allan with his vast milk-glass lampglow brow and brooding night-fire eyes and the doomed and lost mouth buried under the dark moustache, his tie askew on his untidy collar, over his always convulsing and swallowing throat.” Later when Shrank has been revealed as the psychopathic murderer and assumes the role of the projectionist in the movie house, the detective looks for “Poe’s raven eye” up in the booth [91-91, 97-98]. I leave this singularity for others to interpret.⁶

One other resource of Bradbury’s engagement with Poe and his works can be found in numerous published interviews with scholars and journalists. For example, the University of Mississippi issued *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* in 2004, which contains three interviews that confirm that Bradbury “loved” Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne, who all write “with metaphors” and whose works should comprise the basic texts for would-be authors.⁷

I hope that this culling from Bradbury’s works sustains my claim that Ray Bradbury’s reverence for Poe proved significant in his full development and will justify a further delving into the broad topic.

Notes

1. Pierce’s 1976 article is reprinted in J. D. Olander and M. H. Greenberg, *Ray Bradbury*, (1980), 165-187, 225-26. Giving a history of the “fear engendered” by the Gothic tradition in English and American literature, she unduly narrows

Poe's varied influence on Bradbury's work, citing especially his early book, *The October Country* (1955).

2. See Gioia's cogent and penetrating "interview" in the Spring 2005 issue of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, 6.1 (2005), 37-46.

3. See Sam Weller, *Ray Bradbury* (New York: William Morrow, 2005), 10, hereafter to be indicated as SW in square brackets.

4. See chapter 3, "Poet of the Pulps: Literary Influences," 26-33, 162, n. 4.

5. David Mogen cites his address to a group of librarians from William Nolan's introduction to *The Ray Bradbury Companion* (Detroit: Gale, 1975), "How, Instead of Being Educated in College, I was Graduated from Libraries," 30.

6. See J. R. Eller and W. F. Touponce, *Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* (Kent State University Press, 2004), who find this transformation explicable throughout all of Bradbury's writing in terms of the "carnavalesque" element, according to Bakhtin. See this explication, which Poe might have called "metaphysicianism in criticism" (36, 150-152, 312-315, 346-347, and 406-407).

7. Edited by S. L. Aggelis. See especially pp. 20, 37, 119, 181. I have not explored the forty-two published interviews, all by 1973, listed in *The Ray Bradbury Companion*, 267-271.

Scott Peeples. *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004. xii + 199 pp. \$70.00.

In the conclusion to his 1998 study, *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited*, in *Twayne's United States Authors Series*, Scott Peeples briefly muses on the dichotomies in Poe's posthumous reputation as "the alcoholic madman and writer of immortal tales on the one hand and the devoted husband and son-in-law, the seeker of supernal beauty on the other," as well as on the split between "the shadowy pop culture icon [and] the body of work that inspires meticulous scholarly research—and endless debate There are, of course, many Poes," Peeples observes, "not only because he was a kind of literary ventriloquist but because readers bring such a variety of expectations to his poems and tales" (174). In *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe*, Professor Peeples expands these observations into an impressively learned and thoughtful account of "the multiplicity of afterlives" that emerge from the "variety of Poes in literary criticism" and, in a final chapter, from "Poe's changing image in American popular culture" (ix-x).

Labeling this new study "a description of the most influential and widely debated ways of seeing Poe [...] from Griswold's obituary to the year 2002," Peeples resists privileging any particular version of the many posthumous Poes whose genealogies he traces and births he recounts (ix). He maintains his distance from the essentializing flourishes with which so many of Poe's biographers and critics, and indeed Poe's narrators, display the return and unveiling of the dearly and not-so-dearly departed. Modestly avoiding claims of completeness, calling himself more "storyteller than [...] bibliographer," Peeples acknowledges the limitations of his project from the outset: he will say "almost nothing [...] about the heroic editorial and bibliographic work of Thomas Ollive Mabbott and Burton R. Pollin," or about "the large body of work focusing on Poe's literary sources and relationships with other writers." And even though he deals with a writer read and seriously studied in many nations, he will focus "almost exclusively on Anglophone and Francophone Poe criticism" (ix-x).

Even with these limitations, Peeples's project remains very ambitious indeed. In line with the purposes of Camden House's *Studies in American Literature and Culture: Literary Criticism in Perspective*, Peeples attempts "to write an accessible introduction to Poe studies and a history of a major author's reception, providing in the process a broad overview of twentieth-century critical trends"

(xi). I find *Afterlife* remarkably effective in carrying out this aim, which it accomplishes in fundamentally more coherent ways than many recent essay collections with comparable goals and, one suspects, publishers equally concerned to reach the same multiple markets—“scholars, students of literature at the graduate and undergraduate level, and the general reader,” to quote Camden House’s series editors.

In numerous Poe essay collections of the last decade—whether broadly focused assemblages with “introductory” purposes such as Eric W. Carlson’s *A Companion to Poe Studies* (Greenwood, 1996), J. Gerald Kennedy’s *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe* (Oxford, 2001), and Kevin J. Hayes’s *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe* (Cambridge, 2002), or more polemically and thematically organized works such as Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman’s *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe* (Johns Hopkins, 1995), Meredith McGill’s “New Directions in Poe Studies” (*Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*, 2000), and J. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg’s *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race* (Oxford, 2001)—editors have struggled to contain and render coherent for their multiple readers the often contradictory voices of their contributors, some of whom affirm and extend “established” perspectives while others argue for the application of alternative paradigms for the modern study of Poe’s texts and contexts. A key strength of *Afterlife*, one that likely contributed to its selection for the Patrick F. Quinn Award for distinguished Poe scholarship, is Peebles’s modeling of the kind of reader who can affirm the value of contradictory readings without ignoring their “irreconcilable differences” and who frankly feels that “the best new readings of texts draw on various critical traditions”—indeed, that often “new arguments build on, without flatly contradicting, old ones.” Thus, “a reader can best appreciate a challenging new essay [...] in light of the critical history” of how a particular text has been understood (xi).

The chapter subtitles in *Afterlife* provide a succinct summary of how Peebles organizes his informed readings of Poe’s interpreters and interpretations. “Poe’s Place in American Literature, 1849-1909” deals with the shifting constructions of Poe’s reputation within which obituary writers, biographers, scholar-editors, and reader-critics framed his life and writings in terms of various regional and nationalistic agendas. Especially illuminating are the accounts of the cultural politics of post-Civil War memorializing of a “Southern Poe” radically different in emphasis than current discussions of Poe and slavery. The second chapter,

“Poe and Psychoanalysis,” stresses readings building upon Freudian (not Jungian) theory, evaluates the work of biographical interpreters like Joseph Wood Krutch and Kenneth Silverman, but foregrounds the critical perspectives of Marie Bonaparte, Daniel Hoffman, Norman Holland, and the multiple voices involved in the Lacan-Derrida “seminar” on “The Purloined Letter.” In this chapter’s treatment of “Morella,” Peeples admires Bonaparte as “a close reader of the first order” (38). Regarding reader-response approaches that include Peter Brooks’s formulation of “Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism” and Norman Holland’s “transactive criticism,” the author elaborates his commitment to dialogic processes in reading and classroom pedagogy and makes clear his sense “that no criticism is truly objective” and that “as we interpret texts we interpret ourselves” (54). In Brooks’s words, “meaning [...] is not simply ‘in the text,’ nor wholly the fabrication of a reader (or community of readers), but in the dialogic struggle and collaboration of the two” (48).

In his third and fourth chapters, “From Early Formalism to Deconstruction” and “The Socio-Historical Poe” respectively, Peeples threads his way thoughtfully through “the sometimes hostile response to Poe by American New Critics before surveying some of the most influential formalist and philosophical readings of the mid-twentieth century and the deconstructive approaches of Poe of the 1970s and 1980s.” He then “traces the countertradition of historical and sociological scholarship on Poe, particularly analyses focused on race and gender” (x). Here, the discussions of important critics of the 1970s and 1980s—Lynen, Halliburton, Ketterer, Thompson, Irwin, Rowe, Kennedy, and Williams—seem especially valuable as a resource for a new generation of Poe students who often overlook readings from this era and naively attempt to reinvent the perspectives of its major critics. Temporally less distant but equally essential to doing responsible work on Poe and his contexts is the scholarship assessed in Chapter 4, especially that dealing with race, slavery, imperialism, and gender. As Peeples’s narrative of the often-heated dialogue over Poe’s positions on slavery and race forcefully reminds us, divergent readings often emerge from ideologically charged and historically contingent struggles. And while Peeples hardly suggests that newer readings should seamlessly incorporate older ones from the archive, he does find that they often “work together well to convey the complexity of Poe’s work and his world” (121).

