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From the Editor

This issue includes, for the first time, a short story and a poem related to Poe. In doing so, we have opened the door, as it were, for such work. We would also welcome images related to Poe from contemporary artists. Included, as well, in this issue, along with the usual essays, book reviews and features, are two review/essays looking at Poe's influence on twentieth century music and an essay on new trends in Poe scholarship by the coeditor of *Poe Studies*.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Heyward Ehrlich for his thorough and meticulous contributions to the "Poe in Cyberspace" column, begun in *The Poe Studies Association Newsletter* in Spring 1998 and continuing in each issue of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*. His explorations of Poe-related Internet resources provide a helpful tool for researchers, teachers, students and *afficionados* of Poe. In this issue, Dr. Ehrlich reports on international representations of Poe in cyberspace. An on-line version of all of these articles can be found at <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~ehrllich/poesites.html>.

As indicated in the Fall 2002 issue, "Interviews with Poe Scholars" will now appear only in the Spring issues. This issue includes interviews with PSA Honorary Member, Poe scholar and renowned poet, Richard Wilbur and French Poe scholar, Henri Justin.

We are happy to welcome four new members of the editorial board who will serve as readers for the next three years: Dennis Eddings, Emeritus, Western Oregon University; Benjamin Franklin Fisher, University of Mississippi; Leon Jackson, University of South Carolina; and David Ketterer, Emeritus, Concordia University. We would like to thank the Poe Studies Association for an increase in financial support for the *Poe Review*, as we continue to enjoy generous support from the Berks-Lehigh Valley College of Penn State University. Thanks also go to Daniel Hoffman, Richard Kopley, and Burton Pollin for newsworthy items for this issue.

**The Godwinian Confessional Narrative
and Psychological Terror in *Arthur Gordon Pym***

A. A. Markley

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym has enjoyed a strong surge of critical attention in recent years, much of which has been concerned with charting and analyzing the scores of source materials that Poe wove into the fabric of his complex and unusual novel.¹ Many scholars, such as Bruce Weiner, have recognized *Pym*'s relationship to the widely popular genre of Gothic fiction, noting its particular correlation with the "explained" or "rational" mode of Gothic popularized by Ann Radcliffe, whose suspenseful page-turners ultimately provide a reasonable explanation for every supernatural or oddly coincidental occurrence in the plot.² *Pym*'s strong debt to Daniel Defoe, particularly to *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) has also long been acknowledged; clearly Defoe is a critical source of influence not only in terms of subject matter, but in Poe's manner of developing a first person narrative voice.³

It was William Godwin, however, who first married the first person confessional narrative to elements of Gothic suspense in his novels of the 1790s and afterwards. Godwin's literary influence is much forgotten today, despite the wide appeal of his novels during his lifetime, and despite the school of followers he inspired with his peculiar blend of terror and confessional narrative—figures such as Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, William Ainsworth, and, perhaps most importantly in terms of his own influence on Poe, Charles Brockden Brown.⁴ Burton Pollin has acknowledged the relationship between the theme and atmosphere of Poe's works and Godwin's, and has cataloged both the nineteenth-century references that likewise acknowledge this connection, and the seventeen times in Poe's own writings, largely in his reviews, in which Poe himself praises specific aspects of Godwin's fiction.⁵

In his review of Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers*, for example, Poe writes

The name of the author of Caleb Williams and of St. Leon is...a guarantee for...excellence. There is about all the writing of Godwin one peculiarity which we are not sure that we have ever seen pointed out for observation...an air of mature thought—of deliberate premeditation....No

English writer...with the single exception of Coleridge, has a fuller appreciation of the value of *words*; and none is more nicely discriminative between closely-approximating meanings.⁶

In a later review, Poe compares *Caleb Williams* with Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839): "In both novels the hero escapes repeatedly from prison. In the work of Ainsworth the escapes are merely narrated. In that of Godwin they are *discussed*. With the latter we become at once absorbed in those details which so manifestly absorb his own soul. We read with the most breathless attention. We close the book with real regret."⁷

In a final example, in criticizing Charles Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), Poe favors the works of Godwin and his disciple Bulwer-Lytton, calling them "the best constructors of plot in English literature."⁸

A passionate radical devoted to the idea of social reform in England, Godwin published in 1793 a mammoth work of political philosophy, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, which idealistically looked forward to the dissolution of government in a society founded entirely on sincerity and rational thinking. Realizing, however, that both the cost and the approach of *Political Justice* precluded its wide dissemination amongst a mass audience of readers, Godwin turned next to the novel as a vehicle for expressing his political views to a wider readership. The result was perhaps the most influential British novel of this period, *Things As They Are, or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, published in 1794, and followed by dozens of reprints in England, America, and France in the years to follow.⁹

In setting out to illustrate the evils of Britain's political and class systems, Godwin developed a new sub-genre of the confessional narrative. One of the novel's most recognizable features lies in Godwin's particular manner of characterizing his first person narrator; in this case a narrator in torment, driven to tell the story of a disastrous life brought about by his own errors in judgment. The narrator, Caleb Williams, is secretary to a wealthy landowner named Falkland, an aristocrat who values his sense of personal honor above all other aspects of his life. By listening to neighborhood gossip and snooping around Falkland's possessions, Caleb gradually begins to piece together a crime in Falkland's past—the murder of a neighbor and

the framing of two innocent tenant farmers for the crime. When Falkland discovers that Caleb knows his secret, he sets about ruining the young man's reputation, has him thrown into jail for alleged theft, and, when Caleb escapes, has him dogged from town to town, making sure that no one harbors Caleb or listens to his tale.

The political intention of the novel is clear in its deft illustration of the power that the aristocrat held over the reputation of those of the lower classes, merely by relying on the authority of his class status. But from a literary perspective, the deeper interest in the novel lies in Godwin's creation of Caleb as a narrator. Godwin drew heavily on his predecessors in developing his own brand of first-person narrative. Defoe's narrators, such as the titular heroes of *Moll Flanders* (1722), *Colonel Jack* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724) had shocked readers in the earlier eighteenth century with their frank confessions of lurid lives of crime. Godwin specifically turned to *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack* in creating the voice of a character caught in the predicament of having to survive amongst the worst excesses of the British class system as a social outcast. These novels also inspired Godwin to depict the life and point of view of the criminal world from the inside. His particularly memorable depiction of the "gentleman-thief," Captain Raymond, brings home the point that nobility can exist even in those driven to crime. Moreover, the insider's point of view allowed him an opportunity to depict the brutality of contemporary British prisons and the blatant inequities of the judicial system.

Godwin also turned to Samuel Richardson in developing his first person narrator; in his epistolary format in *Pamela* (1740-41), *Clarissa* (1747-48), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54), Richardson achieved new levels of emotional veracity and psychological depth. Pamela's struggles with the relentless advances and irrational anger of her employer, Mr. B., provided a particular model for the troubled love/hate relationship between servant and master in the case of Caleb and Falkland.

Drawing on such influences and focused by a strong drive towards social reform, Godwin managed to create in Caleb Williams a startlingly realistic personality—a slippery narrator fully in control of his story, and yet one whose confessions and rants of terror and profound remorse evoke strong emotional responses in the reader. Pamela Clemit has pointed out that

Godwin's use of first person is central to his political purpose: "the inbuilt unreliability of [the] first-person account throws the burden of interpretation and decision on the reader, soliciting his or her active participation," and thus fostering Godwin's ideal of private judgment in which each individual is obligated "to seek out objective truths in the moral and political realm."¹⁰

Godwin continued to write first person confessional novels for the rest of his career. Punctuated by periods in which he experimented with the essay, biography, history, and drama, and alongside a 25-year career as a publisher and author of children's books, Godwin published five more novels, most of which, unlike *Caleb Williams*, are given a particular historical setting which deeply informs the novels' political bent. The most fantastic of these in Gothic terms, *St. Leon* (1799), tells the story of a man who struggles with the unexpectedly unpleasant results of having been given the gifts of the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone against the back-drop of the Protestant Reformation in sixteenth-century continental Europe. The narrator of *Fleetwood* (1805) indicates Godwin's new interest in exploring the abnormal psyche in the tale of an aberrantly egocentric man whose inability to trust his wife nearly leads him to destroy her. Delving even deeper into abnormal psychology, *Mandeville* (1817) explores the descent of a troubled narrator into madness in an England torn apart by Civil War. These latter two novels in which the reader must weigh more and more evidence that his narrator is actually mad may well have influenced Poe's explorations of abnormal psychology in such tales as "The Tell-tale Heart," "The Black Cat" and "William Wilson."

Clearly Poe shared with Godwin a fascination with anatomizing the mind of a character by allowing that character to tell his own tale. His work in this vein was not, however, always in the serious mode; in his "How to Write a *Blackwood* Article," Poe humorously satirizes the dilemma of the author who attempts to achieve Gothic suspense with the use of a first person narrator. In this tale, Psyche Zenobia's first hand account of her tragic and bizarre decapitation on the town clock makes light of a central paradox of the genre and calls attention to the basic unreliability of the narrator who tells his or her own tale.¹¹

Arthur Gordon Pym calls up the tradition of the Godwinian novel at nearly every turn—beginning with its very title. Critics have noted the similarity

between the name of the narrator, “Arthur Gordon Pym” and the author, “Edgar Allan Poe.” Similarly, “Caleb Williams” as a name raises questions concerning the relationship between narrator and author: “Williams” of course recalling Godwin’s own first name, and “Caleb” alluding to a spy who worked for Moses in the Old Testament—thus Caleb can be interpreted as “William’s spy.”¹² Pym’s opening words likewise recall the Godwinian tradition; Godwin’s narrators inevitably open their tales by discussing their upbringing and education, usually in order to reveal aspects of their early life and early personal qualities that ultimately led to disaster. This convention has a twofold purpose; in addition to providing important background information for the reader to factor into his or her judgment of the narrator’s actions as they unfold, beginning the character’s story in such a way can also be seen as a bid for veracity, contributing to a distancing of the narrator from the author of the work.

Poe takes such a bid a step farther in actually having his narrator refer to Poe himself as editor in the Preface, and in closing the novel with the final “Note,” presumably by the editor, Poe. Pym’s expression of anxiety about his ability to write a viable novel, and about the credibility of his adventures are clearly a further attempt to fool the audience into thinking him to be real. In going to such lengths to establish the veracity of his narrator’s existence, Poe seems to have followed the example of another gothic novelist who drew much from Godwin, Scottish author James Hogg. In his 1824 *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Hogg similarly took pains to distance himself from the text by having his narrator refer to “James Hogg” as an editor of the text; indeed “James Hogg” even appears as a character in the narrative towards the end of the tale. Hogg even went so far as to publish a letter in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* announcing particular discoveries relating to the events of the novel prior to the novel’s publication, later incorporating this letter into the fabric of his novel as well.

Very much in the spirit of Godwin’s narrators, Pym immediately displays a tendency towards what Godwin called “precipitation,” or acting hastily and rashly, and without regard for possible consequences. Oddly, Pym’s response to his near-death experience in the *Ariel* at the beginning of Chapter 1, and the sensational tales of mutiny, shipwreck, and cannibalism that he hears from his friend Augustus, lead him only to long the more to go to sea. One may think of Robert Walton, the narrator of Mary Shelley’s

Frankenstein (1818), the most famous of the products of the “Godwinian school,” who as an ambitious sea captain experiences only a renewed passion for adventure from reading such sea tales as Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*—the kind of sea tale that would make most readers hope never to set foot on a deck.

In addition to a tendency towards precipitative behavior, Godwinian narrators generally have a healthy regard for their own attributes, despite the remorse they unanimously express for their many past sins. Pym’s self-assurance, particularly as he expresses it while attempting to survive on the wreck of the *Grampus*—“I suffered less than any of us, being much less reduced in frame, and retaining my powers of mind in a surprising degree, while the rest were completely prostrated in intellect, and seemed to be brought to a species of second childhood”¹³—bears a striking similarity to confident statements made by Godwinian narrators, who often confess to finding themselves physically attractive. Upon drinking his elixir of life and recapturing his youth, for example, Reginald St. Leon remarks, “I knew not how to take away my eyes from the mirror before me.”¹⁴ Similarly, Casimir Fleetwood, when relating his marriage to a much younger woman, avows, “My person was pleasing, and my demeanour graceful; circumstances which had acquired me in Paris the appellation of *the handsome Englishman*.”¹⁵

As a common convention of Gothic fiction, imprisonment, or the fear of imprisonment in running from the law, plays an important role in many of Godwin’s novels. Pym’s period of imprisonment as a stowaway in the hold of the *Grampus* and Poe’s exploration of the psychological effects of being deprived of light, fresh air, clean water, and adequate nourishment strongly parallels Caleb Williams’ vividly depicted incarceration in jail as well as St. Leon’s 12-year imprisonment by the Spanish Inquisition. One of Godwin’s chief purposes in his political novels was to expose the indecencies of the prison system in contemporary Britain. Carefully researching the state of the prisons of the day, Godwin adds footnotes to the text of *Caleb Williams* during the episode of Caleb’s incarceration in order to make it clear that his details relating to the state of prison cells and buildings and to the care of inmates are entirely factual. In Poe’s novel, Pym’s period of confinement seems also to function on a deeper level, and one much more psychological in nature—representing perhaps a gestational period, or Pym’s passing through a period of death in the coffin-like box to a symbolic rebirth.

Pym's dog "Tiger" plays an interesting role in this episode. Having been twice rescued from death by Tiger in the past, Pym is delighted to find that Augustus has secreted the dog on board. Poe, however, puts a chilling twist on the love between man and beast when the measure of Pym's desperation in the hold can be assessed by Tiger's turning feral from want of food and water. Interestingly, Godwin, too, portrays the intense loyalty dogs to his narrators in at least two novels; in *Fleetwood*, the narrator's faithful pet follows him all the way from Wales to Oxford when the narrator enrolls in the university. In *St. Leon*, a dog described much like Pym's "Tiger" suffers for his great love for the narrator. Like Tiger, who in the mutiny of the *Grampus* saves his master yet again by killing a mutineer, St. Leon's dog performs similar feats of heroism, at one point pulling a drowning boy from a river. In each of these texts, a far-fetched episode demonstrating the pure love of a dog for his master seems to be a useful tool for intensifying the emotional experience of the novel and for making the narrator a more sympathetic personality.

The plot devices of imprisonment and escape allowed Godwin reliable means by which to develop high suspense in his novels. *Arthur Gordon Pym* is so loaded with suspense and adventure as to seem almost a parody of the Gothic genre. One way in which Godwin characteristically intensifies suspense is by creating situations in which a character's worst fear is realized immediately upon his expressing it. In putting together his theory concerning Falkland's past crime, Caleb repeatedly commits actions while hoping Falkland will not see or hear him. Inevitably, Falkland appears immediately, as if summoned supernaturally to the scene by Caleb's very anxiety. Poe seems almost to be making fun of this kind of heavy-handed device when, despite Augustus's careful plans to disguise Pym and to spirit him onto the *Grampus* after dark, Pym finds himself nevertheless face to face with his grandfather, the person he least wishes to meet. Pym proceeds to befuddle the poor old man in a humorous deflation of the suspense of the episode.

The element of disguise in this episode likewise parallels a common Godwinian situation. Caleb Williams often experiments with aspects of disguise in his desperate attempts to flee his relentless pursuers. At one point he rubs ash on his face and dresses in the rags of the poor in order to pass as a Jew in metropolitan London; at another point he quickly lays on an Irish brogue to confuse his captors when he is apprehended trying to escape the country. St. Leon similarly affects an array of disguises to

elude pursuers throughout his narrative; ultimately his attainment of the elixir of life, which restores him permanently to a state of youth 32 years younger, proves to be the ultimate, fool-proof disguise. The issue of disguise in Godwin is, obviously, closely tied to the narrator's exploration of his own identity and his assertion of self through his narrative. Of course, the situation also allows for rich theoretical readings when one steps back from the narrative and considers the role of the writer in playing with his own sense of self and his role as author in creating a startlingly realistic first-person narrator. David Ketterer, for one, has discussed deception as a theme and a technique in this novel, focusing on the ways in which *Pym* continually challenges the reliability of our perceptions of reality.¹⁶

Certainly the richest episode of disguise in *Pym* is that in which Pym disguises himself to impersonate the dead body of his shipmate Hartmann Rogers, to terrify the mutineers and to help his friends stage a counter take-over. Pym's detailed description of the corpse and his various attempts to approximate its horrible aspect in his own appearance take the Godwinian narrator's exploration of self to a new and much darker level of confrontation with death and physical corruption. The disarming nature of this passage brings to mind similarly bizarre episodes in which Godwin experiments with this tactic particularly as a means of exploring aspects of the aberrant personality. The best examples are found in *Fleetwood*. As a young student in school, the narrator Fleetwood participates in a complex scheme by which he and his friends aim to humiliate one of their over-achieving colleagues by creating a life-size puppet to impersonate a schoolmaster. The visually impaired over-achiever is perfectly fooled by the puppet, and the violent harangues of this pseudo-schoolmaster actually drive the boy to suicide in a prank gone horribly wrong. Later in the novel, Fleetwood deals with his rage at the presumed infidelity of his wife by dressing up two wax dummies in their clothing, using the dummies to act out a mock wedding feast, and then tearing the dummies to shreds in a terrifyingly psychotic fit of rage. It is interesting to note that as in *Pym*, what the author is exploring here is the power of outward appearance as the signifier of identity and ultimately as a means of attacking and even destroying others. In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley would explore this idea even further in demonstrating that when appearance is blindly accepted as a valid signifier of character, great violence can be the result.

One of the most intriguing elements of Poe's novel is the relationship between Pym and his friend Augustus, his companion throughout the first half of the novel. The references to the closeness of these young men's relationship, the fact of their sharing a bed and "lying close," strongly prefigure the relationship between Melville's Ishmael and Queequeg of *Moby-Dick* (1851). While scholars have noted that Augustus' age and the date of his death tie him closely to the figure of Poe's brother Henry,¹⁷ the reader may also sense a subtle homoeroticism implicit in the attachment between these two characters. Judith Sutherland has identified aspects of the doppelgänger in their relationship, an old folk motif that offers a complex symbolic means of exploring identity and otherness, two aspects of the same personality, or the dangerously potent attraction and hatred between two characters who mirror each other in powerful ways; Poe's "William Wilson" is certainly one of the finest examples of the use of this motif in modern literature.¹⁸ Clearly Poe is doing much more with Augustus than offering a portrait of his dead brother, as the two characters balance each other in intriguing ways. A drunken Augustus nearly leads a sober Pym to his death in the novel's first episode; later Augustus' life amongst the crew of the *Grampus* neatly balances Pym's pseudo-death in the ship's hold; this balance of active and passive "doubles" may remind the reader of the similar situation in which Victor Frankenstein falls into a nine-month state of near-delirium and confinement in bed while his newly created creature makes his first foray into the world.

But Poe, interestingly, strikes off from the doppelgänger aspects of Pym's relationship with Augustus nearly as soon as he develops it. Pym's reemergence from the ship's hold in the impersonation of a corpse, unsettles the balance of the doubles and knocks Augustus from his status as a major player in the novel. Augustus loses his place as Pym's older brother figure and caretaker and gradually becomes more and more ill, until he dies at the novel's exact center. His near immediate decomposition and the falling apart of his body when the others throw it into the sea to be devoured by the circling sharks, symbolize his decomposition as a key player.¹⁹ Perhaps the oddest aspect of this scene is Pym's relatively rational response to Augustus' grisly end.

Pym's psychological movement away from his fraternal attachment to and his idolization of Augustus in the novel's earliest chapters charts an important aspect of his growth as a character. By the time of Augustus'

death, he has been utterly superseded by the figure of the half-breed Dirk Peters, whose initially appalling physical qualities are gradually mollified in the reader's memory, as his behavior makes him seem more and more to be the most rational and capable actor in the tale. Interestingly, this process of mollification begins for the reader in Peters' humane treatment of Augustus during and after the mutiny on the *Grampus*; Peters' odd affection for Augustus is acknowledged by his grumbling fellow mutineers. How does one of the most dangerous, frightening, and unattractive characters in the novel become central both to the narrative and to the narrator's own life and mind? Again one might think of Melville's Ishmael and Queequeg. Perhaps the answer lies in such a character's ability to challenge the narrator's preconceptions about otherness and difference.

Godwin's use of subtle elements of homoeroticism is an aspect of many of his novels. Caleb Williams' intense love-hate relationship with his patron and tormenter Falkland and the ways in which these characters "double" each other have been fruitfully explored in this light.²⁰ His psychotic narrators, Fleetwood and Mandeville, each develop an intense hatred for a perceived rival that from a psychoanalytic perspective can only be interpreted as having a sexual basis; each frequently comments on the beauty and attractiveness of his particular nemesis. Both of these situations perfectly illustrate Eve Sedgwick's theory of homosocial desire, in which intense desire between men is channeled into hateful competition; one of the texts with which Sedgwick most persuasively illustrates this aspect of desire is Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.²¹ Godwin's *Cloudesley* (1830) is perhaps his most thorough treatment of the power of attraction between men and the inherent dangers therein. In this novel the young hero, Julian, continually expresses a desire for an intense male bond—first directed towards his friend Francesco Perfetti, and later towards the infinitely charming bandit known as St. Elmo—friendships described as having the mix of fraternal love and hero-worship characterized by Pym's early relationship with Augustus.

Another figure in *Cloudesley* that offers a strong parallel to Dirk Peters is Julian's dark and brooding guardian Borromeo, whose misanthropy is ultimately recuperated by the example of the noble Julian. Borromeo is actually a recasting of an earlier misanthrope, Bethlem Gabor, one of the most memorable figures in *St. Leon*, whose response to the violent loss of his family drives him to imprison and torment St. Leon because of St.

Leon's attempts to contribute to the benefit of his fellow man.²² In both of these cases, a wrathful, dangerous, and physically intimidating character is gradually softened by his contact with the hero of the novel; the evolution of Peters as a character clearly follows the same trajectory. It is important to note the clear relationship of these brooding characters to the Byronic hero, Byron himself having been deeply influenced by Godwin's work.²³

Reading *Arthur Gordon Pym* as a product of the Godwin school places several of the novel's characteristics into sharp focus. Its near-parody of Gothic conventions and relentless suspense not only reveals Poe at his best as a master of this genre, but shows him working out aspects of these conventions that would turn up again and again throughout the body of his later work. More importantly, Poe is undeniably successful here in developing the veracity of a peculiar and challenging first-person narrator, and in exploring that narrator's psyche with incredible complexity in Pym's descriptions of his adventures, in symbolic episodes of death and rebirth, and in his relationships with other characters. In *Arthur Gordon Pym*, Poe seems to have set himself the goal of employing every convention he could glean from both Gothic fiction and the popular genre of the sea narrative—often abruptly moving away from one and on to another as soon as he has developed it. The sheer number of terrifying incidents and suspenseful episodes packed into this short work indeed suggest not merely an attempt to meet the conventions of any particular genre, but rather an effort to surpass them all.

As Burton Pollin aptly points out, Poe seems to have had little interest in the strain of social criticism running throughout Godwin's fiction, choosing instead to imitate Godwin's development of atmosphere, his unpredictable but carefully modulated plots, and his intensely realistic depictions of peculiar, often aberrant personalities.²⁴ Despite this major difference between Godwin's and Poe's approach, a close reading of *Arthur Gordon Pym* alongside Godwin's novels makes quite clear the particular aspects of Godwin's style and approach that Poe valued so highly. On the basis of *Arthur Gordon Pym* alone, Poe must be regarded as a major figure in the "school of Godwin," which managed by the mid-nineteenth century to take the first-person narrative to a startlingly new level of emotional intensity and psychological realism.

Notes

1. See, for example, Burton R. Pollin, ed. *The Imaginary Voyages: The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall, The Journal of Julius Rodman*, vol. 1 of *Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe* (Boston: Twayne, 1981; rpt. NY: Gordian P., 1994), and Pollin's "Poe's Life Reflected through the Sources of *Pym*," *Poe's Pym: Critical Explorations*, ed. Richard Kopley (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1992), 95-103. See also Richard Kopley's edition of the novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (NY: Penguin, 1999), and Ronald C. Harvey's discussion of studies of Poe's sources in *The Critical History of Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym: "A Dialogue with Unreason"* (NY: Garland, 1998), 110-12.
2. Bruce Weiner, "Novels, Tales, and Problems of Form in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*," in Kopley, *Critical Explorations*, 49-50. See also Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (NY: Stein and Day, 1960; rpt. NY: Dell, 1966), 392-400.
3. Burton Pollin, "Poe and Daniel Defoe: A Significant Relationship." *Topic* 16 (1976): 3-23.
4. For a discussion of Brockden Brown and Mary Shelley as disciples of Godwin, see Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993).
5. Burton Pollin, "Poe and Godwin," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 19 (1965): 237-53; rpt. in *Discoveries in Poe* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame P., 1970), 107-27. The majority of these references can be found in Pollin, *Godwin Criticism: A Synoptic Bibliography* (Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 1967), 554. See also Pollin's "Primitivism in *Imogen*," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 67 (1963): 186-90, for a discussion of analogies between Godwin's early novel *Imogen* (1784) and "The Fall of the House of Usher."
6. *Southern Literary Messenger* VIII (December 1835): 92-4; cited in Pollin, "Poe and Godwin," 240-1.
7. "Review of *Guy Fawkes: or the Gunpowder Treason. An Historical Romance*," *Graham's Magazine* X (November 1841): 214-22; cited in Pollin, "Poe and Godwin," 243.
8. "Chapter of Suggestions," *Opal* XIV (1845): 188-9; rpt. in Burton R. Pollin, ed., *Collected Writings of Poe: The Brevities: Pinakidia, Marginalia, Fifty Suggestions, and Other Works*, vol. II (NY: Gordian, 1985), 468-70; cited in Pollin, "Poe and Godwin," 250.
9. Godwin himself made revisions to the novel for new editions in 1796, 1797, 1816, and 1831.
10. Clemit, 6.

11. See Jonathan Auerbach's discussion of this tale as a satiric comment on the act of narration in *The Romance of Failure: First-Person Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and James* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 3-8.
12. Burton R. Pollin, "The Significance of Names in the Fiction of William Godwin." *Revue des Langues Vivantes* 37 (1971): 391.
13. Pollin, ed., *Collected Writings*, I:130.
14. William Godwin, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Pamela Clemit, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, vol. IV (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992), IV:283.
15. William Godwin, *Fleetwood, or, The New Man of Feeling*, ed. Pamela Clemit, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, vol. V (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992), 189.
16. David Ketterer, *The Rationale of Deception in Poe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1979), as discussed by Harvey, *Critical History*, 116.
17. See Marie Bonaparte, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation*. Trans. John Rodker. (London: Imago, 1949; rpt. NY: Humanities P., 1971), and Kopley, *Arthur Gordon Pym*, 224, n. 5., and 231, n. 3.
18. Judith Sutherland, *The Problematic Fictions of Poe, James, and Hawthorne*. (Columbia: U. of Missouri P., 1984), 33.
19. See J. Gerald Kennedy's thorough discussion of this aspect of the novel in "Pym Pourri: Decomposing the Textual Body," in Kopley, *Critical Explorations*, 169-71.
20. See Robert J. Corber, "Representing the 'Unspeakable': William Godwin and the Politics of Homophobia," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990): 85-101; and Alex Gold, Jr., "It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 19 (1977): 135-60.
21. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Murder Incorporated: *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*," in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (NY: Columbia UP, 1985), 97-117.
22. For a thorough analysis of Godwin's Bethlem Gabor, see Gary Kelly, "History and Fiction: Bethlem Gabor in Godwin's *St. Leon*," *ELN* 14 (1976): 117-20.
23. For Godwin's influence on Byron, see William St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: A Biography of a Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989), 339-40.
24. Pollin, "Poe and Godwin," 253.

Jack Sullivan and Poe's Influence on European Music

Burton R. Pollin

Through his numerous and varied writings, Professor Jack Sullivan has shown himself to be a firm proponent of Poe's outstanding contributions to literature and to aesthetics. It does not readily appear that this resource, culminating in *New World Symphonies*, has been known or acknowledged among students of Poe; hence, this piece of advocacy is being presented. The evidence of his thorough and perceptive knowledge of Poe's life and works lies even in Dr. Sullivan's early writings on Gothic terror fiction as well as on music.¹ For example, in his 1976 Columbia University dissertation, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*, published in 1978 (Ohio UP), he insightfully remarks that the 1955 tale by Walter de la Mare, "Bad company," was based, in part, on Poe's "Man of the Crowd." No scholar had hitherto traced this important connection.² Also in discussing the macabre, psychic, and supernatural tales of the prolific Algernon Blackwood (1869-1951), Sullivan trenchantly speaks of "the kind of self-destructive alter-ego which Poe called the Imp of the Perverse," and later he eloquently writes: "*Blackwood's* primitivism is Poe turned inside out. Instead of positing an 'otherness' Poe creates settings which emerge from and embody the human psyche. The horror in Poe is the solipsistic horror of being entombed in one's own mind." Sullivan declares *Blackwood's* work, "The Listener," to be a "genuine horror tale which exploits all of the physical senses. As in Poe's '...Valdemar,' each of the senses is given a distinct musical voice, gradually blending with the other voices in a dark fugue of sensations" (101, 123). This is a typical small sample of Sullivan's breadth of response to a literary subject, employing a wide gamut of associations drawn from all the arts with sensitively experienced responses. For his compendious 1986 *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, he managed to secure a rich, well-balanced contribution on Poe by Arthur Krystal.³

His 1990 anthology, *Words on Music: From Addison to Barzun*, was justly praised by recent Guggenheim Foundation President Joel Conarroe as containing a "robust chorus of eloquent voices" and by Gary Schmidgall as having "graceful and pointed introductions" to sixty articles chosen with "flair and inventiveness." They serve "to illuminate the history of western music," as the knowing Seymour Solomon, founder of Vanguard Records well states.⁴ One single instance of far-flung research and zestful

discrimination is the included “Notes on Ravel” by Ned Rorem of 1975, of “chatty, feisty informality”; here Maurice Ravel acknowledges the vital effect of Poe’s “Philosophy of Composition” on his own entire output—to be indicated below. Rorem’s passage (p. 303) was possibly a seminal element in Sullivan’s later fully developed views of Poe’s great influence on Ravel and Debussy. But the spirit of Poe’s expressed laudation of music as the most noble and abstract of the arts, because the most enthralling, enters also into the exuberant book Preface and the separate introductions seductively. Sullivan certainly knows and shares in Poe’s much quoted effect of music, “[the] excess of pleasure...those supernal ecstasies of which the music affords us merely a suggestive and indefinite glimpse.” This tribute to music’s potency was also in the November 1844 first set of Poe’s “Marginalia” entries; it had appeared in his 1842 review of Longfellow’s *Ballads* and was to be elaborated, in the lecture and essay called “The Poetic Principle” of 1848.⁵ Linked to “rapture” as the most successful achievement of a creative artist, whether literary or musical, the postulated attribute of “indefinitiveness”—Poe’s invented term—is discussed in more than ten passages in his works.⁶ In consequence, a truly effective composition must avoid employing imitative tone or any obvious inserted “program” or any moral. This fiat was promulgated first in his purposeful 1839 review of George Pope Morris’s *National Melodies of America* and elaborated in the December 1844 “Marginalia” 44 and, even more fully, in “Marginalia” 202 of March 1848.⁷

In detailed informational essays, genre anthologies, collections, newspaper and journal reviews, concert commentaries, and disk liner notes, Sullivan has used his considerable knowledge of literature and music, always unpretentiously and enthusiastically, for the keenest interest and pleasure of varied readers.⁸ In 1994, he collected his preliminary ideas about Poe’s significance to the musician’s world here and abroad for a striking article entitled “New Worlds of Terror: The Legacy of Poe in Debussy and Ravel,” published in *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* (5, 1: 83-93). His basic argument is this: both Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy were “obsessed” not only by the life and the tales and poems of Poe but also by the aesthetic principles that he advanced in several reviews and well-known essays (see above). There will be opportunity to examine Sullivan’s presentation of his theses later, since he adapted the entire article for the third chapter of this seven-chapter book. His title was retained as well, save for his dropping the phrase “in Debussy and Ravel” since he had added several

more composers to the 1999 book, as will be seen.⁹ No attention seems to have been paid to the 1994 article by Poe scholars or by reviewers of his 1999 book. It was listed by the MLA Bibliography, on line, for those interested specifically in Poe's works or those two composers of the title, but the article could not attain a place in the last (1993) bibliography of Poe-related materials in *Poe Studies*. Among the musical *cognoscenti*, the Debussy-Poe connection has been well known and the Ravel interest seemed to be tangential rather than evidentiary.¹⁰ The title is off-putting for those musically-minded scholars who can scarcely feel an initial interest in an apparent combination of Gothic terror fiction and song or symphony. Adapted into the 1999 volume, however, it was expanded to include Sergei Rachmaninoff's choral symphony on the "Bells," a smaller work on the same poem by the Dane Poul Ruders and a ten-movement symphonic work by Olivier Messiaen. The fact that the Poe chapter had clearly had a long incubation period before 1999 suggests that many other chapters went through a similar maturation, lending richness to the material and adequate time to test and revise various aspects of the original thesis, about the reverse relationship. Sullivan's many reviews of musical programs, participation in numerous conferences on music, and opportunities to review and judge the best and latest recordings have increased his appreciative capacities, to the great benefit of all seven stimulating chapters.¹¹

Rarely has there been such a widespread approval by reviewers of a book with a new, seemingly nontraditional emphasis: *New World Symphonies: How American Culture Changed European Music*. Before examining the Poe chapter, let us sample the critical response to this work of 1999, thereby also covering some of its major virtues. But first we must indicate the non-Poe topics of the other six chapters, which are tellingly presented by Mr. Sullivan. Chapter 1, "The Legacy of the Sorrow Songs," is chiefly about Antonin Dvorak's wonderfully fruitful stay in America, 1892-1894, culminating in the memorable symphony which "thematizes" the book, even in its title; also about the English composer Samuel Taylor-Coleridge who had three musically productive sojourns in America 1904, 1906, 1910; and about Frederick Delius, productive in his stay in Florida (1884-1886). Chapter 2, "Hiawatha Fever: The Legacy of Longfellow," examines chiefly the poem's sway over Dvorak, Taylor-Coleridge (whose cantata on the Indian briefly outdid Handel's "Messiah" in popularity), and Frederick Delius—for a single-performance tone poem. Chapter 4, "New World Songs: The Legacy of Whitman," after keenly analyzing Whitman's free

verse as an advantage to the composer, convincingly displays the resultant achievements in settings of the Englishmen Delius, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, and of the expatriates, Kurt Weill and Paul Hindemith. Chapter 5, “Beyond the Frontier: New World Landscape” includes the American city as well as all the lush and dangerous environments prompting the efforts of travelers or escapees from “old Europe,” such as Edgard Varèse, Darius Milhaud, and Benjamin Britten. Chapter 6, about “Broadway, Hollywood, and...Silly Songs,” examines the creational lure of America upon Kurt Weill, Eric Korngold, and other gold-seekers in Hollywood. Chapter 7, “New World Rhythm: The Spread of Jazz,” is more discursive than the others, but highlights several who ingeniously accept the transmutational challenge, such as Ernst Krenek, in his 1925 jazz opera, “*Jonny spielt auf*,” and Eric Satie, and again Maurice Ravel (reconciling jazz writing with his Poe partiality).

In briefly surveying reviews of this book of early 1999, I have two aims: to suggest the unusually laudatory tone and content from experts and generalists alike and to indicate the extent of attention paid to the Poe chapter (number 3). I must speak of only a few commentaries from amongst dozens seen, most of which mention the prevailing felicities of style, the relevance of information, and the enthusiasm of the author.

The longest, most thorough review comes from Peter Dickinson, of the authoritative Oxford journal *Music and Letters* (November 2000), who summarizes all seven chapters in five pages, with approval until his final listing of eleven somewhat trifling errors in the text and instances of needlessly popularizing tone.¹²

Edward Rothstein, for the *NY Times* of May 1, 1999, writes a long, lively, favorable review, which devotes a paragraph to the two French composers, Debussy and Ravel, who felt like Poe’s characters, “trapped in isolation and horror” and “adopted his esthetic and emulated his refined despair.”

In the *Washington Post* of July 18, 1999, Sudip Bose, notes the “meticulous research” supporting Sullivan’s claim that Europe’s prime composers “owe a greater cultural debt to the new World” than the opposite, and have “used the new World to rediscover something in themselves...lost in time or atrophied by convention.” The final paragraph rightly treats of “insightful commentary” and the “unflagging championing of works seldom heard today.”

In the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of April 30, 1999, Nina Ayoub devotes half her review to Debussy's self-identification with Roderick Usher and, along with Ravel, to their application of Poe's aesthetic theories.

Mark Lehman, in the *American Record Guide* of mid-1999, finds "wit, verve, and elegance" in the book, which is "unified by an authentic, fertile, indeed revelatory idea," the greater influence of American composers on the European than the reverse. It is "packed with...interesting details, consistently animated by...intelligence and curiosity."

Larry Lipkis, in the *Library Journal* of March 15, 1999, in his one-paragraph review, notes the effect of Poe's writings and Sullivan's "remarkable perspectives on the relationship of literature and music" as well as his "beautifully crafted prose."

In Alan Hirsch's paragraph in *The Booklist* of March 1, 1999, Poe's stress on "brevity, conciseness and...technique" predominates as the American influence upon European composers.

In *Billboard* of May 29, 1999, Ken Smith thinks that Sullivan's generalizations about American and European cultures and their leading figures are heedless of sharp differences. Incidentally, three of his nine brief paragraphs concern Poe material. His objections are implicitly answered by Sullivan in the particulars given for each of the cultural agents used to support "the piquant twist" of cultural history mentioned by Edward Rothstein in the *Times* [see above]. Yet Smith praises Sullivan's "breadth in connecting figures across disciplinary divides."

John Dizikes, in *The Journal of American History* of September 2000, writes of this "lively, discursive, opinionated and engaging" book of which the "subtitle indicates the breadth of his approach." He mentions the role of Poe as a major influence, but thinks that Sullivan's categorization of groups is insubstantial and subject to strong debate. But ultimately, "his enthusiasm...is winning."

In his long review in the *Boston Globe* of August 26, 1999, Richard Dyer credits Sullivan with discussing a variety of significant figures with many memorable but overlooked facts. Above all, his book "makes you want to hear the music...talk[ed] about"—most true!

Finally, in perhaps the earliest review, in *Publishers Weekly*, of February 1, 1999, Jonathan Bing *et al.* praise this brief but far-reaching book about “cross-cultural influences” and concentrate on Poe, noting that he put his expertise as “a horror anthologist: to good use in the third chapter.”

In the dark light of the last review’s reference to Sullivan as “a horror anthologist,” two of the epigraphs of chapter 3 are curiously provocative; one is from Maurice Ravel: “My teacher was Edgar Allan Poe” and the other from Debussy: “I spend my existence in the House of Usher.” Sullivan explains that Poe’s influence on both shows how one art nourishes another, not only through providing texts for musical settings but even a literary philosophy for its structures. Ned Rorem in 1975 had made this point about Ravel (see my paragraph 2) and others are cited for Debussy, who was simply “obsessed” by Poe and Roderick Usher, the morbid hero of Debussy’s incomplete opera, labored over for many years. Both French composers and others throughout Europe, e.g., Rachmaninoff in Russia, in his major work “The Bells,” responded to Poe’s poetic and narrative texts with their “subtle sense of the sinister” and to his favoring through the arts a pleasing escape from the constant and ultimately triumphant attacks upon ephemeral life. Poe’s ever active “cosmic dread” was displayed in the tales of “Valdemar” and “MS. Found in a Bottle” and in many of his most musical poems, such as “Ulalume” and “The Raven.” He was embraced by the “turn of the century decadents” as an inspiration, who also deprecated America’s commercialism as in “Peter Pendulum” and “Thingum Bob, Esq.” and doubted the eventual triumph of industrial development and democratic government, as in “Mellonta Tauta” and “Monos and Una.”

Sullivan views Poe’s “Philosophy of Composition,” as furnishing the foundation of many works of Ravel and Debussy: the “preconceived design” for a completely unified effect,¹³ the subtle “suggestiveness and complexity” through an indefinite “undercurrent of meaning” rather than bald, superficial, or didactic statement, and an over-all tone of melancholy. The two composers adopted Poe’s *dicta* differently, Debussy preferring “the visionary and the fantastic” and Ravel, the “calculated and artificial.” Sullivan finds convincing evidence in several letters over the years of Debussy’s absorption of Poe’s ideas and increasing feelings of consanguinity with Poe. In “Usher,” he notes, “are parallels between the protagonist Roderick and Debussy, even in their artistic endeavors, Usher being both musician and visual artist.” Usher’s art has the “spirit of abstraction” (found

by Debussy in contemporary Impressionist paintings) and he admired a “wild air” of Weber and “improvised dirges...amplify[ing] a Weber waltz.” The “parallel” which is so “striking” has been “oddly ignored by scholars.”¹⁴

Debussy made tentative efforts between 1902-1910, to base an opera upon “The Devil in the Belfry.” Sullivan brilliantly analyzes the effect of these scantily realized efforts upon Debussy’s own composing style and its mark upon later finished compositions: a “sly and mischievous sense of irony,” especially in “Gigues” and the “moonstruck *grotesquerie* of the cello sonata.” The two operas became “a sinister [and] seductive obsession” for an “isolated innovator who nursed loneliness and failure,” Sullivan claims. Debussy was almost reverent in his acceptance of Poe as a model creator, whose sounding words and compositions border on the domain of music while his precepts enable the artist to achieve perfection of form. The nexus between Poe and the more reserved, self-controlled Ravel was less emotional and less obvious, apprehended only by inferences, such as “the cataclysmic horror of *La Valse*, which Ravel called “a fantastic and fatefully inescapable whirlpool” and critics have thought to be a setting for “The Masque of the Red Death” or “MS. Found in a Bottle.” “Le Gibet” [the gallows] in its “hypnotic regularity” evokes the “fatal tolling” of “The Bells,” stanza 4. But the intellectual composer chiefly used Poe’s dicta about the need for unity, always planning with a “preconceived design” and keeping the artistic effort taut and trimmed to maintain full attention and total apprehension of the perfected structure.