Peeples ends his study with a chapter subtitled “Poe as Cultural Signifier” and

adds an Afterword, “Loss of Breath: Writing Poe’s Last Days.” The former, which deals with correspondences and differences between “the academic Poe and the pop-culture Poe” (125), opens up rather more paths that it can explore effectively in its short compass, which Peeples acknowledges. I see it as the beginning of another book from his pen. The Afterword, however, seems an ideal coda to Peeples’s treatment of readings of Poe. First, it foregrounds the “unreadable conclusion” that the mystery of Poe’s final days leaves in his “life narrative” (155). It then acknowledges that, in spite of the “silence of the historical record,” the imperative “to make sense of Poe’s death” in ways that connect his life to his work represents a “nearly inevitable” impulse of narrative biographers (157, 159). Finally, it provides a self-reflexive ending for a study in which Peeples, as a reader seeking to avoid constructing a single Poe or privileging single “coherent” readings of his work that surrender to the “irresistible” impulse “to link Poe’s death, and afterlife, with his fiction.” The study achieves this linkage playfully by invoking the figure of the resurrected Lackbreath in “Loss of Breath,” a tactic that offers a somewhat bawdy answer to the question, “what form do the dead take as they become objects of fascination to those who recreate them again and again?” (162). Not only does Lackbreath lead us back to Peeples’s admiration for Bonaparte’s interpretation of the figure—and to later elaborations of that interpretation by David Ketterer and Michael J. S. Williams—it also brings us full circle to the study’s own title.

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James M. Hutchisson. *Poe. Jackson*: University Press of Mississippi, 2005. xviii + 290 pp. \$30.00 cloth.

For several years now, I have been planning to write a biography of Poe. No one knows more about these plans than my wife, Sooki, who kindly listens to all my ideas—no matter how harebrained. The day my copy of *Poe*, James Hutchisson’s succinctly titled biography of Edgar Allan Poe, arrived in the mail, Sooki appeared crestfallen. “Does this book mean you can’t write your biography of Poe?” she asked.

“No, of course not,” I replied. “There are as many possible Poe biographies as there are possible Poe biographers.” Before our conversation, I had never articulated my thoughts about biography writing in this manner. After our conversation, I began thinking about what my words meant.

Every biography contains elements of autobiography. The best ones capture the essence of their subjects but also reflect the personality of their authors. Biography is akin to portraiture in the visual arts. Speaking of photography, Henri Cartier-Bresson explained that portraitists seek the identity of their subject while trying to fulfill their own personal style. Much the same can be said about biography. The best biographers sensitively depict their subjects while expressing themselves in a personal way.

Using this concept of biography writing, let’s evaluate Hutchisson’s *Poe*. To determine the extent to which it embodies Hutchisson’s personality, we must first learn a little more about him. His scholarly reputation is based on his expertise in literary realism and modernism. Previously, he has written books on DuBose Heyward and Sinclair Lewis, and articles about Kate Chopin, Theodore Dreiser, and Nathanael West. The dust jacket of *Poe* identifies him as a professor of American literature and Southern studies, which suggests that he will bring to bear in this biography his expertise in literary and cultural history of a later period.

Poe confirms Hutchisson’s expertise. Incidental remarks comparing Poe with subsequent authors constitute the finest aspects of this book. Like F. Scott Fitzgerald and D. H. Lawrence, Hutchisson observes, Poe continually turned to women to find “affection, approval, and [a] sense of belonging” (9). “Metzengerstein” anticipates Lawrence’s short story “The Rocking Horse

Winner” (1925). “The Masque of the Red Death” prefigures Albert Camus’s *The Plague* (1947) and Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* (1912). Willa Cather’s *The Professor’s House* (1925) echoes “The Pit and the Pendulum,” especially in terms of its use of confined, claustrophobic interiors. William Butler Yeats’s *A Vision* (1925) closely parallels *Eureka*: “Poe’s belief in a cycle of plural existences resembles Yeats’s ideas about the cycles of human history and of revolution (literally, a turning around again) as depicted in his image of the gyre” (219). And the title character of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* anticipates the character of Michel in Andre Gide’s *The Immoralist* (1902).

Hutchisson identifies numerous other twentieth-century literary figures influenced by *Pym*. Calling the book “the most postmodern of all Poe’s works” (76), he links *Pym* with Jorge Luis Borges’s “Pierre Menard, Author of *Don Quixote*” (1939), Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller* (1979), J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986), Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* (1962), and Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *The Erasers* (1953). Richard Wright is yet another modern writer Poe influenced. Discussing “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Hutchisson finds similarities between the story and *Native Son* (1940). In a lengthy note to his discussion of Poe and Wright, Hutchisson traces Poe’s influence in the writings of Theodore Dreiser, William Faulkner, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Ellen Glasgow.

This explanatory note offers a clue to understanding Hutchisson’s approach. For the most part, he keeps his notes short. Several of these discursive notes do discuss Poe’s impact on later authors. One of these suggests the influence of “Berenice” on Frank Norris’s *McTeague* (1899). Another reveals how “The Pit and the Pendulum” helped to shape Stephen Crane’s short story “Manacled” (1900). Hutchisson’s incidental comments and informative notes hint that during the composition of this biography, he felt himself being drawn to write a very different book, one that could be titled “Poe’s Influence on Realism, Modernism, and Post-Modernism.” Hutchisson fought this urge and kept *Poe* within the bounds of biography. Perhaps he will write that book in the future. I can think of no one better qualified to do so.

In short, *Poe* fulfills the second condition of a good biography. It embodies the personal outlook of its author. It reveals Hutchisson as an expert of early twentieth-century literature and indicates his keen ability to tie together different literary periods. He is less successful when it comes to the first, and most

important, condition of the best biographies, those that capture the essence of their subject. *Poe* is quite good as far as it goes, but Hutchisson ignores much important biographical work, including many valuable studies published over the past decade.

His notes make it easy to pinpoint precisely when he finished his research. The latest work he cites is Terence Whalen's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* (1999), which is mentioned only cursorily. Hutchisson does not indulge in Whalen's discussion of Poe and the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the best and most original part of *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*. He cites no other scholarship from 1999, sometimes using older sources that more recent scholarship has rendered obsolete. For example, he invokes the *Dictionary of American Biography* on multiple occasions, but nowhere does he cite the more recent *American National Biography*. Hutchisson apparently finished his research in 1999 and never went back to update his scholarship.

In his acknowledgement, Hutchisson mentions his gratitude to his editors for granting time to work on his manuscript "just a little bit longer" (xii). The extra work shows. Hutchisson's prose is highly polished; *Poe* is a beautifully written book. Besides updating his research, however, I wish he had spent just a little bit longer with his page proofs, too. At an especially dramatic moment in the first chapter, Hutchisson quotes a five-line passage from "To Helen." The two typos in the quotation render the passage nonsensical and ruin the drama of the moment.

Perhaps I should not judge Hutchisson so harshly. After all, he informs his readers on the first page of his introduction that *Poe* "is not intended for Poe specialists but rather for general readers" (xiii). He makes no great claims for the book's originality. Actually, the author of his advertising copy makes taller claims than Hutchisson himself does. The dust jacket puffs the book as "a biography revealing as never before Poe's Southern gentility and his vast influence on literature and letters." The fact of his Southern gentility is nothing new to Poe specialists. It is not even new to the general public. Shortly before reading Hutchisson's *Poe*, I happened to see *The Ladykillers* (2004), the Coen brothers' remake of the Alexander Mackendrick 1955 film of the same name. Changing the setting from England to Mississippi, the Coen brothers made Goldthwait Higginson Dorr, III—played by Tom Hanks—a paragon of Southern gentility who says, "I love, love, love the works of Mr. Ed G'Allan Poe" and

who can, and does, recite “To Helen” verbatim. Like *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000), *The Ladykillers* simultaneously spoofs and celebrates the culture of the American South. Complete with cream-colored suit and Colonel Sanders goatee, Tom Hanks parodies the notion of Southern gentility, but his respectful, emotion-filled quotations from Poe ring true.

Considered in terms of the literary marketplace, Hutchisson’s book is an anomaly. A finely written biography intended for general readers, *Poe* is published by a scholarly press. While Mississippi is better than most university presses when it comes to marketing and promoting its books, I cannot help but wonder if *Poe* will reach its intended readership. I hope so. Hutchisson’s *Poe* is a rare work, one that bridges the world of the academy with the realm of the general reading public. By all means, recommend the book to others. But as you do so, don’t be discouraged from your own work. If, like me, you are planning to write a Poe biography, then don’t let the publication of Hutchisson’s dissuade you. There’s always room for one more.

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***Private Perry and Mister Poe, The West Point Poems 1831: A Facsimile Edition.* Ed. William F. Hecker. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. lxxv + 165 pp. \$19.95.**

Given the rarity of first editions of Poe's writings, any facsimile of his texts is to be welcomed, I should think. The texts of Poe's *Poems* (1831) in this volume are accurately reproduced, and their reappearance makes convenient these early poems, which most present-day readers encounter in Poe's revised versions. Killis Campbell prepared a volume for the Facsimile Text Society in 1936, but, when one can locate a copy for sale, the price of that book has become well nigh prohibitive. So this new volume is indeed a plus in most respects. Campbell's eight-page "Bibliographical Note" in the earlier book is brief compared with the extras in apparatus we find here. Daniel Hoffman contributes a laudatory foreword, "Marching with Poe," which closes with the remark that "[w]hatever we can learn of the circumstances of Poe's life contributes to our understanding of his strange yet universal genius" and which compliments Hecker's "exploration of an overlooked chapter in Poe's life and the new insights into his work this consideration makes possible" (xv). In his introduction, "Private Perry and Mister Poe," Hecker showcases his argument that Poe's military experiences contributed significantly to these early poems (and to his tales, though, since this volume focuses on poems, the fiction is accorded no extensive commentary). Following the texts of the poems, in an afterword, "Poe's *Nom de Guerre*," Tony McGowan offers analytical assessments of several poems.