The last third of the chapter was added to the base which had not been greatly changed in its approach and major content from the 1994 journal article. Sullivan now adds several composers in France and other countries who have set Poe works to music, but finds only three worthy of more than passing mention. His observations on Rachmaninoff’s “Bells” add much to the obvious commonplaces about the varied styles of each of the four sections—regarded by the composer as his best “symphony”—with chorus and soloists and a serviceable new textual translation by Konstantin Balmont. Sullivan finds its unity of symphonic design an evidence of the composer’s clear adherence to Poe’s aesthetic doctrines.

Next, Sullivan discusses the gigantic 1949 *Turangalîla* symphony by Olivier Messiaen of France, based on varied intellectual and narrative elements, such as Hindu writings, the “Tristan [and Isolde]” story, and a

Poe tale. Of the ten sections, three issue from the “darkness” and disharmony of “The Pit and the Pendulum” being placed as numbers 3, 7, and 9 although indicated by Messiaen as the first ones composed. Sullivan calls the whole work “Poe at his most ghostly and Gothic”—using “a chasmal brass motif” at the start and finish of the symphony, as well as a complete contrast between the three “sinister movements” and those sensuously and lushly representing “Love” or “The Sleep of Love.” The score, for large orchestra, the Ondes Martenot, a wailing electronic keyboard instrument, and also a gamelan group, is a masterpiece of careful musical construction adhering to Poe’s principles for quick and total effect.¹⁵

Finally, Sullivan includes the prominent Danish composer Poul Ruders whose “imagination [was] set afire” by Poe’s poetry “in which Poe merges strict form, symbolic content, and emotional intensity.” Sullivan, who interviewed him in 1996, finds extraordinary his 1993 setting for soprano and orchestra; it includes bell tones for voice and instrument, muted piano poundings, growls and shouts, and near medieval modes at the end.

In this short sample of modern Poe music, as with everything else in his book, Jack Sullivan’s whole-hearted and enthusiastic presentation convinces the reader of the vitality of the music under discussion. Whether a general reader or a musical adept, one is likely to resolve upon a first-hearing or a re-hearing of the work discussed, either via CD or in concert. For such an effect, Dr. Jack Sullivan’s commentaries are sufficiently motivating and persuasive.

Notes

1. Jack Sullivan is Professor of English; Chair, American Studies, at Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ. He has been adjunct professor for various subjects, such as literary criticism, modern British literature, American literature, at various universities, such as Hofstra, Columbia, and the New School for Social Research; and a speaker on music and literature at a dozen national and special conferences. His dissertation at Columbia University, 1976, became his first published book, *Elegant Nightmares* (q. v. below). For his various other writings see note 8, below.

2. I was unaware of Sullivan's observation (on p. 93) in my extensive study called "The Pathway of Edgar Allan Poe, Traced in the *Works of Walter de la Mare*," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 42, 1: (1999): 39-69, specifically 56 and 68, note 46. With credit to Jack Sullivan's keenness, I must cite my remark that only in this tale is there no overt reference to Poe although the derivation is patent. De la Mare's prose works being fairly inaccessible nowadays, a reader can easily verify this close linkage more readily through Sullivan's sequent anthology "companion" to *Elegant Nightmares* called *Lost Souls* (Akron: Ohio UP, 1983), 366-72.

3. Published by Viking, NY; the article occupies pp. 322-326.

4. These are from well-written and appreciative paragraphs of the book jacket for *Words on Music* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1990).

5. For Poe's various important uses of music's supreme "enthrallment" see the *Writings of...Poe*, vol. 2 ("The Brevities"): 119-20, 337-343; James Harrison, *Complete Works of Poe*, vol. 11: 74-75 and vol. 14: 273-274. See also B. Pollin, "Poe's 'Eldorado' Viewed as a Song," *Prairie Schooner* 46 (Fall 1973): 228-35.

6. The eight *loci* with the short texts are given in Poe, *Creator of Words* (Bronxville: Smith, 1980) and also, augmented by merger with supplements, via the web site: <eapoe.org>.

7. Poe derived his ideas from some undiscovered translation of two works of L'Abbate Gian Vincenzo Gravina (1664-1718): *Della Ragion Poetica* (1708) or "Of the Rationale of Poetry" and *Della Tragedia* (1715). For ample discussion of these important sources, see *Writings*, vol. 2: 119-20, 153-56, and 337-43.

8. The broad scope and great variety of his writings can be shown by these few samples: articles on L.P. Hartley and Shirley Jackson in E. F. Bleiler's compendious *Supernatural Fiction Writers* (1985); on Clive Barker in *Studies in Weird Fiction* (Winter 1994); on "Psychological, Antiquarian, and Cosmic Horror" in M. B. Tynn's 1981 *Horror Literature*; on Kurt Weill's *Americana* in James R. Heintze (ed.),

Reflections on American Music of 2000; notes for “works by Phillip Rhodes et al. on a 1969 CD; on Berlioz’s *Fantastic Symphony* on a 1998 Delos CD; and on “Portraits of Three Ladies,” on a 1999 CD. Over 70 reviews include 30 in the *New York Times* and 29 in the *Washington Post*. He has also published fiction in the *Kelsey Review* of 1989 and in *New Terrors*, Pocket Books of 1982.

9. The prefatory “Acknowledgments” in the 1999 Sullivan book notes that “portions of Chapter 3 originally appeared in the journal,” with no details given.

10. Edward Lockspeiser’s *Debussy* of 1936 paid some attention to the composer’s commitment for many years to composing an opera based upon “The Fall of the House of Usher” and also, for a short period, one based upon “The Devil in the Belfry.” By 1982 this biography had reached its sixth (and revised) edition. The Ravel interest was less objectively defined as well-known compositions or as specific statements published by Ravel himself.

11. The google.com article on Jack Sullivan in its “selective Articles and Reviews” lists about seventy reviews, of both musical and literary persons and topics, and about eleven essays or articles, including several full interviews. See also note 10, above.

12. I feel duty-bound to add one more trifling error: the confusion of Louis Moreau Gottschalk with Louis Ferdinand Gottschalk, on p. 85. May G. Evans, in her book, *Poe and Music* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1939) p. 45, lists the lesser Gottschalk, who did compose a Poe song, and she specifically warns the reader against making this error. Sullivan’s index, only for Louis Moreau Gottschalk, attests to his mistake.

13. Neither Debussy nor Ravel nor Baudelaire nor, for that matter, Jack Sullivan could have known that Poe had “borrowed” the idea, the very wording, and the supportive argument for using the “method” of the “preconceived design” from Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s essay “Art in Fiction.” Originally in a London journal, *The New Monthly Magazine* of the early 1830s, it was piratically reprinted from the magazine in a two-volume collection of Bulwer’s essays, which Poe reviewed in the November 1841 issue of *Graham’s Magazine*. In *The Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of Sir Edward Lytton-Bulwer* (Phila.: Lea and Blanchard, 1841), the article was on pp. 52-88. Very few copies of the two volumes survive and that essay was not reprinted in England until 1875, after the author’s death. The full account is given in my article, “Bulwer-Lytton’s Influence on Poe’s Works and Ideas, Especially for an Author’s ‘Preconceived Design’” in *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, 1, 1 (Spring 2000): 5-12. Of course, we should all be grateful to Poe for removing the whole matter from limbo to the flourishing world of literature and music, both profiting from its wide dissemination.

14. Sullivan, so all inclusive in his widespread research, seems to have overlooked Dore Ashton’s “The Symbolist Legacy,” in *Arts and Architecture*, 81 (Sept., Nov.,

Dec., 1964) which regards Poe as “inventing” abstract art works in “Usher.” Debussy, but certainly not Poe, also may have known that “Weber’s Last Waltz” was really Karl Reissinger’s “Weber’s Last Thought,” either mistranslated or misapplied popularly in Poe’s day. The melody, incidentally, is extremely sedate, not wild, q.v. in Pollin *Discoveries in Poe* (Notre Dame UP, 1970), 84-86.

15. Sullivan mentions Poe’s “tales” as in the work, but I find only “The Pit and the Pendulum” specified in the NAXOS CD (8.554478.79) of 2000, and in Robert Sherlaw Johnson’s notes on it for the Angel Records CD (SB 3853) of 1978. As for this work of 1946-1948—commissioned by Sergei Koussevitsky for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and initiated in 1949—Johnson indicates it as like “a vast musical painting...a surrealistic dreamworld [sic] where love and death, pain and ecstasy or the sensuous world of love and the horrors of...Poe come together in stark contrast.” My thanks are owed to the NYPL Performance Arts Library for a copy of the liner-notes, also to Elizabeth Davis, the gracious Director of the Columbia Music Library, and to the Bronxville Library’s cooperation in obtaining for me some of the materials needed. I am grateful to Jack Sullivan for his mention of Messiaen in his article on “Poe” in the *New Grove Dictionary* (article on Poe, co-edited with Paul Griffith) and subsequently referring me to the liner-notes confirmation of the composition’s close links to Poe’s work.

Subterranean Homesick Poe: Lou Reed's *The Raven*

Stephen Rachman

At what moment did Edgar Allan Poe, whose long and mournful shadow has been repeatedly cast over the popular culture of the twentieth century, begin to shade his way into the music scene?¹ His face was there in June 1967, amid a choir of cultural references, between Carl Jung and Fred Astaire, just above the Liverpool comedian Tommy Handley and Marilyn Monroe, beckoning to anyone with eyes to see from the celebrated cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. In November of that same year, Poe must still have been on John Lennon's psychedelic mind for he invoked him by name on the *Magical Mystery Tour* in the gnomish, nightmarish "I am the Walrus." "Man, you should have seen them," Lennon sings, his voice full outrage and vinegar, "kicking Edgar Allan Poe." These were "concept albums," of course. They were works that aspired to more thematic unity than an ordinary LP of assorted tunes, and dared, in those days of heady experimentation, to dream of a cultural landscape in which the teenybopper and the avant-garde would have regular business together; where Da-Doo Ron-Ron was not so distant from Dada; where lost Lenores might meet Lucy in the sky with diamonds, and stately ravens croaking nevermore might magically morph into elementary penguins singing Hare Krishna; where you and I and he and she might all meld into one we and, lo and behold, *we are the egg men*.

Perhaps Beatles sometime engineer, Alan Parsons, had partaken of Lennon's sensibility in the Abbey Road studios or had all along cultivated his own taste for Poe. In 1975, he produced the Art-Rock/Progressive Rock/Geek Rock concept album *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* based on tales and poetry of the dark master generously larded with layers of keyboard synthesizers and oratorio. These are the explicit moments of Poe's *entrée* into the pop music world, and he enters from above, a figure of world literary significance or an early avatar of the drug culture. But Poe was also there slightly before this grand entrance. I think he actually slipped in under the radar, or shall we say, appeared hidden in plain view in 1965 by way of Bob Dylan's charming love song "Love Minus Zero/No Limit" (the title—the first time in the history of song—is a fraction). The estranged lover in that song, be it Joan Baez (who has performed "Annabel Lee") or a mythic amalgam of artistic cool, doesn't have to say she is faithful because she is true like ice and fire. Aesthetically and emotionally free from the

trap of success, she knows there is no success like failure and failure is no success at all. And then, in the end, with the wind howling like a hammer and night blowing cold and rainy, Dylan concludes,

My love she's like some raven
At my window with a broken wing.

There, in 1965, Poe appeared on Bleeker Street as it were and then on turntables all over America and the world, his raven transformed into a dark and beautiful wounded lover, a subterranean artist free from the constrained perfection of banker's nieces to visit the bohemian windows of young love.

At that moment in the mid-1960s, Lou Reed, New York rocker with poetic, punk, pop and avant-garde ambitions was busy worming his way into that bohemian ethos that Dylan sang about. He was forming The Velvet Underground, becoming part of Andy Warhol's Factory scene and mixed-media/performance art ensemble, the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. He produced some of the songs of that *demi-monde*, the drug use ("Heroin") and sex ("Femme Fatale," "Venus in Furs") that would become part of pop history and legend. And yet, despite the blunt morbidity of lyrics like "Black Angel's Death Song" and albums with titles like *The Bells* (Arista 1992), it was certainly not foreordained that Reed would produce, some forty years on, *The Raven* (Warner Bros./Reprise 2003), "a two-hour excursion," as the press release has it, "into the obsessive world of Edgar Allan Poe as filtered through Reed's eclectic sensibility." In fact, Reed only recently came to Poe in a serious way. "I really got into Poe when I did the Halloween at St. Anne's Church [in Brooklyn] with Hal Willner, my co-producer," recalls Reed. "When I read 'The Tell-Tale Heart' out loud, I came to understand it in a way I never had before, and I realized my understanding of it had been very superficial." Working with Robert Wilson, Reed created a musical stage production entitled "POEtry," which debuted in the United States at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2001 and incorporated elements from eleven works by Poe. Reed revised this material into *The Raven*. To supplement his band, he recruited a cast of talent to lend vocal and instrumental diversity, headlined by the likes of Laurie Anderson, Elizabeth Ashley, David Bowie, Steve Buscemi, Ornette Coleman, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Willem Dafoe, Kate and Anna McGarrigle, Amanda Plummer, Fisher Stevens, and Kate Volk.

With a mixture of enthusiasm and self-deprecation, Reed has described the resultant polyphonic Poe tribute as “a radio play on steroids.”² The bulk of the critical notices paid to *The Raven* and its antecedent “POEtry” have dwelled on the fundamental incongruity of Reed and all that he represents (e.g. twentieth-century rock, punk, glam, sleeze, sex, drugs, daring experimentation, pretentious experimentation) taking on Poe and all that he represents (e.g. nineteenth-century classic Romantic literature, madness, horror, detectives, black birds, drugs, daring experimentation, pretentious experimentation). Perhaps in response to the mixed reviews the stage production received, his label has opted to release two versions of *The Raven* (I suppose with Poe, everything should have a double): the two-hour “*grand mal* version,” as Reed calls it, and a smaller, pared down version (the one upon which this essay is based). Reed himself was at first skeptical of the project. “I saw it as a can’t-win situation,” he told Jon Pareles in the *New York Times*.



I knew people would say “How dare he rewrite Poe?” But I thought, here’s the opportunity of a lifetime for real fun: to combine the kind of lyricism that he has into a flexible rock format. I really like my version of it. It’s accessible, among other things. And I felt I was in league with the master. In that kind of psychology, that interest in the drives and the meaning of obsession and compulsion—in that realm Poe reigns supreme.³

In other words, he was skeptical for canonical reasons but in short order the taboo of tampering with words of the master proved to be irresistible. Reed had discovered in Poe a kindred spirit, a psychological analog for the preoccupations of his whole career. What could be more like Poe? A can’t-win situation becomes, under the pressure of psychological affinity, a must-do. The Velvet Underground and the youthful *flâneur* of the wild side drifts in the mists of middle age to the night’s Plutonian shore.

The Stories of Edgar Allan Poe

After an overture which sounds more like an envoi of honking, drum fills, and electrified strumming, Reed begins in earnest, or at least in some kind of quasi-candor: “These are the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, not exactly the boy next door.” This up-tempo number meant to kick things off with a bit of energy strives to fix in the listener’s mind the figure of Poe as arch-punk. The incongruity of shouting out the name Edgar Allan Poe as if it were an epithet hurled by Johnny Rotten makes one smile but does not exactly persuade one of the validity of the implied bad-boy claim. Try and shout out all three of Poe’s names at the top of your lungs and see if you can still sound tough. When John Lennon invokes his name, it serves the image of Poe being stomped, but Reed seems intent on bolstering Poe’s own dangerous credentials. However, there is something too refined, too literary, about the name to convince the dubious that the author of “The Purloined Letter” would find a ready home amongst the mohawks and safety pins. Even a Teddy Boy, for all his Edwardian garb, at the end of the day, must brandish his blackjack and loutish diction—never part of Poe’s style. He was far too suspicious of the mob to be that kind of rabble-rouser. This is not to suggest that Poe was incapable of self-destructive behavior comparable to punk nihilism. Thomas O. Mabbott notes a tradition long told by New York newspaper reporters that on the day that Poe’s “Balloon Hoax” was published in the *Sun* in April 1844, “Poe, inebriated, stood outside the office telling people not to buy it, as he had written it.”⁴ Even if apocryphal, Malcolm McLaren could not have dreamed of a more sublimely punk gesture.

Rather, Reed expresses his own passionate relation to his material, and for him, Poe inspires a kind of punk energy. If Reed (born in 1942) forged his own bohemian, *demi-monde* sensibility in flight from the suburban conventions of Long Island and Syracuse University (at which he befriended the declining Delmore Schwartz), then Poe, or rather the themes in his stories (which Reed seems intent on conflating), is not exactly the boy next door. Like Dylan’s raven-lover, Reed positions this Poe in the youth culture as part of a post-World War II counter-cultural sensibility. For this reason, in the liner notes Reed claims Poe as “father to William Burroughs and Hubert Selby;” now there’s a family for you. Poe’s nightmare world stands in opposition to the sunny sitcom world of small town America,

Main Street and “My Three Sons.” (Is there any producer out there who would care to re-make “My Three Sons” with John Astin as Poe in the Fred MacMurray role and Burroughs, Selby and Reed as Mike, Robbie and Chip?) As Reed rattles off some of the narratives his album will address, he insists that because Poe’s fictional world is filled with “decapitations, poisonings,” it is “hellish not a bore” and therefore “you won’t need 3-D glasses to pass beyond this door.” The authenticity of the actual texts, Reed suggests, needs none of the 1950s Hollywood gimmickry that surrounded horror and science fiction in his childhood. Unlike other literary classics, Poe is not boring. Reed, himself never one to fear boring his audience, insists that his Poe need not be filtered through other twentieth-century versions or diversions. “No Nosferatu, Vincent Price or naked women here,” Reed boasts, just the undiluted *horreur verité* of Poe. Not that there is anything particularly horrifying about Reed’s album—in fact, the most horrific thing about it is probably the publicity still by Julian Schnabel that accompanied the CD (Reed’s connections to the New York *aestheterati* apparently know no bounds). It shows the rock-and-roll animal in a floppy-collared, unzipped shirt displaying a wiry pyramid of hair atop his flaccid middle-aged chest. Horror is invoked and remembered but not produced. It hardly matters whether or not Reed’s aesthetic take on Poe is accurate (Reed largely ignores many of the hoaxes, humor, or mediated elements in the tales), it expresses the terms on which Poe has been and continues to be embraced by youth culture.

Add to this the general perversity that what follows are not, strictly or loosely speaking, the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. Some of them are the previously released “stories” of Lou Reed (e.g. “Perfect Day” from *Transformer*, “The Bed” from *Berlin*), recast and rearranged. Others are amalgams of poems or riffs on poems and motifs, and others are purely instrumental. One pleasure that this exercise affords the listener is to tease out or guess at the connection between Reed’s sonic fictions and any given Poe text. By lumping them together as the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Reed expresses the nexus of his sympathy with Poe and offers a clue to the aesthetic rationale of *The Raven*. Under the pressure of a bohemian youth culture now reaching middle age, Poe’s relentless articulation of the perverse becomes for Reed a fundamental organizing principle.

The Valley of Unrest

For the listener looking closely for Poe references, Reed's album can be tricky because there is hardly a one-to-one correspondence between these songs and specific works of Poe. For example, a song entitled "I Wanna Know (The Pit and the Pendulum)" begins "Under the intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes." This warns the listener not to take the titles literally. Rowena from "*Ligeia*" appears in many places, via the disembodied recitative of Laurie Anderson in "Call on Me" and in the elegantly Anglicized monologue of Elizabeth Ashley on "The Valley of Unrest." This second Rowena then proceeds to address herself to a certain Roderick. Lenore appears with a tell-tale heart on "Burning Embers." Even "The Raven," which arguably sticks closest to the original material, adds elements that might derive from "The Oval Portrait" and Reed's eclectic sensibility. Because Reed has filtered Poe's tales and poems through a set of common motifs (perversity, guilt, rejection, *Liebestod*), a matrix of thematic association, all of his songs are pervious to each other. Some reviews have called this mode of appropriation postmodern but it is, more accurately, *pastiche*.

The duet "Call on Me" is a *berceuse maudit*, a gentle lamentation of perdition's aftermath. It illustrates the way Reed feels compelled to shuttle between glossing and dramatizing his relation to Poe. "Caught in the crossbow of ideas and dawns, stand I," he croons (or as close as he gets to crooning these days), "...reliving the past of the maddening impulse, violent upheaval, the pure driven instinct....Why didn't you call on me?" The first lines position the speaker in a medial space quintessential to Poe. Creative impulses vie with self-destructive ones. The chorus poses the question of the damned: Why was I not chosen? Of course there can be no reply. Laurie Anderson in the guise of Rowena counters in her trademark cool, ethereal *sotto voce*:

A wild being from birth
My spirit spurns control,
Wandering the wide earth
Searching for my soul

The exemplary, mad Poe narrator is conjoined with the archetypal haunted lady. Since this expresses a permanent condition ("caught" is the keyword), the song does not move toward resolution, but rather elegantly

has Rowena sing *a capella* the same chorus, “Why didn’t you call on me?” as if it were a lullaby. Announcing their unchosen state, Reed/Poe and his Rowena are alone together in their mutual damnation.

This is followed directly by Ashley’s breathy recitation of “The Valley of Unrest,” which is by no means a straight reading of Poe’s oft-revised early poem of the same name. It is perhaps the album’s most sustained and successful example of *pastiche*. Elements from the early “Valley of Nis” find their way into the mix:

It is a valley where time is not interrupted
Where its history shall not be interpreted.

The imaginary landscape then links itself to “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Tell-Tale Heart.” As with “Call on Me,” the speaker in “The Valley of Unrest” laments her condition. The sounds of bells and rain beset her with a synesthesia of “tears of perfect moan.” This Eulalie-like “world of moan” is followed by an instrumental punk funereal lament, musically reminiscent of the overture, “A Thousand Departed Friends.” The title alludes to the last line of “Shadow—A Parable.” Its unspoken dignity infuses the album with—such as it is—its pathos.

Sonic Fictions: The Impotence of the Perverse

Lou Reed and Edgar Allan Poe share some similarities. Both have lived and worked in New York City, enjoyed a fondness for black and blackness, courted and disdained the popular, are legendary and yet in some ways marginal in their professions, critically ambitious, self-destructive, hard to work with, perverse students of the perverse. Both have avidly recycled old material. In Poe, similar texts crop up in different places. Passages on perversity recur in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, “The Black Cat,” and “The Imp of the Perverse.” “Mesmeric Revelation” returns in a variation as “Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.” Stories and poems published in one collection appear in other collections; virtually every tale and poem has a complex history of reprints. It is altogether fitting and proper that Reed’s *The Raven* should incorporate a number of retellings of his own tales, as if Reed had discovered that Poe had been lurking in the old work all along.

The version of “Perfect Day,” Reed’s idyll from his popular solo album *Transformer* (1972), is a case in point. Sung by Antony, a singer whose voice has been described by Reed as “ethereal” in the liner notes, gives the lyric an amusingly otherworldly quality. He sounds like a *castrato* who has been nipped in the middle of adolescence. There is something punningly “reedy” about this vocal surrogate. This is Reed as Poe verging on Balzac: Perfect Day sung by La Zambinella, the mocking *castrato* in “Sarrasine.” “When La Zambinella sang,” Balzac writes, “the effect [on Sarrasine] was delirium. The artist felt cold; then he felt a heat, which suddenly began to prickle in the innermost depths of his being...He did not applaud, he said nothing, he experienced an impulse of madness, when desire has something frightening and infernal about it.”⁵ This works effectively. Reed manages to queer himself anew and Poe simultaneously, transforming the strung-out flatness of his own vocal style into a willowy prayer of androgynous longing. “A Perfect Day,” presented as one of the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, takes on the power of actual text, not unlike coming across “To One in Paradise” in “The Assigination.” When Antony warbles,

You made me forget myself.
I thought I was someone else,
Someone good.
Oh, It’s such a perfect day,

one hears an echo of Sarrasine’s predicament and the recollection of a perfection from which one is unspeakably distant and utterly cut off. Reed’s re-presentation of his old song might be called an instance of situational perversity. The alienation expressed in the lyric aptly parallels the alienation of the song placed in the context of *The Raven*; Reed might say of it, as the narrator of “The Assigination” says of the poem, “I had some difficulty in recognizing it as [my] own.”⁶

Reed’s chief interest in Poe has to do with the exploration of perversity: perversity as a principle of human existence and art, as the watchword of his own life and career, as a mark of humanity denied by the straight, normal world, and as a mark of identity embraced in the bohemian world. Reed sees himself as posing Poe’s questions again for a new generation. “Why do we do,” Reed asks in the liner notes, “what we should not?” Poe’s theory of perverseness answers this because we *know* we should not, but Reed often avoids the second part of the formulation in favor of

dramatizing self-destruction and acknowledging the impotence of this condition. In fact, when looking for the elements that Reed adds to Poe, one finds again and again the complaints of an impotent, aging drug addict. Here is a sample from “Change”:

The only thing constantly changing is change.
 The living only become dead,
 Your hair falling out, your liver swelled up,
 Your teeth rot your gums and your chin.
 Your ass starts to sag, your balls shrivel up,
 Your cock swallowed up in their sack.

The valley of unrest turns out to be the valley of the formerly virile with precious little Viagra to be found. The new elements introduced into “The Raven” speak to this same preoccupation. Lenore appears to be the victim of a free-basing crackhead who murders her and the raven stares at him from atop (not the pallid bust of Pallas) but a “silent painting of the forever silenced whore.” Poe’s “The Raven” becomes Browning’s “My Last Duchess” meets *Sid and Nancy*. Reed’s raven seems to have learned another word as well, inspired by the specter of impotence.

And the raven sitting lonely,
 Staring sickly at my male sex only,
 That one word,
 As if his soul in that one word
 He did outpour, “Pathetic.”

All of this is of a piece with the castrated version of “A Perfect Day.” And Antony is just one of a host of vocal surrogates that shift the dramatic trajectory of Reed’s lyrics toward the theme of literal and metaphorical impotence. A number are actors whose screen personae roughly accord with some aspect of Reed or Poe (Willem Dafoe, Steve Buscemi) or are known for playing dark, eccentric roles (Amanda Plummer, Elizabeth Ashley) and most have connections to New York’s downtown acting or arts scene (the *aestheterati*). With Dafoe and Buscemi, their voices are close enough to Reed’s to have confused some listeners. Dafoe reads “The Raven” with brimming anger and self-loathing. Buscemi, a talented weasel-faced actor known for the gruesomely ingenious ways that the Coen Brothers have devised to kill him off in their films, performs a seedy

lounge number about the fatuous glamour of show business, “Broadway Song.” His delivery has a flaccid charm. If this weren’t enough, Anna and Kate McGarrigle sing “Balloon,” a bit of Brechtian folderol set archly to the tune of “I’m a Little Tea Pot.” It contains such lyrics as,

I’m a little balloon and I get puffed up.
 Squeeze me and bend me, it’s never enough.
 Put your lips around me, blow me up,
 But if you prick me I will pop.

Never before has the theme of Poe’s alleged impotence been so blatantly concretized. It can even be found in the photos that grace the compact disk. Reed in an overcoat and sandals, looking like nothing so much as a genteel flasher, extends his arms in a mute gesture of surrender, his right hand resting on the ornate hilt of a giant, phallic sword that points ineluctably to the ground.



Hop-Frog

The album nears its close with Reed’s venture into disability studies; he discovers in Poe’s “Hop-Frog” another punk motif: the vengeful dwarf or freak. The idea of the freak entered punk chiefly by way of the Ramones’ song “Pinhead” (1997) with its homage to Bill Griffith’s

classic underground comic strip “Zippy the Pinhead” and its invocation of a common source, Tod Browning’s *Freaks* (1932). In *Freaks*, the vengeful sideshow outcasts encircle their victim notoriously chanting “Gooble-Gabble, Gooble-Gabble, you are one of us!” In “Pinhead,” the Ramones transformed this into the punk rallying cry, “Gabba Gabba Hey!” For Reed, Poe’s “Hop-Frog” inspires three separate tracks: “Hop-Frog,” “Tripitena’s Speech” and “Who Am I? (Tripitena’s Song).” (Why Tripetta, Hop-Frog’s beautiful and wronged midget companion and ally, is rendered as Tripitena is anybody’s guess. A pun on the legendary New Orleans music hall “Tipitina’s?” A corruption that reinforces her diminutive stature, i.e., a teeny Tripetta? It’s all very trippy.) “Hop-Frog,” with supporting vocals from David Bowie, sounds like a cross between some lost glam-rock dirge and a minor number from Rocky Horror-vintage Meatloaf. The lyrics are little more than a stripped down identification with freak selfhood:

I’m a hop-frog,
 A hop-frog.
 They call me the hop-frog,
 Hop, hop-frog.
 They call me the hop-frog.

This is what he is, and this is what society has conferred upon him. The music, with its melodic line repeated over and over and Bowie’s belching vocal coming in right behind Reed’s, attempts to convey rhythmically, Hop-Frog’s “interjectional gait.”

“Tripitena’s Speech” retells the story as a dramatic monologue in the voice of Hop-Frog’s diminutive companion. “You, my love,” she apostrophizes, “tower over them all, they are but vermin beneath your heels, they are monkeys, suit them, frame them to your own vision.” Amanda Plummer recites the lyric with professional aplomb, but the campiness of the pseudo-Shakespearean idiom robs the speech of authority. It becomes a dwarf version of Juliet’s balcony scene, played for a love forged in spite, as if Reed couldn’t decide if he were writing for Juliet or Mercutio. Perhaps the most innovative touch comes as Tripitena focuses her epithets on the reviled king, not because he insults her with such cruelty and callousness (as in the original), but because he is a “loathsome vomitous businessman king.” The introduction of the businessman resonates nicely with Poe’s

own contempt for mercantile pursuits expressed in such works as “Diddling, as an Exact Science.” It also resonates with a punk/bohemian rejection of commerce and the square world of the man in the gray flannel suit.

The anger of this indictment modulates into a plaintive ballad, “Who Am I? (Tripitena’s Song).” Presumably addressed to Tripitena (the speaker is male), the song has a naked confessional quality, as if Poe’s celebrated album verse “Alone” were recast in middle age. Perhaps it is supposed to be Hop-Frog himself singing, but the allusions in the song are too general to point to a specific figure. The speaker wishes

To leave this body and be free.
I’d like to float like a mystic child.
I’d like to kiss an angel on the brow.
I’d love to solve the mysteries of life
By cutting someone’s throat or removing their heart.

Rather it seems that the vengeful mood of Hop-Frog has been generalized to encompass yet another matrix of Poe themes. The dream of disembodiment becomes a wish to dismember, linking the angelic colloquies to the tell-tale heart. A kind of existential necrophilia pervades this introspection, exposing the gap between the latent world of the nineteenth century and the manifest psychology of the twentieth. Part of the point of Egaeus’ longing for the teeth of Berenice is that he is unconscious of his necrophilic longing; Reed is intent upon articulating these impulses as if they were familiar desires. Stripped of repression, the bad taste of Poe’s themes no longer wears the mask of respectability, but we find bad taste where the bohemian *demi-monde* would have it, as part of the menu of the Wild Side. Therefore, Reed can sing with all serious self-consciousness, “And though you know I’m dead you’d like to hold my thighs.”

The Raven closes with an invocation of the power of demonic creativity as survival strategy (“Guardian Angel”). As Reed and most of his vocal surrogates mimic the moaning of the damned, one cannot escape the serious pathos of its intentions in the face its cultural incongruity. But as the subterranean becomes canonical, the repressed perversity of consciousness that we find everywhere in Poe vanishes and becomes the self-conscious perversion of Reed. In this cultural shift from the

nineteenth to the twenty-first century, from antebellum America to post-World War II America, from the Magazine Prison House that Poe operated in to the Warholian Factory where Lou Reed began his career, we see a shift in which perversity has migrated from a little-observed phenomena to a widely advocated one. It has moved, culturally speaking, from latent to manifest. For all its countercultural ambitions, this is the unresolved problem: in the gap between the latent and the manifest, Reed's *The Raven* still is sitting, still is sitting.

Notes

1. For a useful overview of Poe's role in popular culture touching on the Beatles and Parsons see, Mark Neimeyer, "Poe and Popular Culture" in *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Kevin J. Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002): 205-24.
2. <<http://www.bmi.com/musicworld/features/200202/lreed.asp>>
3. Jon Pareles, "Lou Reed, The Tell-Tale Rocker," *New York Times* 25 November 2001, late ed.: Sec. 2. 1.
4. Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales and Sketches: Volume 2, 1843-49*, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Urbana and Chicago: U. of Illinois P., 2000): 1068.
5. Honoré de Balzac, "Sarrasine" in *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (NY: Hill & Wang, 1974): 238.
6. Poe, *Tales and Sketches: Volume 1, 1831-42*: 162.

**From an Editor's Easy Chair:
A Partial View of Prospects in Poe Studies**

Jana L. Argersinger

My title (I blush to confess it) is not entirely my own: “Editor’s Easy Chair,” as this audience will recognize, comes from the head of a long-lived column that ran in *Harper’s New Monthly* through a good part of the nineteenth century. The column was not, of course, written by Poe (it’s difficult to imagine the edgy and sharp-tongued Mr. Poe reclining at his ease in any of the editorial chairs he occupied at the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the *Broadway Journal*, and elsewhere). But I introduce myself that way—pairing and in some senses opposing “easy” with “partial”—to suggest the compass of the view I can offer on trends in Poe studies, noting that we, as editors, both are and are not easy and partial in relation to the criticism we publish.

What I can claim is a limited window on Poe scholarship by way of working over the last thirteen years as associate editor of *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*, and also of *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, which (F. O. Matthiessen’s slight notwithstanding) occasionally publishes Poe articles. In that sense, my field of view is clearly “partial”: I am directly involved with only one stratum of work done on Poe, and I am involved as an editor, not as a scholar—having rather less role-shifting dexterity than Poe himself, the writer/journalist/editor/critic who was famously canny about positioning these multiple professional personalities so that they could give each other a hand (using his editorial powers, for example, to reprint his own tales and poems in the *Broadway Journal* and probably writing or at least co-writing an anonymous favorable review of his own 1845 *Tales* printed in the *Aristidean*).¹ Though this analogy *manqué* between Poe and myself as a *Poe Studies* editor is not one I necessarily aspire to fulfill more completely, it does point to the self-reflexive contour our own journalistic practice can at times give to scholarship. In that light, let me put a further gloss on the window metaphor—because, of course, we don’t simply sit back in our easy chairs and watch scholarship unfold but help build the frame, help determine what is held up to view and what falls outside the consideration of literary academia. A secondary concern of my remarks, then, is for the degree to which I see us rather energetically—“uneasily”—engaged in making Poe studies, and the degree to which our engagement is interested, or “partial” in the other sense.

The first observation I would make about the current state of Poe studies broadly is that it is quite robust, considering that interest in Poe is now supporting two full-length journals, running to between 70 and 90 pages annually (in large format) for *Poe Studies*, an increase over recent years, and 240 to 250 on average for the *Poe Review*. Despite this friendly new competition, we don't find ourselves scrambling for publishable material—in part because both journals are well nourished by the international Poe conferences being held at about three year intervals and also by the PSA-sponsored sessions at the MLA and American Literature Association conventions.

Rather than cite further statistics to sleep-inducing effect, I would like to concentrate on two recent features published in *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*—“New Directions in Poe Studies” and “International Perspectives”—thus apparently narrowing my window further. But, in fact, these features work especially well as focal points for looking both backward and, especially, forward at two broad strains in criticism. “New Directions” is a gathering of brief, open-ended essays that consider Poe's place in six contemporary fields of historicist literary study, attending to sociocultural contexts as diverse as Book History, American women's writing, race and slavery, queer theory, the romantic institution of lyric poetry, and lastly, affect theory—but having in common “a productive uneasiness about what it means today to take Poe as a starting point for criticism.” In other words, these pieces look toward a new emphasis in historicist studies of Poe that would paradoxically dislodge him from his place at the center of Poe studies, and so call up for question the assumption that underlies the idea of an author-centered scholarly enterprise. To use a different figure, as guest editor Meredith McGill does in her introduction, the issue is one of background and foreground, so that the emphasis may shift from “What can Poe's social and cultural environs tells us about him?” to “What can Poe tell us about his environs?” McGill's ruminations and the essays they preface do not come to rest on a decisive judgment about the value of transposing Poe and his contexts—their intended effect is to unsettle rather than settle the future of Poe studies, and their speculations about the new infusion of life that a criticism less occupied with the figure of the author may bring to the field at the same time make allowance for a Poe who is not likely to rest easy in a quiet graveyard of canonical has-beens. McGill ends her introductory essay with an invitation to talk that parallels our editorial position and expresses the impetus behind our desire to circulate the provocative ideas of her contributors in our journal:

“Ourselves persuaded of the value of the study of Poe to a variety of critical projects, we welcome the opportunity to engage Poe scholars in a broader conversation about the shape and future of the field.”² As editors, we too hope to foster dialogue about the promise that beckons and the perils that lurk along the critical pathways envisioned in the “New Directions” essays as well as about their intersections and discontinuities with established ways of thinking about Poe.³

For the most part, the contributors to “New Directions” interest themselves in American contexts—persuasively demonstrating that this continues to be a rich vein for scholarship to mine—but in “Rethinking Race and Slavery in Poe Studies,” Teresa Goddu argues that one of the limiting boundaries whose breaching would allow more space for critical thought is the nationalist boundary. Many of Poe’s tales, she points out, traffic in international discourses related to race and slavery—some speaking to a maritime culture bound up with the slave trade and others taking part in the British periodical culture represented by *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which repeatedly addressed slavery in its pages. “In signaling the circulations of maritime, mercantile, and literary culture beyond American borders,” Goddu suggests, “Poe’s texts provide an important venue for transatlantic models of literary study by disclosing the artificiality of regionalism (and nationalism) that has been reified through author figures such as Poe. In the maritime culture of his texts, slavery is an international economy and race is a strategy exploited by both national and international forces.”⁴ Pushing her critical reach beyond Poe’s American circles, Goddu bridges the concerns of the two features on “New Directions” and “International Perspectives” and gestures in the direction I’d like to suggest studies of Poe’s international faces may very well take.

What strikes me as invigorating and relatively new about the “International Perspectives” essays on Poe in Israel, Russia, Bulgaria, and Belgium is that they stretch beyond a Eurocentric focus (complementing the 1999 essay collection *Poe Abroad*, edited by Lois Vines, which encompasses South America, Eastern Europe, and Asia, as well as Western Europe).⁵ These essays take a historical and not an explicitly prospective view, but I would like to supply a forward glance by suggesting there are early signs that the study of Poe may be enriched by (and, in turn, enrich) the new study of literary transnationalism and its theoretical grapplings with ideas of global consciousness—ideas currently circulating with particular energy

in our editorial office because *ESQ* is gestating a potential special issue and symposium on globalism and American renaissance writers with Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell. In the introduction to a special forum in a 2001 *PMLA* that explores the globalization of literary studies, Giles Gunn gives Poe's influence on Baudelaire pride of place at the head of a list illustrating the long history of "cultural migrations" that have disrespected political/national borders from the Middle Ages on—specifically, the "continuous conversation" "from the early modern period to the present" between European writing and "the emergent literatures of the Americas."⁶ Gunn's insistence on the historical and the cultural refers to two pivotal points in the debate about globalism: when it started and how it can best be described. If, first, globalization is not just a postmodern or even modern phenomenon (as some say) but a slow and complex process that began stirring as long as two thousand years ago and just recently boiled into furious speed, as Gunn and also Paul Jay contend in the *PMLA* forum; and if, second, cultural exchanges are as vital to this process as economic and political exchanges, as theorists in the humanities have proposed *contra* the economists and social scientists who launched globalization studies—then Poe, I would submit, is likely to cut a notable figure in the criticism to come. Robert Eric Livingston, along with Gunn, Jay, and others, call us to resist the impulse either to cheer thoughtlessly or to stand aloof and harrumph dismissively—and instead to bend our critical reading skills to the challenges of globalism, in order to develop a healthy critique of what trends toward postnational community have been and might become, for good or ill.⁷ And while it is early days for these theories, I'd like to throw out several propositions to you about the part Poe may play—given his persistent power to grip scholars, readers, and writers beyond American borders.

Poe is situated at the busy intersection of a number of issues important to the study of globalism, three of which I will consider briefly: nationalism, marketplace economics, and translation.