Although these texts of Poe's poems should create no disputes, some of the essays included in the volume may provoke challenges. Hecker's central idea is that Poe's military training as an artificer—that is, one who prepares weaponry, most notably bombs—influenced the "explosive" qualities in his poems and may be seen as a precursor to his careful craftsmanship. The preparation of bombs requires close attention, else one may be victimized by the very weapon in preparation. Just so, Poe's poems evince a precise attention to detail. I heartily endorse Hecker's implicitly testifying to a far greater realism in the poems than has been generally allowed by scholars. Instead of categorizing the 1831 poem entitled "Irene," later revised as "The Sleeper," as one of Poe's presumed exercises in necrophilia or as a coded revelation of his own reactions to the deaths of women in his personal life, we should read it as a credible depiction of funeral customs in his times. Hecker goes beyond

the biographical accounts by A. H. Quinn, Jeffrey Meyers and Kenneth Silverman, who treat Poe's military activities as having minimal impact upon the poems as well as upon his life in broader contexts. Hecker's focus upon "Tamerlane" and (the first) "To Helen" may reveal the limitation in his take on the military and Poe, although he argues persuasively that we should look beyond the premise that influences on these early poems came principally from British Romanticism and from fairly narrow forces in Poe's life. Hecker sees Poe's enthusiasm for Lafayette as influential background for these poems. Thus we find good reasons for contemplating Poe as a being far more substantial artist than the popular misconception of him as a twitty little man in black with a decided predilection for the bottle who haunts drafty rooms on stormy nights to compose creepy tales. Poe's military experiences and his incorporation of aspects of them in his writings ranks him with other American authors such as Hemingway and Stein, whose experience of war significantly influenced their artistry.

That said, one comes away from McGowan's "Afterword" with greater reserve concerning its solidity or benefit to readers of Poe, especially readers not well acquainted with the writings or with biography. McGowan's argument for Lafayette-Benedict Arnold inspirations for Poe's poetic endeavors seems overstrained to me. I am not convinced that "Tamerlane" recalls Lafayette or John Allan as firmly as McGowan submits. The Gothic-Beckfordian-Byronic elements in that poem are too evident to ignore. Poe's Byronic stance is well-known, and his letters to John Allan, just to name one correspondent, certainly bear out that fact. If we are going to read the poems from a psychoanalytic perspective, the Byron background remains as significant as that of the pair of military figures. Nor do I read "The Valley Nis" as so wholly grounded in martial sources as it is in what we might call the cult of ruins that permeated the Romantic milieu preceding and continuing in Poe's era, a background more thoroughly substantiated by scholars than the biographical-military origins McGowan offers. Is the first "To Helen" so martial in its thrust as McGowan suggests, and does the final stanza of that poem, where Helen is seen in a window niche as repressive as McGowan would have us believe? He neglects that the name "Helen" carries simultaneous implications of superb beauty and brilliant light (as does "Lenore" in "The Raven"), and that the speaker beholding Helen is thus understandably dazzled by gazing into such intense light. Helen as Psyche in the closing of the poem is another light-bringer, whose effect is akin to that of Psyche in "Ulalume." Both females are uplifting or would-be

uplifting inspirations to the males involved, though Helen in the earlier poem exerts a greater nurturing influence than Psyche does in the later. Thus Helen may not be as martial in content as McGowan would have us believe.

Overall, *Private Perry and Mister Poe* is provocative in several senses of that word, and it should not be ignored by any serious Poe scholar. Although it does add to our information concerning Poe and the military, especially in Hecker's presentation, and while it does make available versions of Poe's poems that have been for many years far from readily accessible, some of the readings of the poems (and why do only two or three of the total number of poems get such close analyses?) will doubtless elicit additional critiques. In the interest of textual accuracy, I offer two more comments. First, in the "Introduction" (p. lxii) Hecker introduces an erroneous "the" as the second word in stanza two of "To Helen." On p. 162, n23, McGowan omits the final "l" in Paull F. Baum's name.

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***Nightmares from the Mind of Poe.* Nashville, TN: Willing Hearts Productions, 2005. DVD \$24.90 (\$26.75 in Tennessee).**

“Other men dream of beautiful women. Why must you always dream of rotting ones?” So his wife asks the narrator of “The Premature Burial,” one of four adaptations that make up *Nightmares from the Mind of Poe*, a new film from Tennessee-based Willing Hearts Productions. Produced by Linda Thornton and directed by (and starring) Ric White, the film presents three of Edgar Allan Poe’s best-known tales and one poem—”The Premature Burial,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Cask of Amontillado” and “The Raven,” respectively—using quotes from Poe’s personal musings to link the works’ characters and themes, and Poe’s psychological state. In this way, the film seeks to explore the psychological complexity of Poe the artist through the complexity of his narratives.

In its attempt to explore this link, though, the film risks confounding Poe and his first-person narrators, especially since White plays an Edgar Allan Poe look-alike as the lead in each of the four adaptations. In fact, according to the film’s web site (www.poenightmares.com), the film seeks to bring the four works to life “with Poe as part of the stories, as he dreamed and wrote them.” As Poe critic Robert Regan argues, likening Poe to his “insane—often homicidally insane—narrators” is misleading at best (*Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul*, prod. Karen Thomas, 60 min., PBS Home Video, 1995, videocassette). Fortunately, however, the film only flirts with this indiscriminatioin in practice and generally develops the narrators as separate individuals by respecting Poe’s characterizations. As a result, it comes closer to characterizing Poe himself as D.H. Lawrence does: “Poe is rather a scientist than an artist. He is reducing his own self as a scientist reduces a salt in a crucible.” See “Edgar Allan Poe,” in *Edgar Allan Poe*, Bloom’s Modern Critical Views (New York: Chelsea House, 1985), 21.

This is not to imply that *Nightmares from the Mind of Poe* is good cinema in its entirety. In fact, the film’s four narratives can be divided evenly into the good and the bad. “The Premature Burial” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” are worthwhile adaptations, whereas “The Cask of Amontillado” and “The Raven” suffer from egregious flaws.

Despite moments of poor acting and a few plot alterations, “The Premature Burial” is ultimately respectable cinema, an adaptation of Poe’s story far superior to the 1962 Roger Corman version starring Ray Milland and Hazel Court. In this rendering, White plays Charles, a man who, as in Poe’s story, is obsessed with the fear of being buried alive—so much so that he must defend his sanity to his wife and, in a nod to Hollywood conventions, his wife’s ex-lover, who happens to be the man’s doctor. (Curiously, the tension incipient in this three-way relationship remains largely undeveloped and ultimately adds little to the overall effect of the narrative.) Indeed, he hallucinates continually during both sleeping and waking moments. One nightmare, for instance, recalls the work of George Romero, director of the 1968 horror classic *Night of the Living Dead*, as newly risen corpses pursue the shrieking narrator through a cemetery until he falls into a grave. The same revenants pursue him later during a waking hallucination, which ends when Charles takes refuge in a blacksmith’s shop (as opposed to the “small sloop” that shelters Poe’s narrator from inclement weather), wherein the narrator comes to his senses in the morning after briefly believing that the interment he so dreads has come to pass.

More important, the adaptation respects the parodic qualities of Poe’s story and reveals Poe’s artistry. The original, in fact, is an example of how Poe sometimes wrote as a “skeptical dissembler and hoaxer,” whose tales often “complexly, ambivalently, and ironically explored the fads of the Romantic Age” (G.R. Thompson, Introduction to *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe* [New York: Harper & Row, 1970], 7.). As in Poe’s story, Charles’s brief experience with living inhumation “cures” him of his fear and retroactively undercuts the Gothic horrors of the preceding narrative. Moreover, White (as director) cleverly foreshadows this moment at the beginning of the aforementioned nightmare. Initially, Charles’s coffin is unearthed by a crew of body snatchers. Upon opening the coffin and seeing that Charles is alive, the leader of the body snatchers cries, “He ain’t no good! Throw him back!” Nonetheless, Charles escapes, and, as he runs away, the leader calls after him, “Hey! You come back here! You can’t be alive! This is a cemetery!” With these lines, one senses that Charles’s fear—and the narrative as a whole—is not as serious as it may have seemed at first. This observation corresponds to G.R. Thompson’s reference to Poe as “a Gothic humorist” (6).