First, nationalism: Global Studies, to the extent that it has so far understood its bearing on literary and cultural studies, fundamentally constitutes itself in relation to nationalist narrative, though not always in simple antithesis—and it is in the complicated range of possible interactions between the global and the national (or the global and the local, to use a term that allows, as theorists often do, for other ways of defining identity geographically)

that I see Poe as being rather peculiarly—and paradoxically—at home. “Glocal” is the term Livingston borrows from Japanese marketing language to describe interactions between global and local identities in which neither is swallowed up—“glocal stretching,” he calls it, more specifically, and while rather ungainly, this neologism expresses a useful concept that comes across with the force of an ideal.⁸ As for Poe’s relevance to such theorizing, I think, for example, of Shawn Rosenheim’s [Stephen Rachman’s] introduction to *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe* (1995), which wrestles with “Poe’s syncopated relation to American culture, at once both in and out of step.” What to do, Rosenheim or Rachman asks, with this writer who (figuratively) speaks English in what sometimes strikes the ear as an un-American accent—who declares his aesthetic distance from the sociopolitical ferment of antebellum America yet writes in ways that are richly imbricated with his time and place?⁹ Innovations in transnational theory may add to the persuasive answers offered by the contributors to *The American Face, Poe Abroad*, and “International Perspectives” by looking more closely at Poe’s capacity to create affinities—or kinds of communal identity—that traverse regional and national borders.

The second main intersection is located in the marketplace: The pressing concern in global theory with economic forces and the degree to which those forces are intricately bound up with cultural forms of exchange, as thinkers in the humanities are now insisting, calls up the materialist Poe who has, of late, inspired a great deal of compelling scholarship—for example, Meredith McGill’s new book, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*, which includes two chapters on Poe; Terence Whalen’s 1999 study, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*; and also Leon Jackson’s essay, in the “New Directions” forum, on print culture and the various kinds of capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) for which authors vie in the literary marketplace.¹⁰ This Poe of the marketplace—who spent his boyhood years imbibing political economy by way of his foster father’s dealings in world commodities and who grew into an energetic if often disgruntled participant in the transactions between literary and economic interests—may have something to teach us, from his vantage point at the beginnings of mass market economics, about the development of a global literary marketplace out of a network of local events—especially, perhaps, with regard to the agitation for international copyright.¹¹

The third, and to me most intriguing, of these intersections between global studies and Poe studies is translation. Translation, Mary Louise Pratt

observes in a forum on the subject in a recent issue of *Profession*, has come to be used as “a point of departure or metaphor for analyzing intercultural interactions”¹²—as a way, that is, of getting at more than the rendering of one language into another—and a number of these metaphoric uses seem apropos to Poe. But I would like to focus on language itself, because Poe himself does, thematically (in *Pym*, for example), and because his words have been reconstituted into an extraordinarily large number of languages other than his own. And the way I want to approach the question of translation is by bringing into proximity three statements from different textual sites, in what seems to me an evocative conjunction. The first: “Poe, like it or not, seems to be our most widely read 19th-century author abroad”—from an entry by G. R. Thompson, founder of *Poe Studies*, in the 1973 installment of *American Literary Scholarship*.¹³ The second: “Poe is one of the American writers most likely to inspire deconstruction”—a quotation (worthy of Poe’s high school yearbook photo, if he had had one) from a 1988 *Diacritics* essay by R. C. De Prosopo.¹⁴ And finally, “teaching bilinguals about deconstruction is almost redundant.” This is Doris Sommer in a contribution to the recent *Profession* forum that makes an engaging case for bilingualism in the interest of aesthetic vitality, and she goes on to celebrate what she calls the “wobble room” between word and intended meaning—not a new idea of course, but the wobble room, Sommer suggests, opens up even wider and the fun gets better when one language jostles against another. And fun is just the point—because taking pleasure from the misdirections involved in switching from one language to another limbers up the mental and aesthetic muscles and helps us appreciate otherness; “the aesthetic education...that promotes democracy,” Sommer says, “is the kind that appreciates free play”—the term democracy, in her usage here, taking on a transnational, even “glocal” cast.¹⁵ This is deconstruction with cultural and political as well as artistic work to do. The first two claims about Poe’s unparalleled stardom are sweeping and impressionistic, and self-consciously so, but they have a basis in perceptions that have been widely shared—and I think my sense that an openness to “translation play” is somewhere near the heart of Poe’s transnational appeal finds warrant in his fascination with the pleasurable instability of language, which is partly the concern of Rosenheim’s book *The Cryptographic Imagination* (1997).¹⁶

One of the big questions about applying globalization theory to literature is whether and how it will give us fresh understandings that are distinct from those of traditional studies of international sources and influences.

The question is raised explicitly here and there in recent critical work, and answers are not yet fully formulated, but the distinction has partly to do with a shift in focus (parallel to the shift described by McGill in the “New Directions” feature) quite sharply away from author-centered studies and toward interactive studies of relations between an author’s texts and literary practices and newly conceived international contexts. A compelling variant is the concept of hybridity, which understands a text with global and enduring reach, not as universal and timeless in the time-honored sense, but as endlessly translatable, in any place or era, into new, denationalized, and unreproducible hybrids born out of every union between author and receptive reader or translator. This is Dimock’s formulation, which she connects to the notion of “planetary” or “deep time”—a way of thinking beyond the artificial borders drawn across time and space by periodization and studies of nationalism (in all its political, economic, and cultural iterations).¹⁷

Poe comes out looking rather sunny in the light of this partial rendering of globalism—uncharacteristically sunny, and he is relevant, certainly, to a reading of darker possibilities. Another direction I have not explored is the anterior stretch of “planetary time” in which Poe’s texts live, that is, the international network of source texts that Poe absorbed and “hybridized” before they passed from his pen to be hybridized into new forms many times over. There is much to be said on both subjects—as there is on other “New Directions”—and I will leave that to you Poe scholars.

Notes

Many thanks to Alexander Hammond, coeditor of *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*, and Camille Roman, also my colleague at Washington State University, for their invaluable insights and advice on helpful sources. A version of this article was presented as part of a panel sponsored by the Poe Studies Association at the 2002 MLA Convention in New York City.

1. See Scott Peeples, "The *Mere* Man of Letters Must Ever Be a Cipher: Poe and N. P. Willis," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 46 (2000): 137, 145-46 n. 28.

2. Meredith McGill, "Introduction: New Directions in Poe Studies," *Poe Studies* 33 (2000): esp. 2, 3. Contributors to this forum include Leon Jackson, Eliza Richards, Teresa Goddu, Gustavus Stadler, Virginia Jackson, and Adam Frank.

3. So far, *Poe Studies* has printed two responses to "New Directions": a review essay by Eric Carlson and a critical piece by Paul Lewis. Carlson's essay gives a critical overview of work done in the United States and abroad on Poe's transcendentalism, the philosophical and aesthetic dimension that he has studied in depth over the course of a long career and that he sees as indispensably central to any understanding of Poe. Not surprisingly, then, the possibility of the author's evacuation that McGill contemplates in her introduction sets off a loud alarm for him. Lewis offers a corrective to the "New Directions" proposition that is attuned to Carlson's concerns about the eclipse of Poe but that reflects a more immediate interest in mediating between author-centered and context-centered approaches. He quite directly takes up the train of conversation advanced in "New Directions" and registers one variety of productive discomfort with the risks entailed when Poe's artistry loses its priority and moves toward the periphery of the critical field of view. See Eric W. Carlson, "The Transcendentalist Poe: A Brief History of Criticism," *Poe Studies* 34 (2001): 47-66; and Paul Lewis, "A 'Wild' and 'Homely Narrative': Resisting Argument in 'The Black Cat,'" *Poe Studies* 35 (2002): 1-13.

4. Teresa A. Goddu, "Rethinking Race and Slavery in Poe Studies," *Poe Studies* 33 (2000): 16. Poe's entanglements with questions of race receive in-depth consideration in *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*, eds. J. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (NY: Oxford UP, 2001).

5. See *Poe Abroad: Influence, Reputation, Affinities*, ed. Lois Davis Vines (Iowa City: U. of Iowa P., 1999); and the contributions by Aminadav Dykman, Nikita Nankov, and J. P. Vander Motten to "International Perspectives," *Poe Studies* 33 (2000): 33-63.

6. Giles Gunn, "Introduction: Globalizing Literary Studies," *PMLA* 116 (2001): 17.

7. See Gunn, "Introduction," 20-21; Paul Jay, "Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English," *PMLA* 116 (2001): 32-47; and Robert Eric Livingston, "Glocal Knowledges: Agency and Place in Literary Studies," *PMLA* 116 (2001): 145-57, esp. 147, 153-55. Also see the further debate about transnationalism in "Special Topic: America: The Idea, the Literature," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 9-113; especially John Carlos Rowe, "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality," 78-89.

The terms globalism, transnationalism, and postnationalism—which I use interchangeably here, are increasingly (though not consistently) given distinct shades of meaning in the developing lexicon of this new critical language.

8. Livingston, "Glocal Knowledges," esp. 147-48.

9. Stephen Rachman [Shawn Rosenheim], "Introduction: Beyond 'The Problem of Poe,'" in *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), esp. xii, ix. Cf. "Letters to the Editor" on pp. 112-13 of this *Poe Review* issue.

10. See Meredith McGill, "Unauthorized Poe" and "Poe, Literary Nationalism, and Authorial Identity," chaps. 4 and 5 in *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P, 2003), 141-217; Terence Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999); and Leon Jackson, "Poe and Print Culture," *Poe Studies* 33 (2000): 4-9 (the latter drawing on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu).

11. See Whalen, *Poe and the Masses*, esp. 22-24; and Bruce I. Weiner, *The Most Noble of Professions: Poe and the Poverty of Authorship* (Baltimore: Enoch Pratt Free Library, Edgar Allan Poe Society, and Library of the U. of Baltimore, 1987), 4-5, 8, 10-11.

12. Mary Louise Pratt, "The Traffic in Meaning: Translation, Contagion, Infiltration," *Profession* (2002): 25.

13. G. R. Thompson, "Poe," *American Literary Scholarship* (1973): 32.

14. R. C. De Prosopo, "Deconstructive Poe(tics)," *Diacritics* 18 (Fall 1988): 44.

15. Doris Sommer, "Bilingual Aesthetic: An Invitation," *Profession* (2002): esp. 10, 8, 7.

16. Shawn Rosenheim, *The Cryptographic Imagination: Secret Writing from Edgar Poe to the Internet*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997).

17. See Wai Chee Dimock, "Literature for the Planet," *PMLA* 116 (2001); esp. 173-88, 179, 182; and "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," *American Literary History* 13 (2001): 755-75.

Meredith L. McGill. *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*. Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P., 2003. VIII + 364 pp. \$39.95.

The lack of international copyright law in the early and mid-nineteenth century stacked the deck against American writers and inhibited the development of a national literature; unable to compete with better-known British writers whose work was widely pirated, poor devil authors were forced into the magazine prison house. Poe, Hawthorne, and others made the best of this unfair situation by perfecting the art of the short story.

Poe scholars and other students of the “American Renaissance” period have repeated this lesson for so long that we have paid little attention to some obvious questions: why *wasn't* international copyright enacted, who opposed it, and what effects did its absence have beyond those invoked above? In *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853*, Meredith McGill explores those issues and argues that the story of copyright and reprinting is much more complicated than the one we’ve been telling at least as far back as 1959, when William Charvat’s *Literary Publishing in America 1790–1850* was published.

In fact, McGill regards copyright opponents’ case as a strong one. In her introduction and first two chapters, she argues for a scholarly paradigm shift, from emphasizing the *lack* of copyright to discussing what was there instead: a vibrant system of reprinting, a culture relatively less concerned with origins and authorship but more concerned with the wide dissemination of literature and information. For many, the concept of a national literature underwritten by expanded copyright raised the specter of central control, while in the culture of reprinting, publishing was for the most part regional. Similarly, petitioners against copyright, who far outnumbered copyright advocates, saw in “authors’ rights” the vestiges of anti-republican “luxury and hereditary privilege” (95). Some defenders of reprint culture believed that the American mission in publishing was not to think profound thoughts but to popularize knowledge and great literature. According to this utilitarian logic, what made a book American was not so much its subject matter as its form: two volumes rather than three, close print, prices that farmers and mechanics could afford. Whether they accepted that vision of American publishing or not, many judges, legislators, and citizens, as well as publishers, wanted copyright to remain

carefully restricted, adhering to the limits established by the Copyright Act of 1790. As McGill demonstrates in her chapter on *Wheaton v. Peters* (1834), the Supreme Court held that the contents of printed texts are publicly owned, that copyright represented only a “temporary alienation of public property” (46). To understand this is to re-evaluate what we mean by the profession of authorship in this period.

To that end, McGill devotes the majority of the book to analyses of the work of three writers—Dickens, Poe, and Hawthorne—in relation to the culture of reprinting. Dickens was unprepared for the anger his outspoken support for international copyright would provoke during his American tour in 1842; McGill traces the controversy through Dickens’ letters during the tour, his *American Notes for General Circulation* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and also through reprinters’ editions of *American Notes*, particularly the “extra” printed by mammoth weekly *Brother Jonathan*. McGill argues, convincingly I think, that Dickens’ depiction of Jacksonian America as endless duplication of experience in a culture lacking a center reflects his antipathy for the system of reprinting; although he tries to avoid the copyright controversy in *American Notes*, he can’t help but reflect it in both his comments on American society and the disjointed structure of his narrative. Unauthorized printings of *American Notes* also commented obliquely on Dickens’ criticisms; for example, McGill’s close reading of *Brother Jonathan*’s advertisement for *Notes* (which took the form of a U. S. Treasury note) reveals a playful rejoinder built around the puns on “Notes” and “Circulation.”

Poe’s total immersion in the system of reprinting makes him the logical central figure for this study, and the two chapters McGill devotes to his publishing and re-publishing career represent a legitimate challenge to traditional Poe studies: “Most often invoked as the victim of a literary marketplace that undervalued American authors’ labor, Poe is both subject to and seeks to benefit from the peculiar structure of this market” (150). While this is not an entirely new way of thinking about Poe—as McGill acknowledges, Terence Whalen, Eliza Richards, Shawn Rosenheim, Stephen Rachman, Jonathan Elmer and others have positioned Poe as more of a player in the literary market than outsider/victim—the emphasis here on the uses of unauthorized reprints adds a new dimension to the ongoing historical reconsideration of Poe. For example, McGill points out that, while biographies and posthumous editions give the impression that he dropped poetry for fiction early in his career (only to return to it later), his

constant republishing, often with revisions, makes it “strikingly apparent that he never abandons his interest in poetry as a mass-market phenomenon” (150). Some of the stylistic trademarks of Poe’s fiction—allusiveness to British literary tradition, spatial and temporal dislocation, and eclecticism (151)—register quite differently when seen in the context of reprint culture, which privileged those tendencies in a way that twentieth-century American author study does not. When “The Fall of the House of Usher” was republished in the *Boston Notion* in 1840, it was identified only as a reprint from London’s *Bentley’s Miscellany*, which had run the story after it had already appeared twice in American publications (*Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* and *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*). The tale’s indeterminate setting contributes to its transatlantic circulation, suggesting that Poe knew very well how to exploit reprint culture, albeit with no expectation that he would be paid for each reprinting. More broadly, reading Poe’s eclectic output in the context of reprint culture suggests that “antebellum readers were sophisticated about genre, tolerant of generic mixing, and delighted with the unauthorized and parodic mass-circulation of high-cultural texts. The need to resolve generic and tonal instability, and to insist on authorial mastery may indeed be our own” (170).

The other Poe chapter seems less groundbreaking, perhaps because it mainly expands McGill’s 1995 essay in *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*; even so, it helps us understand Poe’s relationship with Young America and what was at stake in that relationship for literary nationalists. McGill argues that Young America’s courtship of Poe must be regarded partly as a spin-off of the group’s break with John O’Sullivan’s *Democratic Review* over the copyright issue. As supporters of copyright, Evert Duyckinck, James Russell Lowell, and their compatriots sought a literary hero, fully formed, from whose example a new model of self-sustaining American literature could be constructed: “Lowell’s reversal of the priorities of the literary nationalist program [in his biographical sketch of Poe in *Graham’s*—his insistence that a literary criticism with integrity would necessarily precede the advent of the Master Genius—reinforced Young America’s newfound commitment to discrimination and to the restraint of the system of republication, and placed Poe in a difficult position” (204). McGill goes on to read Poe’s debate with “Outis” in the Longfellow War and his goading a Bostonian audience by reading his obscure “juvenile” poem “Al Aaraaf” as responses to that difficult position, attempts to renegotiate the role thrust upon him by Young America.

McGill argues that the shape of Hawthorne's career has been distorted as well by a failure to account for the reprint culture he inhabited throughout the 1830s and '40s. Countering the myth of Hawthorne's obscurity prior to the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, she argues that "[t]he enthusiastic reprinting of much of Hawthorne's early work indicates that he was in possession of a significant, if uneven and unpredictable reputation" (226). She points out that Poe, in his reviews, understood what Hawthorne was up to in adopting a "tone of repose" that would later lend itself to self-effacing reflections on his own obscurity and, in the meantime, help his work circulate in the system of reprinting. Most of the chapter, though, is devoted to showing how Hawthorne continued to rely on forms and techniques that had worked for him as a writer of sketches in crafting *The House of the Seven Gables*, whose plot, not coincidentally, foregrounds issues of origin and repetition. The novel's preoccupation with the awkward transition from old ways to new, exemplified by (but not limited to) the opening sketch of Hezbibah setting up shop, resonates with Hawthorne's confronting a changing literary market.

I found McGill's introduction and first two chapters to be particularly valuable in their careful and well-researched explanations of how the courts as well as authors and publishers regarded copyright, why the issue mattered so much, and how the debate reflected the values of the not-so-early Republic. She uncovers and makes sense of arguments that I suspect most scholars of the period were simply unaware of. Moreover, analogies to copyright controversies in our own times suggest a broader significance to this study: *Metallica v. Napster*, restrictions on academic "fair use," and Disney-backed legislation to extend further the duration of copyright protection all raise issues familiar to the antebellum culture of reprinting.

In the later chapters, McGill demonstrates how Hawthorne and Poe operated as components within a larger system of literary production, and, in turning to their fiction, "how changes in the conditions of publication make themselves felt at the level of literary form" (3). Still, one might question, for instance, the significance of the parallel between the disorder Poe describes in the Duke's palace in "The Visionary" and "reprint culture's haphazard arrangement of its literary materials" (168), or the multiple reflections of Hawthorne's relationship to the literary market in *The House of the Seven Gables*. McGill argues persuasively in these chapters for those sorts of correlations, but at times the lit-crit payoffs seem small

compared to the insights on publishing history she provides in the early chapters. Perhaps, in that regard, McGill accomplishes at least one of her goals—shifting the reader’s attention and interest to reprint culture—too early, making me relatively less patient with the author-focus of the later chapters. But that’s a small complaint, and the only one I have regarding this important book. McGill revises the story we tell about heroic authors in a benighted age before international copyright. Students of antebellum American culture, and certainly Poe scholars, will be consulting her research and citing her arguments frequently and for a long time.

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Renza, Louis A. *Edgar Allan Poe, Wallace Stevens, and the Poetics of American Privacy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002. xix + 277 pp. \$44.95.

This is a delightful and provocative book that explores the poetics of privacy in an unlikely pair of writers. Contrary to the critical tradition, Renza does not assume that Poe and Stevens retreated in disgust from the pressures of popular (or political) art. Nor does Renza suggest that privacy is a realm into which a writer could actually retreat, if by privacy one means a fixed and inviolable sanctuary. Instead, he argues that works by Poe and Stevens evince “a virtually interminable, rhetorical process of going private.” In a general sense, privacy functions as a shifting and elusive horizon that subtly frames all public actions and all social formations. In a literary sense, privacy is less a theme or topic than an effect achieved when an author turns away from the present moment of the reading audience and looks back toward the vanished moment of literary creation. This privacy effect is achieved in various ways, but according to Renza’s compelling account, when Poe and Stevens “go private” the reading audience is left behind by design.

The argument is necessarily complex, but the book itself is clearly and thoughtfully organized. In the Introduction, Renza establishes his precise sense of privacy in relation to contemporary literary theory and especially to the heightened critical concern with politics and identity. The first two chapters deal primarily with Poe, while Chapter Three makes a transition from Poe’s *Eureka* to Stevens’ *Harmonium*. Chapters Four and Five deal primarily with Stevens in a way that loosely parallels the treatment of Poe in the first two chapters. Chapter Six returns to the comparative approach of Chapter Three, but here Renza suggests that Stevens diverges slightly from Poe insofar as *Harmonium* anticipates readers in some correlative private realm rather than in the bustle and glare of the literary marketplace. In this review I shall focus on Renza’s treatment of Poe, but I want to emphasize the considerable achievement involved in demonstrating an underlying similarity between Poe and Stevens. According to Renza, both writers prefigure the public reception of their texts so that they may exercise a pre-emptive “write to privacy.” In other words (and as the pun implies), Poe and Stevens create “provisionally viable zones of compositional privacy” through rhetorical and literary methods that constitute a distinct poetics. Several corollaries follow from this central claim. First, since the

privacy sought by Poe and Stevens occurs only in the process of writing, it cannot define or foster a stable private self. Second, the absence of a stable identity or subject position is, according to Renza, inconsistent with the making of “public truth claims.” Finally, insofar as Poe and Stevens limit psychic investment in their work by going private, they also elude (without simply negating) the consequences of public evaluation and criticism.