“The Premature Burial” does raise several technical points of interest. In addition to the obvious influence of Romero, the adaptation borrows from

expressionism in its use of shadows and odd camera angles. Enthusiasts of cinematography may be reminded of a scene from Orson Welles's 1942 classic, *The Magnificent Ambersons*. As Charles relates to his wife a story of premature burial, the scene shifts to a woman—in Poe's story, the wife of "a lawyer of eminence and a member of Congress"—sealed alive in a burial chamber. After struggling futilely to free herself, she collapses in distress and impales herself on a piece of ironwork, an expressionist shadow lying across her body. To my mind, this scene recalls a similar one near the end of *The Magnificent Ambersons* when Aunt Fanny collapses from "fear, exhaustion, and despair" (Gardner Campbell, "The Presence of Orson Welles in Robert Stevenson's *Jane Eyre*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31.1 [2003], 6.). Other points of interest include effective low-key lighting and the use of a handheld camera whose unsteadiness completes several point-of-view shots that highlight Charles's sense of fear and confusion as the corpses chase him through the cemetery.

The film's narration of "The Tell-Tale Heart," which follows Poe's tale virtually word for word, also benefits from moments of skillful filmmaking. For instance, White uses slow motion photography in recreating the oxymoron Poe employs to describe how the narrator "thrust" his head into the old man's room "slowly—very, very slowly." In addition, several close-ups and medium close-ups of the narrator sharpening an axe effectively foreshadow the gruesome dismemberment to come, and a series of extreme close-ups of the policemen chatting near the end of the tale complement the narrator's sense of horror and confusion. White also employs a highly effective canted shot as the narrator charges into the room to smother the old man, his mental unbalance symbolized by the camera's odd angle. Just before this shot, moreover, White effectively employs montage with a rapid succession of shots that increase viewer tension.

Moreover, White's performance in this adaptation is the best among the four features. His actions fit Poe's words. He captures the narrator's desperate need to convince us that he is not mad. The crux of his argument concerns *method*: "How could anyone so solicitous about details [...] be 'mad'?" (John A. Dern, "Poe's Public Speakers: Rhetorical Strategies in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Cask of Amontillado,'" *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 2. 2 [2001]: 57). Thus, White as the narrator patiently sharpens an axe and methodically dismembers the old man's corpse, making sure to wash away every last drop of blood. Nonetheless, the narrator's recognition of his failure to deceive—conveyed through extreme close-ups of the officers' faces—reveals his skewed

perspective, undermines his attempt to prove his sanity, and results in his cathartic eruption. At the end of the tale, the narrator sinks to the floor, which covers the old man's dismembered corpse, and lies motionless, save that his finger taps rhythmically on the floorboards.

Unfortunately, *Nightmares from the Mind of Poe* fails to maintain the level of filmmaking that the first two narratives promise. Beginning with its *mise-en-scène*, "The Cask of Amontillado" fails to convince viewers to suspend their disbelief. Filmed in Tennessee, the adaptation does not evoke the European milieu of Poe's story. Indeed, whereas "The Premature Burial" benefits from its southern American setting, "The Cask of Amontillado" suffers because of it. Montresor's "palazzo," for example, becomes a charming—but inappropriate—Southern mansion. The "catacombs," too, suffer from a lack of verisimilitude and a dearth of corpses.

In addition, White's portrayal of Montresor is not nearly as convincing as his portrayal of the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart." In fact, the best portrayal of Montresor is that of John Heard who, along with Rene Auberjonois as Fortunato, takes on the role for an adaptation included in the PBS Home Video *Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul*. Heard plays Montresor with wonderful irony, ingeniously revealing seething hatred with every winning smile and loathing with every genial word. In contrast, White plays Montresor almost crassly, overstating many of the lines whose underlying menace demands the irony of understatement. For instance, when he responds to Fortunato's desperate plea of "For the love of God, Montresor!"—delivered a little too buffoonishly by Clayton Cheek—White offers the response "Yes, for the love of God!" too viciously. As his opening monologue in Poe's story clearly reveals, Montresor is a much subtler creature.

Unaccountably, White also alters the story's penultimate line and creates an untenable situation vis-à-vis point of view. Poe's penultimate line reads as follows: "For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them [the bones]." This line is important in terms of interpreting Montresor's situation at the beginning of the narrative: a "moment's reflection suggests that the indistinct 'you' whom Montresor addresses in the first paragraph is probably his death-bed confessor—for if Montresor has murdered Fortunato fifty years before, he must now be some seventy to eighty years of age" (G. R. Thompson, introduction to *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 19). White alters this line to read,

“For *centuries* no mortal has disturbed them” (emphasis added). (Moreover, because of a lack of bones, Montresor in this version is referring to the *stones* that imprison Fortunato.) Centuries? If centuries have passed, then White’s narrative cannot be that of a first person, at least not a mortal first person. Yet, Poe’s Montresor, a mortal first person, has been presented as the narrator throughout the story. Such an egregious inconsistency simply weakens the story as a whole, especially when combined with the adaptation’s other failings.

Psychologically, *Nightmares from the Mind of Poe* suggests a Freudian connection between the victims of “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Cask of Amontillado,” and Poe’s de facto foster father, John Allan. Poe the “son,” in other words, figuratively acts on the aggressive impulses of his infantile sexuality. The reverse of these aggressive impulses, one must assume, Poe reserves for the “mother,” or the object of his infantile sexuality—in Poe’s case his real mother, Elizabeth Arnold Poe; his foster mother, Frances Allan; and his wife, Virginia. His anguish over the loss of this latter, the film suggests, Poe reveals through “The Raven.” (“The Raven,” however, appeared in January 1845, and Virginia did not die until January 1847. Of course, her health had been in decline during the five years prior to her death.)

Like “The Cask of Amontillado,” unfortunately, this adaptation of “The Raven” has its flaws, particularly in terms of its handling of Poe’s poetics. In his well-known review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales*, Poe argues that rhythm “is an essential aid in the development of the poem’s highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful.” The rhythm of “The Raven” derives from its use of a trochaic meter. The line “What this grim, ungodly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore,” for instance, employs the poem’s standard trochaic octameter beat. For some reason, though, White renders this line *without* the word “ghastly,” effectively changing the meter to trochaic heptameter (and weakening the extended alliteration). Another example of such an alteration involves the line “So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,” which White delivers as “So now, to still my beating heart, I stood repeating”—a hexameter line. Other changes in the poem’s wording have a similarly negative effect on the poem’s rhythm and, consequently, undermine what Poe perceives as the essential connection between rhythm and “the Beautiful.”

White does do a passable job of presenting the narrator as a tortured soul. As G.R. Thompson argues, the Gothic materials of “The Raven” “are fully rendered

as the dramatization of the extreme psychological state of the bereaved lover who absolutely revels in self-torture” (Introduction to *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 13). In accordance with this interpretation, White plays the narrator as a man who designs his questions so that the bird’s response of “Nevermore” will torture him to the extreme. Indeed, this “self-torture” culminates in an actual (slow motion) swoon—White actually looks as if a beak has pierced his heart—after the narrator speaks his last line of dialogue in the poem. The narrator’s voice then completes the poem as the camera focuses on his prostrate body and then backs away.

The four adaptations presented in *Nightmares from the Mind of Poe* are uneven. “The Premature Burial” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” are certainly worth viewing, but “The Cask of Amontillado” certainly is not. “The Raven” will upset scholars concerned with Poe’s poetics, but the acting here is not as off-putting—although a bit overdone, perhaps—as it is in “The Cask of Amontillado.” Before deciding whether or not to purchase a copy of the film, Poe fans may want to investigate the aforementioned web site. It includes background information on Willing Hearts Productions and its past endeavors, brief biographies of the director and producer, a synopsis of the film, still shots, and a trailer.

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Poe in Cyberspace

The Purloined Letters

Viruses. Spyware. System failure. If not quite biological warfare, cyberterrorism, or weapons of mass destruction, nevertheless they are dangerous threats that recently affected three Poe scholars whose names you know. One found his files paralyzed and inaccessible (spyware). Another suffered a hard disk crash the night before the end of a major project (no backup). A third, whose name will be revealed at the end of this column, suffered a recurring laptop freeze (cause unknown). So while acquiring new Poe information on the internet—the usual theme of these Poe in Cyberspace columns—remains important, protecting the Poe work you already have on your computer can be even more important. The new hazards are more damaging than the well-known older dangers because they are all but unexpected.

Do computers really have malign artificial intelligence to betray us at the worst possible times by Murphy's Law—or does it just seem that way? While Olympians may continue to believe that they are immune to computer data losses, mere mortals realize that it's not a case of *whether* but rather of *when*. According to a Sept. 2005 article in *Consumer Reports*, even though the public spent \$2.9 billion in protection software in the last two years, the national cost of damages caused by software viruses and spyware was still \$9 billion in repairs and replacements, suggesting that the protection software was not doing its job or was rarely being used correctly. Although spam annoyances seem to be easing somewhat, now viruses are attacking more sensitive data, and spyware is increasing at an explosive rate and becoming more virulent. According to Microsoft, spyware is responsible for up to half of all PC crashes. Chances are that your computer has gone kaput already from one of these several causes—or will do so in the near future. Realistically speaking, when your computer crashes or freezes, what advance arrangements will you have made to protect your Poe data? When disaster strikes you next—and it will—will your losses be calamitous, substantial, or minor?