In Chapter One, “Poe’s Secret Autobiography,” Renza considers the contrast between Poe’s fondness for exposing the hidden aspects of life and art with his attendant tendency to “privatize his public exposures of his private maneuvers” (30). Renza begins with a subject he has so ably addressed before, namely the many coded self-references that Poe insinuates into his works (“Siope” as an anagram for “is Poe”; “ape” as an anagram for Poe’s initials; and in general, the multiple occasions in which Poe exposes his hoaxes and illusions in order to call attention to his role as author). According to Renza, these acts of self-reference “signify nothing” relevant even when they are “decoded” by the reader. In other words, the reader may discover “Poe was here” graffiti written in invisible ink, but these autobiographical traces are too arbitrary to make sense within the formal narrative structure and too “wayward” to add artistic ambiguity or density to the text as a whole. As Renza emphasizes, the autobiographical traces exist “for no apparent reason other than to confront that reader with Poe’s terminal, autobiographical presence—or his present absence” (32). In fact, the “secret” autobiographical traces actually undermine the single effect that Poe celebrates in “The Philosophy of Composition” by distracting the overly acute reader or by entirely breaking the literary spell. Readers who seek some profound meaning in Poe’s autobiographical traces ultimately find that they have been chasing the hermeneutic equivalent of *amontillado*.

Poe’s motive for this, according to Renza, has less to do with revenge or exhibitionism than with a desire to transform (public) writing into a partially private act. Whether the autobiographical clues are missed or fruitlessly pursued, Poe anticipates misinterpretation in order to remove the process of composition from full public scrutiny or even acclaim. Renza argues that this strategy is allegorized by such tales as “The Oval Portrait,” “The Oblong Box,” and “Ligeia.” The latter tale, for example, relentlessly veers toward metanarrative and thereby “exercises its will by traducing its reader into a self-referential maze that...disable[s] outside perspectives” (44). Playing off one tradition against another, Poe undermines the conventions

of American domestic fiction with gothic extravagance while he denies the Romantic ethos through the “allegorical homicide” of Ligeia herself. Whether through murder or metanarrative, Poe limits the life of his dark muse to the duration of the tale’s composition. Instead of offering the death of a beautiful woman as the supreme poetical topic, Renza concludes, Poe “blacks out the one literary autobiographical moment of [Ligeia’s] passing, muse-like significance for himself.” This seems excessively perverse even for Poe, but Renza extends and supports his position by analyzing a similar strategy in “The Fall of the House of Usher” which enables him to extend his analysis. “Usher” exploits public interest in private (and scandalous) matters, but Poe seems to turn away from this interest through gratuitous detours (think “The Mad Tryst”) and catastrophic dissolution (of the house, the family, and the narrative). Instead of viewing this as a simple rejection of popular expectations (and popular acclaim), Renza sees it as evidence of Poe’s desire for an ideal reading public. Hence the symbolic renunciation of literary ambition may be seen as a renunciation of the various (real) audiences who can only confer a wretched kind of fame.

Chapter Two relates Poe’s poetics of privacy to the trends and concerns of antebellum American culture. Renza does not undertake a comprehensive cultural history of privacy. Instead, he explores how Poe engages the public/private dialectic in works ranging from “The Philosophy of Furniture” to “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” I cannot do justice to the argument in this review, but Renza’s conclusions are compelling and far-reaching. In “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” according to Renza, the ratiocinative excess and anagrammatical playfulness (e.g. “ape” for “E.A.P”) betray Poe’s desire “to become his own private other in the act of imagining or writing his fiction” (85). Renza’s reading of “The Philosophy of Composition” continually circles back to what now appears to me as the real focal point of Poe’s ideal room: the unidentified man asleep on the sofa. Renza sees the sleeper as a figure for Poe himself, and hence the act of writing becomes an even more private act of dreaming. In other words, Poe invites the public into his perfect (and imaginary) room, but the sleeper—who may be dreaming up the room—remains a total mystery. As a consequence, Poe “figuratively disappears from the informal private sphere of the home” into the “truly interior” realm of the text itself.

Renza’s argument is compelling partly because of his deft use of historical evidence and his careful consideration of alternative critical positions. But

what makes Renza's book especially valuable is the way that he makes sense out of one of the defining features of Poe's writing. Many critics have been perplexed by the way that Poe teases the public with privacy. By carving his name into the polished surfaces of his tales, Poe disrupts the aesthetic effect that he works so skillfully to achieve. In this regard I must mention T.O. Mabbott's final note to "The Philosophy of Composition." There, Mabbott speculates about the hanging Argand lamp which throws a "magical radiance over all":

At this point in the sequence of Poe's tales the reader feels that no room described in such fond detail by the author would be complete without its hanging lamp. Unlike some of the others this one has nothing sinister or perhaps even significant about it. It is simply as if he had written Edgar A. Poe after one of his manuscripts. (Collected Works II: 505, n. 16)

Not every lamp is sinister, but after Renza's book, it will be difficult to dismiss Poe's autobiographical traces as simple or insignificant. Poe uses these traces to create a privacy effect for the act of writing, and this is why Renza treats privacy as a poetics rather than a theme. The written text may be inherently public, but the act of writing is not.

Chapter Three ("Falling Stars") makes the primary transition of the book—from Poe to Stevens, from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century, from fading Romanticism to emergent Modernism. Focusing on *Eureka* as his primary Poe text, Renza takes his thesis to its logical extreme. In brief, Renza argues that *Eureka* represents Poe's most "radical private imaginary," insofar as it enacts a kind of literary self-annihilation that removes even his previous works from public scrutiny. I am not fully persuaded with this turn of the argument, but my reservations have less to do with this particular reading than with the interpretive license which *Eureka* grants to all. In other words, *Eureka* invites endless speculation, but I am not sure that it has the artistic merit that would enable or even justify sorting through the multitude of plausible interpretations. Furthermore, treating *Eureka* as a limit text somewhat undermines Renza's strong readings of other works by Poe, for these works are cast as "imperfect" products of ambition that *Eureka* must retroactively "redeem" (98). Happily, however, the Poe section concludes not with *Eureka* but with "The Cask of

Amontillado,” a tale in which Poe exploits his readers’ taste in popular literature just as Montresor exploits Fortunato’s taste in wine.

The remainder of the chapter (and book) explores the poetics of privacy in Wallace Stevens’ *Harmonium*, his first published collection of poetry (1923). Renza interprets *Harmonium* on a number of levels, ranging from its overall design (Chapter Three), to the staged confrontation with the decline of privacy (Chapter Four), to the distillation of public or biological sexuality into private “nothings” (Chapter Five). These are strong readings that challenge such critics as Harold Bloom and Frank Lentricchia by emphasizing how a poetics of privacy is central to nearly all of the poems that make up *Harmonium*. Of course no critic ever gets the last word, and in these readings of Stevens, the opening for dissent lies in the crucial but ultimately unstable concept of privacy itself.

It may be the case that absolute privacy vanishes in the presence of a witness, but this ineffable quality serves as a standing invitation to produce alternative interpretations of the elusive and diffident style of *Harmonium*. *Harmonium* begins with “Earthy Anecdote,” a poem that seems calculated to stop readers in their tracks. (The following lines seem representative: “Every time the bucks went clattering/Over Oklahoma/A firecat bristled in the way.”) Several critics have viewed “Earthy Anecdote” as a Modernist beginning that insists on the primacy of the poem itself by rejecting paraphrase and other reductive approaches. Renza acknowledges this, but he argues for a link between Stevens’ firecat and Poe’s “The Black Cat.”

As Renza summarizes, Stevens not only resists interpretive approaches that render a poem disposable (by exchanging it for its sense or meaning); he also “envisions a place that figuratively evokes a private, geo-poetic topos: an imaginary Oklahoma where no established American public as yet exists” (117). My problem with this is that in expanding the concept of privacy to include the wilderness and the rugged (poetic) frontier, the term loses some of the force that it had in earlier chapters. This is, however, a minor objection, because most of the poems in *Harmonium* gesture toward a different kind of privacy. In general, Renza’s readings of Stevens are executed with a wonderful deftness, and they culminate in positions that are both significant and invigorating. Paradoxically, Renza’s analysis of the poetics of privacy heightens the importance of Stevens as a public poet.

In sum, this is an important and valuable book both for its individual interpretations and for its exposition of a new poetics. The scope of this poetics is relatively open, as is the concept of privacy itself. Sometimes privacy is an inescapable solitude, sometimes it is the effect of public scrutiny or artistic creation, but in general it functions as an epistemological and hermeneutic limit beyond which we may not pass. Renza takes us to this limit, but instead of abandoning us there, he leads us back to a transfigured literary public where Poe and Stevens coexist.

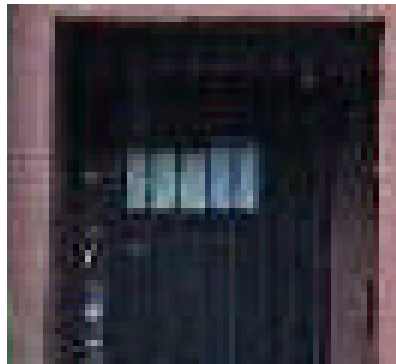
Terence Whalen
University of Illinois, Chicago

A Dream

Richard Kopley

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I paid the sullen cabby and stepped out on to the singularly dreary Greenwich Village block. I glanced uneasily at the famously undistinguished, renovated facade, and then its inverted image in a dark puddle. I know not how it was, but I felt a sickening of the heart. The newspaper article had seemed a very singular summons, but I felt that this mansion of gloom, Poe's former residence at 85 W. 3rd Street, promised only an unnerving and unredeemed dreariness.

Glancing through the bars of the ancient window, I saw some living monster of hideous formation, rapidly ascending the celebrated staircase. But no—I refocused my eyes—it was but a spider, climbing up the fallow window pane.



I walked to the door. It was locked, of course. And I was forbidden entrance. I stepped back and saw, through the red-litten second-floor windows, law students, youthful but worn, wandering with feeble and unsteady gaits. I looked at the darkened windows above. I knew that I had to make my way in. Doughty but ungauntleted, I stood near the locked door awaiting an opportunity. A solemn student pushed the door outward and, paying me no attention, tottered away. I clutched the creaking door and slid inside.

I hurried to the shadow of the staircase—the very one Poe had trodden lo one hundred and fifty-five years ago. I rushed up the steps, steadying myself with the cool curved ebony bannister.

A feeling for which I have no name took possession of me. I saw in the amber light unending cubicles—a wilderness of seemingly arbitrary rectangles. Beside me was an antique typewriter, littered with plaster fallen from the ceiling. A piece of typing paper lay rolled within the ruined machine, and the thoughtless fallings from above were spread out into the word RECOVERY.

Another flight up—an unspeakable darkness, shrouding what seemed to be a chaos of obsolescence. There was a weak and wavering light in a rear apartment—I pushed open the door and saw him face to face.

It was with a feeling of irrepressible reverence and awe mingled with the sensation of wonder with which I regarded him. He was what I had dreamed—that clothing of shabby elegance, that brow of immense intelligence, that expression of intense terror. And then the sudden cry tore through the chamber:

“Help me!”

“Yes,” I replied, trying to be reassuring; “I will do what I can.”

“Be seated,” he said, recovering himself, seeking to establish a formal propriety. I sank into an overstuffed armchair, and he approached me, proud and purposeful.

“I am glad you have come. Now tell them what I say. I have come from a far place to this, my only home remaining in Mannahatta. The Spirit of Improvement has withered the other abodes with its acrid breath.”

“I lived here for six months with Sis—my wife Virginia—beginning in October 1845. She was a maiden artless and innocent. I have spoken the truth when I said that we loved with a love that was more than love. I idolized her. We knew she had little time. But we had this circumscribed Eden of our dreams. It was here—” He paused in thought. “It was here that she wrote me a valentine....” And he recalled the first lines:

Ever with thee I wish to roam
Dearest my life is thine....

We were both quiet. He started in again.

“And I had my work. I was the greatest lion in the city—in the country! I was the observed of all observers! And it was in this room that I worked on the proofs of *The Raven and Other Poems* and wrote my explanation of how I had written ‘The Raven’ itself—‘The Philosophy of Composition’!”

Here I interpolated, “Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance?” He smiled in satisfaction. And he went on.

“It was here that I wrote that bold critique of my contemporaries, ‘The Literati of New York City.’ The demand was so great, they had to reprint an issue of *Godey’s*! It was here that I worked nights on the *Broadway Journal*, the weekly that I owned and edited—and lost!”

He paused. I waited for him to go on.

“And it was here that I wrote some of my short stories—‘The Sphinx’ and ‘The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar’—and here that I began ‘The Cask of Amontillado’!”

His face darkened. He cannot forget the insults, I thought.

But he continued.

“Does not this building deserve a high place of honor? No mere plaque will serve. Those who love me—and who may come to love me—will want to visit this place—to imagine my life, my work in old Manhattan.”

I nodded in silence.

“Yes,” he added; “It’s true that I rejected the university’s invitation to present an original poem. But I couldn’t, you see—the coughing, the drink....”

He peered at me, hoping that I understood.

Then angrily, “Yet do they seek revenge for my rudeness?!!”

“No, no,” I assured him. “New York University does not seek revenge. But the building has changed....”

“So make it the way it was! Work backwards! Restore my house! Build the law school around it. Or move my building, if need be—but preserve and restore my home! Let it be a place of learning—a museum and a library—a place for children to marvel and for scholars to study—and for old men and women who remember when they first read ‘The Raven’ to be at their ease.”

I was convinced—had been to begin with—but I added, “They say it’s not a cultural landmark.”

His eyes widened, then narrowed, and with a quiet fury he asked, “What more could I have done?”

I could not think of a thing.

He suddenly turned to the shutter and asked, “What was that? That clanking sound?”

I heard it, too, and I did not mention the wind, the raven, or a barely-discernible fissure.

He faced the shutter and looked for all the world like one dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.

Then he flung open the shutter, and we saw it in the moonlight—a black ball suspended from a long dark crane.

He whirled around to me and cried, “Tell the people! Tell them everything! Tell them to be the friend to me that I have been to them!”

The ball was drawn back by invisible forces. Poe’s moonlit face trembled in an agony of expectation. My brain reeled as I saw the mighty ball rushing forward. I ran down the stairs and out the door in time to hear a discordant hum of human voices and to see an outstretched hook.

The ball abruptly ceased its deadly swing! The university had found another way!

Poe in Massawa
Charles Cantalupo

“In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.”
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Haunted Palace”

Square with seven arches on each side
Of marble and blue enamel,
The emperor’s palace says he died
Horribly but lived well.
The grand entrance stairs blasted in two,
The gaping dome, bullet holed, crumbling
Walls and missing floors the light pours through
Recall a King of Kings

Who rarely slept, fed conspirators
To his leopards and lions at dawn,
Acted peacefully amidst total war,
Scattered flamingos across his lawns,
Lived without the written word,
Barely spoke and punished silence.
He only remembered
What he thought made sense



And strengthened him as head of state.
 Anything else meant disease.
 He also thought it wisdom to wait,
 Seeing everyone on their knees
 Had a knife behind their back.
 But now the railings' shattered filigree,
 A foundation full of cracks
 And viscera of masonry

Dangling in oriental doors
 Speak of a greater power here.
 It says, ignore.
 Climbing on a balcony, I peer
 Through the shutters at a rich table
 And chairs lined up, but nobody comes.
 The elevator without car and cables
 And the belfry stripped deaf and dumb

Faze no one, and a shirtless man
 Walks by barefoot in a sarong.
 A delivery van
 And a boat in dry dock don't seem to belong
 Next to the palace, but they portend
 No more spirit
 To haunt him and the fishing dhows that bend
 Among the container ships that sit

In the harbor doing business,
 Or haunting you and me
 As we join a chorus
 Of camels silhouetted against the sea,
 Particles clinging to a grinding stone...
 And a raven's nevermore
 In a corner of the emperor's bones
 Upon the Red Sea shore.



Interview with Richard Wilbur (May 2003)

Barbara Cantalupo: Well, I'll start with a question about something I read in a 1985 interview you had with Nancy Bunge. In it you mentioned that during World War II, you had packed in your knapsack a "beat-up little paperback of Poe."

Richard Wilbur: That's right...



BC: And I just wondered why that was in your knapsack, why you chose Poe?

RW: I had various things in my knapsack from time to time instead of the gas mask I was supposed to be carrying...

BC: oh, no....

RW: At one time it might be Hopkins, at another Aragon, at another time some biography or novel. American publishers were supplying us, at that time, with pretty good paperbacks in the so-called "armed services editions," and it may have been in that form that I was carrying Edgar Allan Poe. In any case, though I had read Poe as a child, in an edition full of Beardsley-like, morbid illustrations, I didn't really know very much about Poe, but I thought I would give him a look. And, so, I did carry that book with me, in the place of more presumably military things, to Monte

Cassino. And that's where I really made my acquaintance with Poe. The situation there, as everybody knows, was pretty bad for the Allied troops. We were sitting down in a valley under the noses of the Germans, and they were shooting 88s at us in a harassing spirit. And so we all dug holes in the ground, and when not on duty, we were deep in the earth.

BC: very Poe-like, yes?

RW: Yes...I did a great deal of reading at that time, as did many people in my company, which was the 36th Signal Company of the 36th Division. And, of course, there was a lot of going to sleep, going half to sleep, coming half awake in our foxhole, where we spent so very much time—I say 'our' because this was a two-man foxhole...That may have contributed to my getting in tune with some of the Poe stories I began to read. I commenced to see, after I had read a few of Poe's stories, probably discontinuously, waking and then sleeping again and reading a little more, that much of the underlying structure of his fiction has to do with the stages of the mind's approach to sleep and dream. In other words, the so-called "suggestive layer" of Poe's prose fiction did suggest itself to me, and I have never had any comparable experience with another writer.

BC: That's what I was curious about...whether you had had this experience before...

RW: I don't pretend to be psychic when it comes to fiction writers, but, in the case of Poe, partly because of the circumstances and, in good part because of the power of Poe's writing, an underlying pattern came through to me. What I noticed first, I'm sure, though I don't have specific memories of this, was that many of the stories I was reading concluded in whirling patterns, in maelstroms, in whirlings of the mind, in whirlwinds, in whirlwinds of fire as in "Metzengerstein"—there are countless stories in which some kind of vortex appears at the end, and I began to think that these stories were, in some sense, all one story, at least in terms of that kind of drowsy structure.

BC: Poe articulates that magical time between sleeping and waking quite beautifully in one of the "Marginalia"...

RW: Yes, yes. There's that invaluable one of his "Marginalia" that talks about the approach to the very margin of sleep, how at that point when you're half in reality and half in dream, you see indescribable abstract forms which, for him, as I remember—what does he say—are glimpses of "the spirit's outer world."

BC: And that also happens in *Pym*; you mention that in your introduction to *Pym* that the ending with the whirlpool and the gigantic figure in white...

RW: Yes, indeed. It's once again rather like a plunge into sleep. At the same time, it's certainly a transition to the spirit's outer world.

BC: I wondered if we might go back, again, to your life, kind of historically, and, of course, you needn't answer this if you don't want to, but I wondered whether your father—and I see right here above you the portrait of your father with paintbrush in hand—as a painter, was he interested in Poe, did he read Poe to you when you were a child?

RW: I think he read Poe from time to time, though not to me. Many of the books that were in our house were the books that would interest a painter because of their illustrations. We had all sorts of "boys' classics" wonderfully illustrated by N.C. Wyeth. I wonder if Harry Clarke was the name of the Beardsley-like illustrator whose pages tended to be marginally festooned with grisly images...

BC: Did the book have color plates?

RW: It may have had color plates, but what I remember most were the line drawings, which were intricate and much more gruesome than Beardsley ever let himself be.

BC: The images in the Godine *Pym* edition that you wrote the introduction for—the images by Hoover—were extremely striking and ghastly...

RW: They were, and as I said in my introduction to that edition, Mr. Hoover had illustrated the literal story in all its horrors, and I was going to take care of the under currents.

BC: Well, I'd like to ask one more personal question, and then we can get on with the more intellectual part of discussing Poe...I also read that your grandfather was an editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, is that correct?

RW: Yes.

BC: Was there any connection in your family to Poe through that...

RW: He certainly would have been aware of Poe. He was a reader. But I don't recall his saying anything along those lines. Most of his recollections were of people he knew in the line of business, like William Jennings Bryan, for heaven's sake. He traveled with Bryan through two campaigns. No; I don't think an interest in Poe was given me by my grandfather.

BC: Okay. Also, over and over, in many of the interviews you've had, you say that your own work is, in some respects, a quarrel with Poe. It comes up a number of times. But, then, I wondered why, when you were editor of the Laurel poetry series did you choose Poe when you could have chosen, say, Wordsworth?