As computers improve and become more reliable, we have come to depend on them more and more, and, as we do so, we use networks increasingly for communications and research. Unfortunately, with greater network and online use come the greater dangers of contamination by virus, spyware, or spam

agents, all of which enter through email attachments, web browsers, or software downloads—elements we have come to depend upon. We know when our computer has crashed, is stolen, or perishes in a flood or fire. We know it soon enough when human error results in deleting or overwriting a vital file. But often we don't know it when viruses, spyware, or Trojans enter our computer, not until they produce some major slowdown or utter catastrophe such as data loss, system collapse, or identity theft. In the meantime we may suspect that something is going wrong but as to what it may be we don't have a clue. In the worst-case scenario, we will have to redo or reconstruct years of Poe research and also buy a new computer and software. But this article is about avoiding the worst-case scenario. Twenty years ago, personal computers had a \$5,000 price tag and seemed more valuable than our time, but today simple PC systems are advertised for as little as \$300, reminding us that it is our Poe research and other work that is irreplaceable.

Although computer defenses are constantly improving, the public is nevertheless beginning to lose the battles against spam, viruses, and spyware. Spam is the commercial process of sending out tens of millions of email messages at relatively little cost to elicit a few positive responses. (When Congress finally passed the Can-Spam Act of 2003, despite the objections of 44 state attorneys, it required that spam include an opt-out address that actually benefits the spammer by verifying your address: hence the lesson is never to reply to spam). Spyware is usually a commercial attempt to redirect web browsers to unintended destinations or to gather data on your computer usage, but lately spyware has become more destructive. Viruses are a malicious attempt to overwhelm or damage your computing processes, often producing results far in excess of the expectations of their makers, who may be teenage programmers living in the third world. Phishing, a growing danger, is the attempt to trick you into disclosing confidential financial or identity information. A favorite trap of malware is putting an innocent-looking address on your screen but programming it to a malicious address you probably won't see beneath: the lesson, if you suspect treachery, is to type in the address instead of clicking on it.

Many Poe scholars do little or nothing to defend their computers and data until they encounter a major difficulty, by which time recovery may be inconvenient, expensive, or even impossible. The defensive steps to keep your Poe (and other) data safe are not complicated but require constant vigilance (monthly or weekly) to keep up with the growing sophistication of the attacks. First of all, keep

your operating system up to date. If you use Windows XP or another Microsoft operating system, regularly download and install the latest versions, service packs, and upgrades, each of which will contain improved protection features. If you get a security patch notice from Microsoft, install it before the hackers figure out how to exploit the weakness. If you don't get such notices, go to www.microsoft.com and subscribe. (This article will focus on Microsoft Windows because Macintosh users, being fewer, have been targeted less for these attacks.)

Second, install and maintain an anti-virus program from a reputable company such as Norton Symantec or McAfee. Be sure to configure your software to activate a virus scan for each incoming and outgoing file or email, to check your hard disk each week, and to download an upgrade each month or when notified. Keep anti-virus protection up to date because the most recent viruses are the most dangerous. Do not continue to rely on the 90-day trial of the anti-virus software that came with your computer. Do not use more than one anti-virus program at once. Renew the annual subscription of your anti-virus software or purchase updates to your software (with rebates, often free). Don't just own the software: update it regularly and use it thoroughly.

Third, use one or more anti-spyware programs. Again, take the time regularly to download protective software updates, to scan your hard disk, and to examine all incoming active files. *Consumer Reports* (Sept. 2005) recommends the free anti-spyware program that can be downloaded from the Microsoft web site (it requires a verification process). A second anti-spyware program can be added since no single anti-spyware program does it all.

Fourth, take measures against spam (which accounts for more than half of all email) by using the latest versions of Microsoft Outlook or Apple Email and by activating filters from your internet service or email provider. You may be able to delete suspected spam messages by inspecting message headings. Never reply to spam, especially not to request removal of your address (as mentioned above, it confirms you got the message), never buy or respond to unsolicited offers, and do not open file attachments you do not expect to receive. Beware of "phishing," attempts to elicit financial data and your digital identity—potentially a very costly blunder. And if you have a broadband or wireless connection, acquire and install the appropriate firewall, security, and password protections.

These outer perimeter defenses against damage through spam, viruses, spyware, and phishing are not sufficient without internal defenses against mechanical or software malfunctions (or plain old human error). The main defense against internal threats is the habitual backup made after each major save, session, or day. For serious projects, multiple backups, entailing more than one medium and more than one location, are strongly recommended. Evidently so few users took advantage of the traditional Backup and Restore functions in Microsoft Windows that they have been eliminated in Windows XP Home Edition (the fact that Professional edition still has them tells us something).

So how then do we actually make a backup? What sort of hardware is required? Do we need a special software package? How do we configure the data that needs to be protected? Can we handle the entire process ourselves? Ordinarily your operating system is not a candidate for backup since to restore it from the system disks will remove all data from your hard disk. Similarly, software programs are not backup candidates since they must be reinstalled from the original program disks. Keep operating system disks and software program disks in a secure place for use when needed.

First of all, you must understand how your data is structured on your hard disk and which documents and folders (I still call them *files* and *directories*) contain your Poe projects and other priorities. In an effort to make data access easier, Microsoft actually has made it much harder. In Windows XP, if you *left-click* on Start, you'll find My Documents, and links to media-centric places such as My Pictures, My Music, My Computer, My Network Places, etc. But if you *right-click* on Start to launch Windows Explorer, you'll find an entirely different list of locations, somewhat simplified here as Desktop | My Documents | My Computer | 3 1/2 Floppy A: | Local Disk C: | Documents and Settings | Program Files | D: | Recycle Bin. It's true that you are more likely to use Desktop or My Documents than the Recycle Bin, but where in the world is your Poe project? By default Microsoft Word (and other Microsoft Office programs) puts all your files in the My Documents folder. After a while this becomes Fibber McGee's closet, your local junkyard, heaping up word processing, spreadsheet, database, presentation, download, and family picture and music files. If you wish to configure your own backups, you'll have to go beyond Microsoft's marketing to understand how your hard disk is actually structured.

In Microsoft Windows the top level or root of your main hard disk is called C: (because there were once A: and B: floppy disk drives). This is level 1 and you cannot alter it. Beneath it, Level 2 has a folder called Documents and Settings (what in the world do these have to do with each other?), and within this folder at level 3 there are folders for each user (I am “Heyward” on my own machine), as well as All Users, and Owner. Beneath my folder in level 4 there are folders called Desktop, Favorites, and My Documents; and finally in level 5 under My Documents there are sub-folders for My Pictures, My Music, etc. So Desktop, Favorites, and My Documents are four levels down from the top level of the C: Drive. You may be working forever in one document called *poe.doc* in the My Documents folder, but most of us have several files and more than one project. We may in fact have hundreds of files and dozens of projects. To assure that we backup frequently it is best to do it efficiently—selecting only the recent changes and additions to current projects that we need, assuming we already have backups of folder material. How can you gather all the files together for your current Poe project, and just those files alone, to make such an efficient backup? Few Poe scholars know where their working files are located on their hard disk. Since Microsoft Windows offers no help, we must take matters into our own hands.

The first principle is to separate data from programs and then to separate different projects from each other. If you like Microsoft’s configuration with the My Documents at level 4, you can follow it by creating a general Poe folder at level 5 and then several specialized Poe project subfolders at level 6, one for each article, review, course, research interest, or other topic. Or if you find this inconvenient and confusing, as I do, you can make a general Poe folder as high as possible, level 2 (since you cannot alter level 1), and then make project folders in the level immediately below, level 3. Then you can point Windows Explorer or your file manager more readily to the appropriate folder and files to launch your backup procedure. But Microsoft Windows is further unhelpful by persistently showing by default each of your files or documents as visual icons that are ordered alphabetically. This is doubly useless: when you wish to backup only the most recent files you need to know full file information including full names, types, sizes, and dates. And if you suffer as I do from file name amnesia, you want to see your files in reverse chronological order - the most recent files shown on top. You must change two things: first, in order to replace wordless icons with real information: *right*-click on Start to

open Windows Explorer, navigate to your folder and then click on View | Details to display the name, size, type or extension, and date for each file. Second, examine the triangle at “Date Modified” and click on it if necessary to make sure that it faces downward. Now you will see full file names with the most recent files at the top. Then use the Restore to shrink the Windows Explorer panel so that it occupies only a partial screen. Now launch Windows Explorer a second time, and similarly reduce this second iteration in size and then reposition it so that both of these Windows Explorer panels are visible at the same time. Direct one Windows Explorer panel to the folder with the working source files folder and the other to the destination medium drive and folder. Now you are ready to copy and thereby backup only the most recent files. If you find the procedure above complicated and Byzantine, give up on Windows Explorer that came with your computer and use a third party file manager such as Total Commander.

Do incremental backups: do them in small parts each day or session, in larger sections each week or month, and totally each semester or year. The period to be covered in the shortest of these backups is defined by the amount of work you are willing to lose: fifteen minutes, one hour, one session, one day, one week, one month, one year, longer. One further hint: if your project extends over time, don’t keep saving your work under the same filename. That obliterates variations in earlier versions that might prove of value later. Instead, use “Save As” to introduce variant names to indicate the different file versions (e.g., review_22sept.doc, review_25sept.doc, review_28sept.doc). Incidentally, if you ever need to upload your files to the internet, do not use spaces in filenames; instead, use underlines or hyphens.

Once you have regrouped your files by project, you can turn to the question of which backup medium to use. The traditional media and methods for backups have changed greatly. The once-universal medium for backups, the floppy disk of 1.44 MB, is now obsolete: new PCs and laptops are delivered without floppy drives. Similarly, Zip disks of 100 MB or larger, once widespread in academic use, are now fading in general acceptance. Although both of these older media were convenient, they were also subject to data failure over time or the hazard of slightly incompatible source and destination drives. Similarly, compression into .zip files (no relation to Zip drives), once essential for large data projects, is limited today mainly to time-saving in file downloads. The two new media for backups that have become standard are small USB memory devices and

CD writers, both being fast, cheap, and universal. The USB port on recent computers can accommodate keychain-sized memory devices that can be inserted or removed at any time, typically with capacities of 128 MB to 1 GB, large enough to handle a group of articles or an entire book. The CD drive writer or “burner” handles about 700 MB (DVD writers can manage 4 GB or even much more) and is useful for making unalterable records, doing general backups, and conquering space-hungry media. If you are tempted to install a second internal hard drive as an easy, cheap, and fast way to do backups, keep in mind that both hard disks will depend on the health of the same operating system. A far better solution is to use an external second hard drive with a USB or Firewire connection, which can also serve as a transfer device to share data with a second computer.

Many Poe scholars who synchronize data between their desktop and laptop computers at different locations have unwittingly created a desirable backup system safe from common destruction by flood, fire, or theft. In addition, if a transfer medium is used to synchronize them; an excellent multiple backup system will have been created. It is important, of course, to maintain accurate file dates and times so as never to overwrite newer work unintentionally with older work. If you have an account on a mainframe computer of the type maintained by universities, corporations, and internet providers, backup copies of files may be uploaded for storage and then downloaded from anywhere. I make heavy use of web pages in my teaching and other work, so I have on my hard disk at home a directory called Upload with sub-directories for each class or project. I then customize my upload program to save the configurations of recurring file transfer operations.

The restoration process, alas, can be more hazardous than the backup process, just as it may be trickier to receive a pint of blood than to donate one. File copying is easy—too easy. An older version of a Poe file can accidentally overwrite and thus destroy a newer version of the file. One added protection is to add a date or version code in the name of each important saved file. That will also preserve an archive of older versions that may prove unexpectedly useful. Never “save” files after only inspecting them: it records the last inspection date as though it were the last editing date. Keep an eye on file sizes: newer files usually are larger than older files.

Sadly, user error can be worse than any computer error. In Microsoft Windows programs hitting Ctrl-A by accident (when Shift-A is intended) defines the entire file and thus prepares to replace it with the next keystroke. If that happens to be the space character, as occurs in intending to type the capitalized word “A” in a title or new sentence, the entire file will disappear from the screen. To recover from this potentially destructive maneuver, immediately press Ctrl-Z to return to the previous data state. The Ctrl-Z recovery action can be repeated if needed, and should it be necessary Ctrl-Y can be used in reverse to unrecover any excessive recovery actions. Whatever you do, never save the truncated or obliterated file since to do so will overwrite your real data with nothing, in effect erasing the file. Generally, it’s a good idea to set your software to automatically save working files at a fixed interval of about 15 minutes, whether or not power failure is a problem in your locality. In a public place, always save before that nonchalant visitor accidentally steps on your power cord, thereby disconnecting you. Always save before a phone call, before another chore interrupts you, and absolutely before any “print” command: if your printer should freeze up for any reason, you will not be able to get back to your file. When I start work for the day on a continuing project, I often bring up the file of the previous day and save it with a serially altered name, preserving yesterday’s version as a fallback.

While we’re on the subject of caring for your data, a few words about preventive maintenance are in order. Microsoft Windows has several free system utilities for your hard disk (under Start | All Programs | Accessories | System Tools | see Disk Cleanup, Disk Defragmenter, and System Restore). Supposedly “deleted” files actually stay on the hard disk in the Recycle Bin until you decide to get rid of them permanently. For fuller services, use third party software utilities such as those from Norton Symantec and McAfee. It is not enough to own suites of software utilities: they must be updated often and run regularly (mine are set for 5:00 p.m. Friday).

What can one do in advance to prepare for a data emergency? A bootable floppy disk may get the system started at a primitive DOS level, a rescue disk set can be made of a floppy disk to boot the system with essential drivers, and the Norton CD disk can be used to boot the system and provide some emergency treatment. As you may have suspected, I was the third Poe scholar mentioned at the beginning of this article who suffered a recent computer breakdown. For reasons still undetermined, while away from home my IBM laptop regularly

froze a few minutes after bootup. (Heat? Could I work on dry ice?) Although I had copies of all my current data both on my primary desktop computer at home and also on the little USB stick in my pocket, still I lost a week during which I had hoped to work on this very article.

Admittedly, those who neglect maintenance and backup procedures are free to take their chances, waiting for a crisis to develop. If calling friends then fails, and your computer specialist at work cannot help you, it is time to face the commercial services that deal with PC crises—at a price, of course. Before you call for commercial service, try some common sense preliminaries: reboot the machine (if it won't reboot normally, hold down the power button until it does), check all the plugs and connectors, update the operating system, and run anti-virus and anti-spyware software if you can. If your computer is still under warranty, call the vendor, but be sure to make clear that the recovery of your data is an absolute priority. If that does not help, try either of two online telephone services recommended in *PC Magazine* in August 2005, *yourtechonline.com* (877-717-7111) or *www.pcpinpoint.com* (877-434-8697). Of course, if your system is not healthy enough for online or telephone help, you must bring your computer to or call in a computer guru. If possible, find one recommended by friends; that failing, consider names in the phonebook or on a local bulletin board. One service heavily advertised on television and widely available for repair services through local Best Buy stores is Geek Squad, *www.geekssquad.com* (800-433-5778). If you are fortunate, all your computer may need is a corrective software scan or the replacement of an inexpensive part (plus labor), typically costing about \$150. But in the dreaded worst-case scenario, if your computer cannot be repaired, first you must buy a new machine (typically \$500 or more) and then reinstall (and perhaps reacquire) all your software. Next you must use a costly commercial data recovery service to extract the data from the dead computer by disassembling the hard disk, taking off the data, and sending it to back to you on some appropriate copy media, costing perhaps \$1000. Finally you must put your software and data back on your new machine—assuming of course that your Poe data could be recovered. For more information, see *Consumer Reports*, July and September 2005; *www.microsoft.com*; *The New York Times*, September 3, 2005, B5; and *PC Magazine*, August 31, 2005. Online links to all Poe in Cyberspace articles are at *andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrllich/poe*.

Heyward Ehrlich
Rutgers University- Newark.

Abstracts for PSA Sessions
at the 121st MLA Annual Convention
in Washington, D.C.
27-30 December 2005

Session 209. Poe in Place

Wednesday, 28 December 2005

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Coolidge, Marriott Wardman Park

Presiding: Barbara Anne Cantalupo, Penn State University, Fogelsville

(1) “‘We write this article with no books before us’: Poe on the Art of Street Paving,” *John E. Reilly, College of the Holy Cross*

Poe published three statements on street paving while living in New York in 1844 and 1845. The first appeared in one of a series of letters to the *Columbia* (Pennsylvania) *Spy* to which he was serving as correspondent; the second was an editorial in the *New-York Mirror*; and the third was an essay in the *Broadway Journal*. All three were prompted by Poe’s objections to the noise of horses and wagons on the round paving stones used in the City, and in each statement Poe proposed the adoption of blocks of preserved wood as an alternative to stones and spelled out in detail the procedure with which wood is preserved in a process called “Kyanizing.” In the *Broadway Journal* essay only, he added a lengthy paragraph describing the method of road building in ancient Rome. Using the editorial plural, Poe appended to the essay the disclaimer that “we write this article with no books before us.” This disclaimer notwithstanding, Poe drew upon several unacknowledged sources for his information on Kyanizing, the principal one very likely being a report on the subject of street paving published in the *Journal of the Franklin Institute* in the autumn of 1843. Far more egregiously, he lifted, often verbatim, all the information he used on Roman road building from a single source: the 1843 American edition of William Smith’s *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, a book edited by his friend Professor Charles Anthon, which Poe had reviewed in the *Broadway Journal* just a week prior to the publication of his essay. Aside from the issue of Poe’s use, or abuse, of sources, his distress over street noise raises the question of the relationship between his own hearing and the acuteness of hearing that plays a role in several of his prominent tales.