RW: There were various other poets I could have chosen to edit, but I did feel that, in the case of Poe, I had had a kind of personal experience of him, and I felt—it's hard to put this without seeming to brag—but I felt that I had had a special experience of him and seen into him to a degree that the critics I had encountered had not done. I'm really not in favor of the kind of critical pride that makes one claim to be the elected interpreter of somebody—but the way Poe's suggested themes initially came at me in a foxhole at Cassino rather committed me to him, and the more I looked into Poe, the more I read and re-read him, the more I felt that I had not been hallucinating my initial understandings of him...

BC: ...but that the work itself, as you said at one point, was meant to invoke this other space, this other world and, in fact, it has that power to do that?

RW: Yes, the worlds of drowsiness and dream. I think there's been a lot of wonderful criticism of Poe, and that there had been prior to my making my attempt at it, but it seems to me that response to what he continually called his "under current" was never quite strong enough or never quite along the lines he desired. I don't know if you've ever read Marie Bonaparte's...

BC: Yes, but only parts of her work...

RW: Well, her interpretations sound rather tiresomely formulaic in a Freudian way, yet, at the same time, she, because of her analytic training, paid a lot of attention to the details and images of Poe's stories, much more than other critics did prior to whenever it was, the 1930s, when she published. She noticed things wonderfully well. She simply gave them the wrong names, it seems to me—the names which were to hand for a Freudian analyst. In general, early Poe criticism had not been, what they called, in my college days, "close reading."

BC: Well, there's been a movement from the New Critics to deconstruction which, also, did close readings but of another sort—deconstruction was looking for a particular way of reading Poe, for what couldn't be said—well, what I'm trying to say is that all ideologies, when applied to literature, attend to only what fits or suits that particular formula or concern...

RW: Yes; somebody, who, for example, is interested in Poe and race relations...

BC: Yes; then you see it in Poe's work; you make it happen...Okay, so you chose Poe (in the Laurel series) because you felt a special bond with him?

RW: Yes; I felt a kind of bond, a kind of eerie attraction to Poe, and, at the same time, I was always aware that his imagination was after things that such writing as I was doing was *not* after. I remember a quotation from Yeats which goes, "out of the quarrel with others we make politics; out of the quarrel with ourselves, we make poetry." When I am quarreling with Poe, or stating my aesthetic differences with him, I'm quarreling also with myself, with the potential Poe who never quite got out...

BC: Right...so in "Love Calls Us to the Things of this World"—I see Poe in that but...I'm not quite sure how to say this...well, let me turn to the published exegesis you made in 1964 (I think it was a response to a seminar class in a book called *Talks with Authors*). The class was assigned "Beasts" and "Love Calls Us to the Things of this World"—in "Beasts" at the end, you say "crows on the public statues"—and I immediately thought of the raven on the bust of Pallas...

RW: My heavens, that connection has never occurred to me; I'd have said it came out of Sophocles. But you're right: though it doesn't mean what Poe meant, the resemblance is there.

BC: And I particularly love "Love Calls Us to the Things of this World" because it's about ordinary things, a clothesline between buildings and yet it's about that magical time between sleeping and waking...

RW: Yes, yes. That's right. I think that, long before I claimed any insights into Poe, I had been very interested in sleep, half-sleep, and hypnogogic images, though I never had a name for that last phenomenon. When I was an adolescent, I remember keeping, briefly, a record of my dreams. Not everybody does that...

BC: No, no...that's true.

RW: So, I was unconsciously preparing myself to enjoy some aspects of Poe. Speaking of my early poems, there was just one time that I thought when Poe's vocabulary was getting into mine...

BC: I was going to ask you that question, actually...

RW: I don't really think there's very much connection between his vocabulary and mine, but in a poem called "A Death of a Toad," I have a toad who's been injured by a power mower crawling into a flower border to die. That flower border was originally described, on the day that I wrote the poem, as a "dim,/ Low, and ultimate glade." There we have "ultimate" and "dim," and together they are highly reminiscent of "Dream-Land." Of course, I very soon crossed out "ultimate," and made that stanza end in "a dim,/ Low, and final glade."

BC: I was going to ask that very question—whether Poe's language finds its way into your poems—because it seems that anything we love comes somehow into our work whether we want it to or not...

RW: Oh, yes. Let me add one more thing about my poems and Poe. You mentioned "Love Calls Us" as evocative of Poe, in some ways. You could say, really, that it's a poem written in resistance to the spiritual direction of Poe's poems. Poe is always heading for infinitely elsewhere, heading for another

world and trying to abolish this one in the process. That poem of mine is really saying to the angels, come on down here so we can see you better...

BC: I guess that leads me to the next question...actually, I got quite carried away when I was composing the questions for this interview—they're far too formal, in any case, but, still, if you don't mind reading these particular excerpts over and letting me know if you still stand by them?

RW: Why, certainly.

Silence while RW reads BC's question: "In some sense, your quarrel with Poe, as you have put it in the past, centers around your sense of Poe's desire to deny 'the things of this world' for some 'realm of pure spirit.' In 1959 you wrote that Poe's aesthetics 'say[s] that art should repudiate everything human and earthly, and find its subject-matter at the flickering end of dreams[;] [this] is hopelessly to narrow the scope and function of art.' (38). In 1970, you reaffirmed this position in an interview with William Heyen, saying that it's 'morally and religiously bad to brush aside the realm of nature and drive impatiently toward what one supposes to be the realm of pure spirit'" (58).

RW: (reading the above quote out loud) Here I sound just like Allen Tate when I say that it's "morally and religiously bad to brush aside the realm of nature and drive impatiently toward what one supposes to be the realm of pure spirit"—I do think that a healthy imagination must function in the order of nature...and not as the diluter and abolisher and loser of mundane imagery...

RW continues to read in silence: "And, again, in 1975, in an interview with Christopher Bogan and Carl Kaplan, you were asked the same question, and you answered similarly that 'I simply cannot finally stomach any kind of idealism or spirituality which is contemptuous toward the body or what we call the material'" (152).

RW: Yes. Yes; I would still say all of those things.

BC: On another track, in an 1985 interview with Edwin Honig about translation, he asked you to make a connection between hearing Russian declaimed and hearing English in the same way, and he wanted to know about that step in the process of translation whether it was helpful to hear it in the original language, and he asked for your response. He posited a

hypothetical translator of Poe as an example for the English, and your response was: “It has to be Poe, hasn’t it?” Honig then provides an alternative to get to your response to the issue of translation. It was hard to read the tone of this exchange, although it seemed as if it could have been exasperation on your part. Do you remember why you responded this way, or maybe it doesn’t really matter that much...

RW: Poe’s poetry, more than most poetry in our language, asks to be recited in an intoning and spell-binding way, and a faithful translator would have to duplicate that aspect. Perhaps that’s what I meant; I’m not sure...

BC: Well, maybe it’s not that important...

RW: Certainly, Poe is someone who, in English, can be catchily declaimed, and one learns something of his meaning and intent by hearing what then happens. I suppose that’s what Ed Honig had in mind. A translator of Poe would do well to hear him declaimed. I recall being in Paris for a while in 1948 and spending some time talking to a young poet, then rather famous, Henri Pichette. He was interested in Poe, and he asked me to read “Annabel Lee” to him and I did. He thought that it was “*formidable, formidable.*” He was overcome by the sound and the movement of “Annabel Lee,” and then he said, “I want to know what some of it means.” I went through the poem, translating it into French as best I could. And when I got to the lines, “For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams/ Of the beautiful Annabel Lee,” he broke in and said, “Is it so banal as that?”

Laughter.

RW: So there was a great gap between the sound of Poe in English and what I gave him as an impromptu translation. A great gap between the two things,—and had he proposed to render Poe’s poem into French, he’d have had to match, somehow, Poe’s redeeming and transforming music. Poe gets away with it; he gets away with banality, as he does also in “Israfel,” I think. It’s not only that “Israfel” *sounds* good, it’s that somehow the movement of the verse and the chiming of the verse all overwhelm and transform what is ordinary in the language.

BC: You also mentioned that “The Bells” was, in many respects, Poe’s most successful poem. Do you still feel that way?

RW: There are days when I think so.

BC: So, there's a kind of incantatory—I can't say that word—

RW: “in can' ta to' ry”

BC: ...there's a kind of incantatory aspect of the language that overrides the clichéd meaning, sometimes.

RW: And sometimes it hides the meaning. Sometimes, it seems to me, the meaning is more interesting than the musicality of the poem would seem to argue. I once gave a talk to the Poe Studies outfit at the MLA, and in it spoke of a new understanding I had of the poem “Israfel.” It had taken me many readings of the poem, many hearings of it, to see what Poe was actually saying in that “duty and beauty” stanza. “But the skies that angel trod,/ Where deep thoughts are a duty...” (An angelic poet, it seems, is a dutiful and enlightened spirit, and can be intellectual at no cost to his poetry...) “Where Love's a grown-up God...” (Angelic passion is not like the earthly passion which he decries elsewhere; it's higher and more spiritual) “Where the Hoari glances are/ Imbued with all the beauty/ Which we worship in a star...” That stanza about angelic sensibility stresses the idea of duty, and of deep thought or intellect, and the adoration of transcendent beauty. This is the same triad of moral sense, taste, and intellect that he speaks of in his criticism; and the stanza is saying that if you're an angel, you can manage a fortunate balance among those faculties, as the earthly poetry can't, and can even dare to be passionate. But it took me a long time to see any argument whatever, anything but jingling and commonplace language, in those lines.

BC: You mention the notion of passion...

RW: I think that there's a certain amount of sexual joking in some of the comic pieces about loss of breath or size of nose. I suppose that if you're willing to make jokes of that kind, sexuality and physical desire are not altogether strange to you, but...

BC: ...but it's not a part of Poe that people see, or, rather, want to see...

RW: No, but it's not really the best of Poe, either...I often find it hard to read, with understanding, those stories which he intends as take-offs on

literary fashion and popular taste—take-offs, for instance, of *Blackwood* stories. If I were a real Poe scholar, I would have complete files of *Blackwood's* on the shelves, and other magazines and papers of his day, and so would have a sharper, livelier sense of what he's up to in those tales. Often, I think such pieces have a mixed or multiple character.

One thing I've never talked or written about is Poe as a self-mocker, as a parodist of himself. It strikes me that we find that happening very successfully and touchingly in the poem "Fairy-Land," where he keeps dropping into the matter-of-fact, the prosaic, and almost exploding his poem. I've always thought that the story called "The Man Who Was Used Up" is, in some degree and for some purpose, a self-parody. It was written not long after "Ligeia," and if you set its first paragraph next to "Ligeia's" first paragraph, the opening of the later story is very clearly a take-off on the wondrous uninformative-ness of the opening of "Ligeia." The narrator of "Ligeia," as you recall, can't really tell you where the lady came from, where and when he first met her, or what her family name was. The same sort of fogginess occurs, though more prosaically, in the corresponding paragraph of "The Man That Was Used Up." If you go on reading the latter story, there are comic parallels and contrasts with "Ligeia," and of course there's an enormous contrast between the manners in which Ligeia and General A.B.C. Smith are revived or restored. The main object seems *not* to be to make fun of "Ligeia;" the main object seems to be to present the General as the deplorable opposite of that ethereal goddess. He's a man who has been completely reassembled by modern science...

BC: ...rather than by some sort of spiritual force?

RW: Yes; General Smith is altogether from this earth, and stands for aspects of this earth to which the Poe poet is opposed—practical science, utilitarianism, "rectangular obscenities"—things from which Poe's heroes flee. The General is an anti-Ligeia.

BC: That's very interesting. Are you going to do something with that idea?

RW: I guess somebody ought to write it up, and prove it in greater detail, if that hasn't already been done. I can, to be sure, see more than one kind of humor in that story—there are topical jokes and satirical swipes which have now become obscure. And I think that after all there's a measure of self-mockery, too.

BC: One of the things that I've noticed in "Ligeia" is a moment of explicit anamorphosis which suggests a very purposeful kind of setting that would allow for a seemingly spiritual recovering of Ligeia through Rowena, but, in actuality, a more mechanical and purposeful activity is going on. There's a machine that makes the curtains move, as you note in your analysis of "Ligeia." In some respects, this might add to the argument of an alignment of "Ligeia" with "The Man That Was Used Up." In other words, how can you mechanically create the illusion of spirituality at the same time you're actually trying to convince a reader that such spirituality is triumphant?

RW: The narrator is certainly the deviser of that chamber and its artificial air currents and that sort of thing...

BC: And he has all the money in the world to do it, just as the narrator does in "The Domain of Arnheim"—also a story that seems to set out an ideal.

RW: Yes. Well, I'd say that Poe's dreamer-heroes don't need literal money or machines, and that a great fantasy like Arnheim can be constructed without heavy equipment. It's all done by dream-power. What we see in the latter pages of "Ligeia" might smack of illusionism and conjuring, but I think we must trust certain symbols in Poe, such as that cresset that hangs from the ceiling in "Ligeia": it depends from the Deity, and so would not sponsor illusion...

BC: I guess you're right...

RW: Glancing over some of the criticism I read long ago and haven't reread of late, I notice that T. S. Eliot thinks of Poe as having an atrocious prose style. Allen Tate—though he has a lot of sympathy with Poe—says that Poe is exhausting to read, and that having read one piece of his, you wouldn't wish to go right on and read another. And someone else—D. H. Lawrence, perhaps—is put off by what he calls Poe's "prose style." Other critics counter that sort of detraction by pointing out that Poe has many different prose styles, and that, for example, you get in "The Tell-Tale Heart" not a sample of Poe's prose, but an utterance by an exclamatory madman who wants to own up to a murder. In that view the prose, wild as it is, does its job. And I recall Auden's saying that the prose of "William Wilson" conveys the hero's grandiose character very well.

I do think some of the prose tales are much more profoundly thought out than others. “The Fall of the House of Usher” is just beautifully made, word by word, I think. And those who are repelled by the “fruitcake” character of Poe’s prose should see how many fruits they can get out of a story like “The Fall of the House of Usher,” taking it carefully, sentence by sentence. There are always new things I notice whenever I read that story. And “Ligeia,” again, is a story that has new meaning for you every time you read it, and not of a vague kind. I remember noticing, after many readings of “Ligeia,” that as we approach the final transformation of Rowena, for a page or so, there’s a continual echoing of words that have been earlier applied to Ligeia—words like “writhing” and “gold” and “shadow.” She’s been compared to a shadow in the very beginning of the story, and several other words are “theme” words about Ligeia. It’s almost as if an orchestra were tuning up to play “Ligeia” to you, and all that is very excellently contrived. We must give Poe the trustful attention that we’re used to giving John Donne—we were all told in school to read John Donne very carefully. Nobody said that we should do that with Poe. I think that if he’s read word by word, he turns out, at his best, to be a very rich and intentional writer.

BC: And Poe even wrote, at one point in his criticism, that every detail of a story should have meaning or contribute to the *dénouement*—that nothing should be inconsequential. He says it, but, as you said, most people don’t teach Poe that way...

RW: Students are not urged to take Poe seriously, in that way. It’s perfectly true that some of his stories are like fruitcakes—they’re very rich and full of stuff, and we may not know how to consume them at first, but we can learn.

BC: To take another turn now, Richard Kopley asked me to ask you if you had ever corresponded with T. O. Mabbott...

RW: Yes, I did. In fact, I went to see him in the late 50s or early 60s and saw both some of his Poe materials and his coin collection—he was a great coin collector, as I recall. He was very kind to me, and gave me all sorts of his accumulated information and insights. I don’t think he wholly went along with my interpretations, but that would have been surprising. He was very kind about reading all of my introduction and footnotes to

the Poe section of Perry Miller's *Major Writers of America*, and so I think of him gratefully.

BC: Do you plan to write something formally about Poe again?

RW: I just now edited a selected poems of Poe for a new American poetry series that the New American Library is doing. They've put out the four initial volumes; the Edna Millay volume, which is one of the first four and edited by J. D. McClatchy, is very satisfactory and easy to handle and well chosen. They're going to do one hundred volumes of American poetry in this way, not complete editions, but little selections. I wrote a small introduction for that selected Poe; I'm not sure I said anything new in it, but I persevered in my original notions.

BC: Is that out already?

RW: No; it's not out yet, but it should be out pretty soon. I don't know whether I shall have another go at Poe. Since I knew you were coming—I started looking at Poe once again for the first time in quite a while, and was as intrigued as ever. I found some things here and there that I hadn't noticed. And so, who knows whether I'll be bitten again with the need to do something about it? A while back I wanted very much to find out what connection there was, if any, between the Temple of Mut in Egyptian Thebes and "The Fall of the House of Usher." The temple of Mut was surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped lake that was filled by the rising of the Nile, and, of course, religious symbolism was ascribed to that lake as well as to the structure. I think that the temple is no longer around, but reactions to it and notions of what its meanings were in Egyptian religion are probably accessible somewhere. It might be something to follow up...

BC: You characterize your own writing of poetry, in some sense, as writing poem by poem, each a separate kind of evocation. On the other hand, you have characterized Poe's work as concerned with an overriding cosmological/spiritual sensibility that shapes his work. I just wondered, well, there are two questions, actually: is that something you would think someone looking at your work could do, or is your impulse to do that to Poe something you think peculiar to Poe—that Poe's work seems to call for? I'm trying to ask a question, here, but I'm not quite being clear enough...

RW: Well, I don't know the extent to which someone else might be able to see my work as all of a piece, but I rather think that Poe, if compared to most of our contemporary poets, was more consciously self-limited, and tied to the conception of poetry's function which he expounds in poems like "Sonnet to Science" and "Al Aaraaf." I'm not, of course, talking about the flattering little poems he wrote for people's personal albums.

BC: So you think that since Poe had this almost rigid sense of the parameters of poetry, that somehow this limited what he had to say even though it was his choice.

RW: Yes. I think it did limit him. If he was devoted to a kind of obscurity and wasting away of the world, that limited his power to write "Hiawatha" (laughter). But there are some poems of his which pretty nearly tell a story. "The Raven," I guess, comes closest. And yet I find that, when I compare "The Raven" to the short stories, there are still some loose ends in the narrative of the poem, more than there would be in one of the short stories.

BC: Do you mean purposefully?

RW: Well, nothing in the poem "The Raven" gives us a sense of fully understanding the raven sitting on the bust of Pallas at the end. When you think of what sculpture means elsewhere in Poe, especially in his prose, and when you think of the resemblance of that final tableau to the final view of wife and cat in "The Black Cat," the conjunction of raven and bust seems unexplored in the poem, or unexplained as it wouldn't be in prose. So I think he's cut off somewhat by his desire for what he calls indefiniteness; he's cut off from telling full stories in verse. In my little introduction to the New American Library volume on Poe, I took as an example of this "The Valley of Unrest," which is best understood in relation to stories like "Eleonora." If you want to understand "The Valley of Unrest" as narrative, you think of what similar material is motivated by in the stories.

BC: I think you've mentioned that elsewhere—and I found that a very helpful cue...

RW: It makes the poems very dependent on the prose for some kind of fullness of narrative meaning, because Poe's whole aesthetic as a poet is opposed to telling complete and apprehensible stories. And I think the

same can be said of argument in Poe's poetry. He doesn't want the intellect to be given the lead in poetry, and so there are very few poems that proceed by logical steps and give us a conclusion.

BC: Do you still prefer Poe's prose to his poetry?

RW: Well, there's not too much in Poe that I'd like to banish. But my greatest respect is given to the best of the stories, which he considered work in an inferior genre. I find his great fictions more imaginatively satisfying, with their ostensible and suggestive layers of meaning than most of the poetry.

BC: You wrote at one point that "poetry is sterile unless it arises from a sense of community, or at least from the hope of community." That's one of the things—community—I've been thinking about recently in relation to Poe—before I read your quote, actually. Unlike Hawthorne, for example, Poe's work is rarely situated in a community. Most of the stories, and I haven't thought carefully about this, but most of Poe's stories are in isolated valleys somewhere away from people or in isolated houses...I can't think of any, actually...well, there's *Pym*, but that's a weird community on a ship isolated from the world...

RW: Yes, though, in one perspective, and this may be a crazy perspective, but it's mine—in one perspective, that whole shipload of people is there in order to perish, and, somehow, the gradual perishing of that shipload of people is part of Pym's process of purgation. In that perspective, it's still a rather lonely situation that the story presents.

BC: How, then, in constructing that idea about poetry and community—how does it relate to Poe?

RW: Offhand, I would say that Poe is never a poet of the sense of community I was thinking of. I believe, when I said that, that I was taking off from Wallace Stevens' distinction between poetry as something by individuals for individuals and poetry that contributes to the general imaginative strength of a society. There are many poets, like Auden for example, who consciously wished to contribute to the imaginative strength of their societies. And I think Poe is somehow at the other extreme from that desire. If you're trying to get to "some other star" ...

BC: ...it's not here.