(2) “‘Why Will You Say That He Is Mad?’: Reexamining ‘The Tell-Tale Heart,’” *Susan Amper, Bronx Community College, City University of New York*

No abstract received.

(3) “Who Was ‘Uncle Ben’? A New Look at the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter* Contest,” *Peter C. Molin, Indiana University, Bloomington*

My presentation introduces a heretofore unexamined fictional portrayal of Edgar Allan Poe written by one of his contemporaries in Baltimore in the early 1830s. I assert that an author for the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter* named “Uncle Ben” regularly included in his column a character based on Poe. The most important Uncle Ben column in this regard was one placed in the 23 October 1833 issue next to Poe’s “The Coliseum,” the poem that won second place in the poetry portion of the famous *Saturday Visiter* contest. Appearing the week after Poe’s prize-winning “MS. Found in a Bottle,” this Uncle Ben column contains an embedded story titled “Genius and Application.” The tale’s two protagonists, “Allen Wilson” and “Henry Morrison” (as in Poe’s brother William Henry Leonard Poe), are ambitious young men who use different tactics to win fame and fortune. I claim that the editor of the *Saturday Visiter*, John Hewitt, deliberately placed this Uncle Ben column next to Poe’s poem as a commentary on Poe’s character and the nature of his talent and potential. Further, I believe that “Uncle Ben” was the famous temperance author, T.S. Arthur, a known acquaintance of Poe in the early 1830s. My argument is that the Uncle Ben columns provide a more-detailed fictional portrait of Poe during his obscure Baltimore years than the well-known depictions in the *North American* weekly and the verse fragment “The Musiad or Ninead.”

(4) “The Emergence of Gothic Revival Architecture in Poe’s Baltimore and New York,” *Geralyn Strecker, Ball State University*

Critics have long suggested American Gothic literature draws its architectural settings from European models. Most recently, Benjamin F. Fisher writes in “Poe and the Gothic Tradition” (*Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, 2002): “American authors, understandably, had no castles, abbeys, or cloisters in the near proximity that European authors had. [. . .] American Gothic works tend to transform European architecture into American landscape” (75-77).

While pre-1830s authors “had no castles,” the Gothic Revival in American architecture corresponds directly with Poe’s career; in fact, important early examples of the movement were built in cities where Poe lived. Readers were fascinated with Gothic architecture, and these American sources for Poe’s aesthetic deserve more exploration.

While Poe was in Baltimore, Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-92), the most prolific American architect of the mid-1800s, ignited a new movement in American design with *Glen Ellen* (1832-33), built for Robert Gilmor III in Towson, Maryland. Although such structures had existed in Europe for centuries, *Glen Ellen* was the first American Gothic Revival residence. In 1838, Davis designed another important Gothic villa adjacent to Washington Irving’s *Sunnyside* in Tarrytown, New York. Its original owners were former New York City mayor William Paulding and his son Philip. Interestingly, William’s brother—writer James Kirke Paulding—was one of Poe’s earliest supporters. Completed in 1842 but eventually redesigned and renamed *Lyndhurst*, this building is considered one of Davis’s masterpieces. Railroad magnate Jay Gould purchased the estate as a summer home in 1880, and it is now a National Trust Historic site.

Davis also designed many important public buildings in New York City, and his New York University office was just a few blocks south of Poe’s New York home. During frequent walks around the neighborhood and throughout the city, Poe would have seen Davis’s works in various stages of completion. Prominent features of Gothic Revival architecture—vaulted ceilings, narrow arched windows, restricted natural light, and oddly shaped rooms—inform many Poe settings, notably “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839). Plus, in “The Philosophy of Furniture” (1840), Poe advocated the imaginative potential of “Arabesque” interior decoration. He also praised one of Davis’s collaborators: prominent landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing.

Illustrated with Davis’s original designs, this presentation will explore connections between American Gothic Revival architecture and Poe’s works.

Session 722. *Eureka* Once Again

Friday, 30 December

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., Virginia Suite A, Marriott Wardman Park

Presiding: Carole M. Shaffer-Koros, Kean University

(1) “Poe ‘over There’: Mallarmé’s *Eureka*,” Eric Touya de Marenne, Adelphi University

Taking into account the complexity of Mallarmé and Poe’s poetics, my paper traces the influence of *Eureka* on the French poet’s own art. Mallarmé perpetuated and transcended the vision of *Eureka* in which the American poet sought to resolve the secret of the universe. In this context, he gave a modern significance to Poe’s principle of analogy. The parallels between chance and necessity in “Un Coup de dés” and the conscious representation of the self in “Le Tombeau d’Edgar Poe” introduced a transformed representation of the conflict between the real and the ideal, the profane and the sacred. The aptitude of the American poet to express necessary dualities as well as his conviction that the poet reinvented in the isolation of the self-consciousness from the world found new meaning in Mallarmé.

In light of this influence, I explore the extent to which the American poet’s dream to compose the poem of the Universe guided Mallarmé’s ascetic experience. The essential role played by Poe in the formation of the Frenchman’s attitude toward language implied a universe that separated itself from all belief: “Je révère l’opinion de Poe, nul vestige d’une philosophie, l’éthique ou la métaphysique ne transparaîtra.” Thus, beyond the years of crisis, Mallarmé contemplated the universe with the optics of *Eureka*, submitting his poems to the law of a divine transposition for the accomplishment of which humanity existed. After having found Nothingness, he pursued Poe’s vision of beauty as the only legitimate domain of poetry and his concept of the Book embodied the notion of universal analogy through which the American poet had endeavored to resolve the secret of the universe. The French poet shared the same dream of a complete work whose ultimate aim would be “l’explication orphique de la Terre.”

(2) “In Defense of Poe’s ‘Art-Product’: Alexander von Humboldt’s Influence on *Eureka*,” Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University

Baron Alexander Von Humboldt's stamp on Poe's *Eureka* is widely acknowledged but remains vastly unexplored. Poe dedicates his work to Humboldt for a number of striking personal and theoretical reasons, but most important for Poe is Humboldt's claim in *Cosmos* that "the rational experimentalist does not proceed at hazard, but acts under the guidance of hypotheses, founded on a half indistinct and more or less just intuition of the connection existing among natural objects or forces." Using this method, Humboldt produced exotic, carefully worded images to "represent nature as one great whole, moved and animated by internal forces." Humboldt also used such imagery to wonder about a pasigraphy.

For Humboldt, this bold experiment takes form not only in his rich verbal descriptions of "cosmic" landscapes (which motivated Frederic Edwin Church to translate them to canvas) but also in his more scientific illustrations that map both visual and textual elements onto the same image. Similarly, in *Eureka*, Poe produces his own cosmic landscape in text, in some cases following Humboldt image-for-image in an attempt to present a similar, intuitive correspondence through metaphor. Using *Cosmos* as his guide, Poe attempts to bring all oppositions together—fact and feeling, science and poetic intuition—under the assumption that there is a discernible design to the universe that is both true *and* beautiful.

(3) "Oneness: A Pragmatic Reading of *Eureka*," *Andrew Sutherland, State University of New York, Buffalo*

Eureka: A Prose Poem is a poetic cosmology.

A cosmology is a philosophical statement finding harmonic order in the seemingly chaotic complex of worldly particulars. *Eureka*'s content obviously places it in the rarefied genre of philosophical cosmologies and, in particular, alongside other nineteenth-century cosmologies—especially Emerson's *Nature*.

Nevertheless, Poe himself called his work an "Art-Product" and expressed, in the strongest terms, his desire that *Eureka* be critically assessed as literary art: "it is as a Poem only that I wish this work to be judged after I am dead." While the temptation to read *Eureka* as a prose cosmology and not foremost as a

prose poem is strong, the poetics of *Eureka*, for those readers who take Poe at his word, must be considered in any serious critical evaluation of the piece. If philosophy is a kind of writing, as American pragmatism and the subsequent French deconstruction have argued, then reading *Eureka: A Prose Poem* as a poem requires one to identify the difference between Poe's language and paradigmatic philosophical cosmologies. While the basic unit of much philosophical prose is the aphorism (as is the case in *Nature*), one must look elsewhere to determine the fundamental element of Poe's poem. I submit, therefore, that the basic unit of *Eureka* is not the aphorism of philosophical rhetoric but a fundamental unit of poetry—repetition. My paper accordingly examines the use and implications of various forms of repetition for the sound and for the sense of Poe's longest and, perhaps, most difficult poem.

PSA Matters

From Scott Peeples, President: I'd like to congratulate and welcome our recently elected executive board members. As of 1 January 2006, our new Secretary-Treasurer will be Paul C. Jones (Ohio University), and our members at-large will be Marcy Dinius (Penn Humanities Forum) and Stephen Rachman (Michigan State). They will join Barbara Cantalupo (Penn State Lehigh Valley, Vice-President), Richard Kopley (Penn State, immediate past-President), Richard Fusco (St. Joseph's University, coeditor of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*), and myself on the board. I'd also like to thank everyone who agreed to serve if elected and everyone who voted.

As I hope you're aware, our next international conference will be held in Oxford, England, 13-16 July 2006. The conference, titled "Transatlanticism in American Literature: Emerson, Hawthorne, Poe," is cosponsored by the Hawthorne and Emerson societies, along with the PSA. The program committee is hard at work and should be able to announce the conference program soon. As a member of that committee, I can promise you this will be a large, lively conference; and the setting, at the Rothermere American Institute and St. Catherine's College, Oxford, is ideal for several days' discussion of these three major writers. Registration is now open: you can visit the conference website and register at <http://www.cofc.edu/~peeples/oxford/Oxford.htm>. Our "scouts" report that the accommodations at St. Catherine's are very nice, and you'll notice on the website that the room rate includes meals. Some rooms accommodate two persons, but most are singles; particularly if you plan to share a room, you should try to register as early as possible. More information is available at the website.

The executive board is beginning to make plans for yet another conference, this one commemorating the bicentennial of Edgar Allan Poe's birth. The one big decision we've made is to hold the conference in Philadelphia, a city where Poe wrote much of his most important work and where his house still stands. Given the occasion, we hope to make this event a celebration as well as an academic conference. Please contact me if you have suggestions about the program.

From Barbara Cantalupo, Vice-President: The PSA Executive Committee is pleased to announce the winner of the Patrick F. Quinn Award for a

distinguished book of Poe scholarship. The award goes to Scott Peeples for *The Afterlife of Edgar Allan Poe* (Camden House). One of the Executive Board members writes, “I applaud Peeples’ appeal to a wide audience of readers interested in literary study and in Poe in particular. The book is impressively knowledgeable. [. . .] I’m sure it will be a useful reference for literature surveys and courses in fiction.” The award will be presented to Dr. Peeples at one of the Poe panels at the 2005 MLA convention.

Abstracts for the two PSA panels for the 2005 MLA convention in Washington, D.C., can be found elsewhere in this issue.

I also wish to announce the topics for the 2006 MLA convention:

Session I: “Music and Poe’s ‘Poesy.’” In keeping with Marjorie Perloff’s initiative to create a thematic thread in proceedings of the 2006 convention, this panel invites papers that take into consideration Poe’s statement that “music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment in Poesy as never to be neglected by him who is truly poetical—is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended that he is mad who rejects its assistance—content with this idea we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality” (From Poe’s review of Longfellow’s *Ballads and Other Poems* in *Graham’s Magazine*, March 1842). Perloff plans to organize poetry-related panels so that they do not overlap, and she promises to “distribute, at the beginning of the conference, a flyer announcing all related meetings. Theoretically, then, each MLA member could go to all poetry sessions involved.”

Session II: “Poe and Drama.” Papers would engage Poe’s drama, his critical responses to drama, Poe & drama in the 20th century, and/or the drama in/of Poe’s life.

Please send proposals to me at bac7@psu.edu by **1 March 2006**. Please note: those chosen to participate must be MLA members by 31 March 2006.

From Mary De Jong and Noelle Baker, Members-at-large: Submissions are invited for a session titled “Poe and Anxiety” sponsored by the Poe Studies Association at the American Literature Association Conference, 25-28 May 2006 at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco in Embarcadero Center in San

Francisco, CA. For information on the conference, visit www.americanliterature.org

All approaches to this topic are welcome. Treatments of the subject may address but need not be limited to the contexts of nineteenth-century spiritualism, ghost stories, authorship, nation building, globalism, cosmopolitanism, religion, science, German literature and philosophy, gender, race, sexuality, comparisons of nineteenth-century and post 9/11 conceptions of “evil.”

Please send inquiries and abstracts (250-500 words plus brief CV) via email (no attachments, please) by 2 December 2005, to

Noelle Baker (nbaker2@new.rr.com)
2408 Woodland Terrace
Neenah, WI 54956

and

Mary De Jong (mld4@psu.edu)
Penn State Altoona
3000 Ivyside Park
Altoona, PA 16601-3760

From Carole Shaffer-Koros, PSA Secretary Treasurer: As of 23 September 2005, membership was 219. For 2005, the initial checking account figure was \$8,778.60, adding in our Money Market of \$3,665.68 and CDs of \$5,326.12, totaling \$17,770.40. Overall balance as of 23 September 2005 was \$17,085.15, which includes our Money Market and CDs, and includes interest to date in 2005. Checking account activity during 2005 through 21 September was: income from dues, advertising and contributions of \$2,967.00; miscellaneous expenses and publication of the Spring and Fall issues of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, \$3809.84, for a net change (including interest accrued on Money Market and CDs) of (\$685.25) (decrease).

Carol Peirce

Carol Peirce was born in 1922 in Columbia, Missouri, as Helen Emily Williams. Her last name was changed to Marshall following the divorce of her parents, and about the same time she adopted the use of Carol as a first name. She received her A.B. at Florida State University in 1942. Thereafter, she attended the University of Virginia, obtaining her M. A. in 1943. Her Master's thesis was "Edgar Allan Poe's Philosophy of Man and the Universe," prepared under the direction of none other than James Southall Wilson. (Eight years later, she married Brooke Peirce, who had been Dr. Wilson's student assistant and would become a long-time professor of English at Goucher College.) She earned her Ph. D. in 1951 from Harvard University, Radcliffe College. After teaching at Fairfax Hall Junior College, Cedar Crest College, and Radcliffe, she came to the University of Baltimore in 1968, where she quickly became a fixture. She retired in 2003.

Poe always had to share Carol with her other great literary interests, J. R. R. Tolkien, T. S. Eliot, and especially Lawrence Durrell, but he sustained a regular presence in her life. She gave a radio lecture on "Edgar Allan Poe and the First Detective Story" in 1945, and was interviewed about Poe on the *CBS Sunday Morning Show* on 1 October 2000. On 21 October 1984, she participated in "Poe's Women in Poetry," a reading which was part of "The Three R's of American Art: Romanticism, Realism, and Regionalism" (at the Baltimore Museum of Art); and on several occasions, she delivered her paper "In the Perilous Realm: The Fantastic Geographies of Tolkien and Poe." (This paper was ultimately printed in *Poe and Our Times*, ed. Benjamin Fisher, Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, 1986, pp. 124-136.)

She joined the Poe Society in 1968, became a member of the executive board in 1973, and rose to the role of president in 1990. In addition to assisting with the annual lecture series,

she planned and ran, with Kendra Kopelke, “Evermore! Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Poe’s ‘Raven’ ” at the University of Baltimore (8 April 1995, cosponsored by the Poe Society and the Mayor’s Commission on the Arts Program). She was particularly proud of her efforts in establishing the Alexander G. Rose endowment fund, which encourages the teaching about Poe at the University of Baltimore.

She joined the PSA in 1982, and was active in various ways. In 1988, she delivered a paper, along with Alexander Rose, on “Poe’s Reading of Myth: The White Vision of Arthur Gordon Pym” at the Pym gathering in Nantucket (printed in *Poe’s Pym: Critical Explorations*, ed. Richard Kopley, Durham: Duke University Press, 1992, pp. 57-74). She also chaired panels at both the 1999 and 2002 International Poe Conferences. In 2003, she was made an Honorary Member (see *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, 4.2 (2003), pp. 100-101). She began a term on the Editorial Board of the *Poe Review* in 2004, though her duties were abruptly interrupted by the onset of oral cancer. Having valiantly endured surgery, radiation therapy, the return of the cancer, and several rounds of chemotherapy, she succumbed to pneumonia on 31 August 2005.

The world of literary scholarship can be contentious and cliquish. Naturally personable, and with more than a touch of Southern graciousness, Carol was always refreshingly open and generous. Although she could be demanding, she brought an infectious passion for learning to her classes, and sustained an active interest in and warm connections with many of her students long after they had graduated from the university. For those of us who worked with Carol in the Poe Society, and especially those of us who were fortunate enough to be among her friends, it will be impossible to replace her or to forget her.

Jeffrey Savoye
Secretary/Treasurer
The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore

Notes on Contributors

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Benjamin F. Fisher is professor of English at the University of Mississippi. A past president and current honorary member of the Poe Studies Association, he has published often on topics related to Poe, including his recent edition of *The Essential Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004).

Paul Grimstad is a graduate student at New York University.

Alexander Hammond is professor of English at Washington State University. In addition to his many publications regarding Poe, he is the long-time coeditor of *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*.

Kevin Hayes is professor of English at the University of Central Oklahoma. His publications include *Poe and the Printed Word* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and, as editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Burton Pollin, professor emeritus from CUNY, has published eight books on Poe's works and five volumes of the critical edition of Poe's *Writings* (1981-1999). An honorary member of the PSA, he is currently preparing with Jeffrey Savoye a new edition of Poe's letters.