RW: Right. There may be some way of seeing Poe as belonging to a group with other people. I suppose he belongs consciously to the Republic of Letters, which would include all that he'd read of the classics and all that he constantly read in the magazines of the world. He communed with a number of other writers, living and dead, and there were other writers, like Dostoyevsky and Baudelaire, who sooner or later communed with him.

BC: I guess, in that sense, he would be part of a community, in that he's responding to the popular movements of his time, in some way, either critiquing them or mocking them. In that sense, he is part of a community. But as far as building community, well, I don't know... Well, is there anything else you'd like to say?

RW: Well, if anybody can find proof that Poe had heard of the Temple of Mut—any mentions of it—I'd like to hear about it. Professor Charles Anthon might well have told him something. No doubt my hunch about Mut's temple is nonsense, but I have a respect for hunches. The temple, by the way, was in a district called "Asher."

There is one thing I'd like to say. After I had had my fit of insight into Poe during World War II, I came back and went back to Harvard graduate school and from there, by good luck, I went into Harvard's Society of Fellows for a few years. And while I was there, I started to write a book about Poe but didn't really find a satisfactory set of basic terms in which to describe the Poe phenomenon. I did, during that period of years—sometime between '47 and '50—teach a volunteer course at Harvard in Poe. Five or six brave undergraduates and graduate students joined me for that, and since then I've taught seminars in Poe at Wesleyan and Smith, and always had a wonderful time with it. I always found that my students could do what they ordinarily don't expect to do in literature courses—they could find things out that no one had ever noticed before. In no other seminars that I ever taught anywhere did students come up with new and valid interpretations of texts as they did with Poe's. A lot of Poe is still lying there, I think, waiting to be seen in the right way. I'm sure other people who have done Poe in the seminar way—not just lecturing, but giving the students a chance—have found the same thing.

BC: Would you still maintain, then, as you did in 1959, that “These, then, are Poe’s great subjects: first, the war between the poetic soul and the external world; second, the war between the poetic soul and the earthly self to which it is bound”?

RW: It took me awhile to discover those things. What first made itself clear to me, as I’ve said, in part, was that in many of his stories, there was an underlying structure of the gradual approach to sleep; you had not only terminal maelstroms but also winding paths, and winding streams and mill-wheel sounds, and reflected water-banks, and flickering visual phenomena...all sorts of symbolic approaches to the condition of dream insulation and enclosure. Those were the things I first caught onto. It was quite a while before I came to see that there was a kind of fundamental Gnostic or Neo-Platonic myth at the back of the stories. I expect that if I had taken “Al Aaraaf” more seriously in my early readings, I might have seen that a little sooner.

I’ve often had little reveries in which I walk into a second-hand bookstore somewhere, and see on the table a book with the fascinating title of *The Treasure-House of Neo-Platonism*, and pick it up and the initials E. A. P. on the flyleaf. When I was having such fancies as that, I was not as sure as I now am that the pattern of Poe’s myth is Platonic or Gnostic. By now, that pattern has turned up in so many different texts that I’m confident of it.

BC: It’s definitely in *Eureka*.

RW: So it is. *Eureka*’s there at the end, and “Al Aaraaf” at the beginning. They inflect everything which you read that lies between.

BC: *Eureka* was my first real response to Poe. It was so difficult that the challenge engaged me...now that I think of it, here’s something that I’d like to ask: how do you make sense of *Eureka* as a “prose poem”?

RW: I think that the best explanation I could give would be to try to remember that passage in which he speaks of Kepler. He says that Kepler guessed or dreamt what turned out to be proper astronomical answers—and I think Poe associates guessing or intuition with the poetic act—and so he’s saying, here’s a dream of mine. And I suppose he’s also saying, you’ll notice that it’s very self-consistent, and if it’s self-consistent....

BC: ...then it has to be true.

RW: Yes; it has to be true.

BC: *Eureka* really does “whirl” you as you read it, and I sometimes imagine what it must have been like to hear it, trying to imagine sitting in the audience listening to Poe deliver his “prose poem”...

RW: Yes, sitting in the audience you’d be saying to yourself, “I think I see where’s he’s going: am I going to turn out to be God?” (laughter)

BC: Yes; yes. Well, on that promise, I think we’ll have pretty much covered everything. I want to thank you so much for inviting me into your study in Cummington and talking with me about Poe.

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Interview with Henri Justin (October 2002)

Barbara Cantalupo: Well, here we are in the quiet of this small study room in the Philadelphia Free Library's Rare Books Division. Thank you for meeting me here after the conference in Towson. So let's begin. I understand that your dissertation was on Poe, and I wonder how you first become interested in Poe.

Henry Justin: Yes. In France, at that time, as a lecturer, you had to submit a hundred-page work, and I did something on a number of writers. There was a bit of Virginia Woolf, John Donne, Shakespeare, and there was a bit of philosophy. I was trying to define what I call the "structure of imaginary space," but that, of course, was too ambitious. I couldn't develop that into a dissertation, so I had to become specialized. I thought I would do something on T. S. Elliot's reading of John Donne, and I started on that. Ideally, I would have written on Keats; I felt really very close to him, too close, probably, for a study. And also I felt, naively, that everything had been written about Keats.



So, suddenly I discovered or rediscovered Poe; I just had had to teach it, and I thought, well, that's my man. I do think that he picks up the Romantic tradition, or the Romantic way of writing or feeling, but looks at it from a distance, with a lot of intellectual distance. I think he does; that's what I'm interested in—to show this. That he does construct—that, structuring his own space—he does construct the logical feel of Romanticism. So that's how I came to Poe—thinking that, with Poe, I could show what I wanted to show about poetry, about Romanticism, and even about Shakespeare and tragedy and so on. So he was a tool for me; he was helping me with my criticism.

BC: What attracted you, then, was the sense that, although Poe embraced, in some ways, the Romantic, he had a particular kind of distance from it so that you were able to use that distance to write about Poe? You weren't as overly involved with Poe as you might have been, say, with Keats?

HJ: Exactly, exactly. One thing I wrote in my dissertation, which I think summarizes this, is that Poe transforms Romanticism into Structuralism. I was very much working in the wake of Structuralism in the 70s.

BC: I understand that Patrick Quinn began to translate your dissertation...

HJ: Began and finished.

BC: He did finish...?

HJ: He finished, which means that I have the complete translation of my dissertation at home. But, it can't be published...there was a gap between what I wanted to say and what Patrick Quinn could accept intellectually. Plus, perhaps, a gap in the sense that some of the more stylistic effects in my French didn't show up. Mainly, I think it was an intellectual reluctance...

BC: I see.

HJ: For example, I'd say somewhere, "How the text laughs!"—so he says, well, the text can't laugh...

BC: Okay...I see.

HJ: It sounds unimportant, but the whole translation is loaded with "shall we say" or "in a manner of speaking" and so on. He had to add these, because he probably thought, "I can't just translate this straight..."

BC: So the performative aspect doesn't come through...

HJ: I'm not sure that I follow you there. It's a whole intellectual view that I have that he couldn't embrace wholeheartedly. We had a lot of correspondence. I read his translation of a section, a number of pages, and made my remarks—and we had quite a bit of shuttling back and forth. It's come very far, the translation—it went as far as it could go...

BC: This is something very interesting about translation for me...I've wanted to bring languages other than English to the *Poe Review*, so the idea of translation—but I'm curious—since you're so facile in English, wouldn't you be able to take your own text in French and move it into English?

HJ: Perhaps I lack courage. Of course, if a publisher said, “I’ll take it,” then, of course, I’d set to work right away...but I probably need an English-speaking person to help. My English is very academic; I’m not very fluent. I must do it in collaboration.

BC: Now, getting back to Poe. Do you find yourself, now, teaching Poe...

HJ: I’m retired now...but I’ve taught English and American literature all round.

BC: Since I don’t read French, I wasn’t able to do the legwork that I usually do before interviews, and I must apologize for that. I’m not quite sure how much of your work on Poe is in English...

HJ: Not very much. I belong to an old school of French academics who tend to read and teach in English; we study the original texts—we don’t work from translations—but we tend to write our criticism in French. So in English I’ve written two reviews for *Poe Studies* a long time ago, and the last thing I wrote was on Poe’s aesthetics, for the 1999 conference; a paper that Richard Kopley has selected for the projected publication.

BC: Would you give us a sense, then, since most of your work on Poe is in French, what about Poe’s work interests you now? Is there a particular theoretical approach to Poe that you have used? Is there anything about his work that fascinates you in particular?

HJ: Yes. My dissertation was entitled “Poe and the Infinite Center,” and, again, it’s this idea of a formal field which I find structures the literary imagination. My main interest is to make the field visible. First, I just have this field in mind—the basic idea is this kind of perverse logic, you could call it, or perverse topology. You have circle with a center. When you move to the center, the more you move to the center, in fact, the more you approach the receding periphery of the circle. You’re always going two ways—you can’t escape it. That’s the main thing. Which means it’s aporetic. Language cannot do that except in poetry.

BC: Let me see if I understand...this spatial orientation, this geometry, you talk about, is more amenable to visual expression than to language. I’ve always seen the visual as being better able to accommodate spatial

sensibility than language, which is linear. But you're arguing that there's a kind of imaginary space that, in always moving towards the center, is always moving toward the periphery—on the other side of where it originates, of course. So what I'm trying to ask you is that when you talk about this imaginary space, you have to translate that field into language—into poetry?

HJ: With me it's always language...

BC: So I guess I'm trying to ask you, how do you see the construction of imaginary space as language? Are you arguing for that?

HJ: I'll take an example, the freshest in my memory—"The Masque of the Red Death." I'm surprised by the number of readings that see the Red Death as coming from the outside—the *final* death coming from the outside. In fact, there was the threat of the Red Death, and Prospero walled himself in against it, but this kind of wall in Poe is always porous. The pressure of the death outside, in fact, seeps in—which means, it seeps into the abbey and into the mind of Prospero, and this is why all the decoration culminates at the seventh chamber with a setting proper for the apparition of the Red Death itself—the color red, the clock, etc. It's all there. It's all been planted by Prospero.

BC: Yes.

HJ: And finally how does he die? He doesn't die because suddenly the doors burst open; we forget about this outside described at the start. Death is at the center, simultaneously. That's an idea...it's through language. It's very visual in the sense that you have the castellated abbey, the suite of rooms, the black chamber, the red panes, etc. But it's difficult, even there...but, even there...a friend and I tried to draw the suite of rooms...it's impossible. It contradicts itself; it's very difficult visually, in that sense. The visual is limited too—it's limited to perspective, to the proper point of view, etc. What I'm talking about is something invisible, really. You cannot really represent it; you must use certain possibilities of language to come towards it. It would be the same with painting; you would use certain techniques to come towards it.

BC: Would "it" be, then, like Freud's "navel," in a sense? Freud's notion of that place which is beyond language, beyond representation...is that the kind of "center" you're talking about?

HJ: Yes, yes. The eye of the maelstrom...

BC: So that's the aspect of Poe's work that you're attracted to...that he was able to create a kind of story or poem which exemplifies that idea....

HJ: ...made it as visible as possible, or as visible as any other writer I know could make it.

BC: Oh, okay. Now it's clearer.

HJ: So, having seen that in Poe, I hope to show it more visibly in other writers such as Shakespeare...

BC: So you think that this topology is universal...that great writers...

HJ: I think it's part of the literary condition, when a writer starts writing fiction. You are in it. You may not see it. You may see it. Avoid it. Go towards it or not. React. Refuse it—whatever. You're in it.

BC: Did you discuss this idea in the Richmond paper?

HJ: Yes, because I thought, it's my first opportunity to speak to my English-speaking colleagues directly, so I tried to go to the heart of it. That's why I entitled my paper "Impossible Aesthetics or the Aesthetics of the Impossible." I conclude that it's an aesthetics of the impossible. And to give some sense of the impossible is possible.

BC: Yes, and that Poe does this very well is what you're saying. Have you published on Poe in French?

HJ: Yes. There's the book and about fifteen articles.

BC: Do these tend to reflect this same sensibility?

HJ: Oh, yes. That's my only idea, you know. Don't ask me for a second one...(laughter). What you call in French, "*idée force*"—a "driving" idea. For my book—it's entirely in French, the quotations, everything—I've changed the dissertation title to make it more attractive: "Poe within the Field of Vertigo." It's really the same thing as "Poe and the Infinite Center."

Well, as I was working on the dissertation, I would read Poe, at different times, and each time—there it was—the same structure. How could I start and develop any analysis? One day I met a colleague in a pub, a linguist, and he said, “Well, you’re not doing very well with your Structuralism these days. It’s all enunciation now.”

BC: ...yes—speech act theory...

HJ: Yes. So, I thought, “Now gosh, the narrator!” And I went back to my tales, always with the structure at the back of my mind, and with each tale I wondered, “Who is speaking?” And with these two things, plus the chronology of the tales, I established a diagram of the tales. I’ve even drawn up a table. Each tale is in a particular slot determined by these three elements—chronology...

BC: Let me interrupt—when you say the word chronology...

HJ: ...of publication.

BC: Oh, okay. I only ask since I just heard a paper at the conference on re-print culture—the fact that Poe published something, then it came out here and then there, at various times, for example, five years later...

HJ: I wasn’t too particular about that. Basically, I took the date of the first publication.

BC: so you have chronology and...

HJ: Yes; and on the table, horizontally, there’s the position of the narrator with respect to “the structure.” To take an obvious example, in “The Descent into the Maelstron,” there’s the narrator and “the structure,” and he’s directly facing “the structure.” But when you come to the woman narratives, “the structure” is represented by the room and is mediated by woman as character: woman as psyche, as the image of the soul. So that the narrator is not directly facing “the structure.” This group of stories has access to “the structure” through woman.

And then there are the less interesting tales, the ones with an anonymous person writing—with no narrator as character. So I’ve done that.

BC: Okay, so the articles you wrote after the book, do these further exemplify these ideas of Poe?

HJ: Of course it depends on what I was being asked to do. Some are more circumstantial than others. There are two types of articles: some are strictly on Poe—for example, one which I like very much, which is typical of me, it's call "The Vortex, Reason and Vertigo"—it is reason itself, which, if it is honest with itself, goes to the extremes which are in it and comes to vertigo—it's not a different force—it's reason pushed to its own limit, which is something you find in Pascal, for example. There's a vertigo of reason. And others like "From the Sexual to the Textual," the woman narratives, this kind of thing. And the other type of articles when I begin to build bridges between Poe and other writers so that I come back to my first ambition—I'm not interested in Poe in himself, but I'm interested in that structure, basically. A long time ago, I wrote something, "Keats, Poe, Faulkner." I also wrote an article on Mallarmé's translation of Poe's poems. And a long essay which is a long tug-of-war with D. H. Lawrence, his reading of Poe, which is interesting in a way, and, on the other hand, so unacceptably naive...it was a little bit unusual, this article. The latest one, which I like very much, studies the filiation linking William Godwin, William Gilmore Simms and Poe. We know that Poe had great admiration for Godwin and used him a lot, but I think it's through Simms and the particular condition of the South. And now I've started on Poe and Shakespeare.

BC: Are there any American critics who have influenced you?

HJ: Gargano's "Poe's Narrators"—that was an important watershed in Poe criticism. More recently, Kennedy, of course, and I have great admiration for Irwin. Not influence, exactly, but interest. Both have some contact with French culture—I have a certain affinity with them. And, of course, Dan Hoffman—his book is delightful. Also, Alexander Hammond, on whose reconstruction of the tales of the Folio Club I have built an interpretation. Of course, with more thought, I could extend the list...

BC: On another track, would you talk about Poe's influence in France today—has it waned or is it as strong?

HJ: I find it's difficult to say. Poe is always in the picture. He's immovable. He's always there in the schools, if that's any indication. Students read

him. The funny thing is, the next thing I have to do is some forty pages introducing Poe especially as a writer of fantastic and detective fiction for teachers in schools. And I was told on that occasion that he is the only foreign author who is studied in French schools for his own sake. He keeps a very special place.

And I've translated a number of tales in '91, bilingual, with notes for students. It goes on being sold, nicely. There is this.

Also, perhaps I can mention the musical by Lou Reed and Robert Wilson in Paris—and there were plenty of young people there! So, in that sense, it goes on.

Another thing that was recent enough, on the cover of a book on translation—how to translate from English to French, etc., there is the face of Baudelaire with the face of Poe behind it. Because their case is typical of what translation is about.

BC: Do you find yourself at all interested in cultural studies?

HJ: Obviously seeing things from France, I'm not so much involved, as you would be in the United States. Gender problems, racial problems, etc.,—and also this kind of structure is more abstract than that. It's more that I feel the pressure; for example, now I see a number of things being written on Poe and slavery—did he have an African-American friend or not—this kind of thing. And I begin to feel that the structure I see at work in Poe has something to say about that.

For example, take the figure of Pompey. That's Poe. That's a self-portrait, I'm sure. And, even in the word, "Pompey"—it's "Pym" plus "Poe." The six letters...I'm sure it's a self-portrait—the long overcoat trailing in the dirt. If you take "Ulalume," you have the soul with its wings drooping and trailing in the dust. They are signs of impotence. I do very much think that there is something about impotence in Poe, so the black slave was the image of that in social terms of the time. Deep down, maybe not as a social person, but as a writer, he could not, perhaps, relate to the African-American, but he could feel a conflation of his own position with theirs. So that's deep down, in terms of structure; it's not cultural studies; it's a reaction to cultural studies.

BC: Is Poe's work still seductive to you?

HJ: Yes. My ambition would be to write on the emergence of the detective story. Also I have translated all of Poe's main poems, but it's difficult to find a publisher...I agree with Poe when he says somewhere, "I have no ambition but when I see a fool doing something..." Sometimes, I come across new translations of Poe's poems, and I think, "oh." So I would like to publish my translations. One thing I can say is that I've had some success with my translation of "The Raven." I've given three public readings—because, of course, it's been translated by many other people and, making a collection of the French translations—I must have twenty—I have created another one, with all the rhyme schemes, the sound effects...

BC: Since music is a very important aspect of Poe's poetry, it seems important to translating Poe's poetry that the music survive—would you find that in your translation?

HJ: Yes. You would recognize the rhythm in my translation whereas Baudelaire said these poems by Poe, they're just too crystalline, they cannot be transported into another language, they just refuse to translate. But since he translated "The Philosophy of Composition," he did translate "The Raven" in that context, but he said he was just giving a translation for use. It's good though, but it's prose. Mallarmé was more ambitious. He translated most poems, keeping the rhythm, and miming the constructions, but it's poetic prose; he didn't try to keep the verse form. He's still the authority.

BC: In his keynote address talk at the Poe conference, Doctorow said a number of times that he believed that Poe is America's best worst writer. Do you think that that's a sentiment you might hear among French academics?

HJ: Not so much. Not being native speakers of English, we're not so sensitive to the kind of rigidity and non-colloquiality which there is in Poe, so we can take it more straight, you know. When it comes to specialists in comparative literature, they do look into the English text, but for their emotional reactions, they rely on the Baudelaire's translations, and Baudelaire naturalized the texts very much. It's an honest, humble translation in many ways, which is remarkable on the part of such a tremendous writer. But he composed the text partly with his own choices and shortcomings, so that, for example, most of the wordplay is lost. So, Poe's texts, like "The Tell-

Tale Heart” and so on, are much more highly intense, psychological dramatizations without the distance that you find in the English text.

BC: So the texts become more, in translation, like the performances done by actors acting out the stories as plays, which is, of course, only one aspect. Oh, you said, that it was the poetry, initially, that drew you to Poe. Did you mean literally the poetry or the poetry of the language?

HJ: When did I say that?

BC: In the very beginning you said...

HJ: Oh, yes. I wasn't talking about Poe. I was saying that about the nature of poetry...

BC: Yes, that's what I meant...

HJ: Oh, right! In the case of Poe, why Poe is so interesting is that he is a “half-failed” poet. His poetry is not that good, but what he did was save something of the nature of poetry, the essence of poetry, in prose. And this is why the structures—what I would call poetic structures—become visible because he translates them into fiction. So he is faithful to his poetic vocation. But, turning to prose, using all his analytic capacities, he comes to a kind of critical attitude towards poetry in the prose.

BC: So, when you get to *Eureka*, finally, which he actually calls a prose poem, he articulates that...

HJ: Yes; for a long time, Poe said that prose and poetry are like oil and water, and in *Eureka* he tries to blend.

BC: And that might be a verification for your assumption that implicit in the fiction is his faith to his desire to be a poetry and to poetry itself. Well, I think we've covered a great deal today, and I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me about Poe here in Philadelphia.

HJ: I hope with this interview, I might intensify my contacts with American colleagues since my contacts are more British. I spent two years in a university in Great Britain, and the U.S. is a new country to me—I've only been here three times for three weeks each.

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Poe in International Cyberspace

Heyward Ehrlich

Poe's reputation, like the Internet itself, has always been international. Despite the Anglophone if not American orientation of the web, virtually all languages and nations have Poe sites. To search for "Edgar Allan Poe" on Google will produce about 250,000 hits. (No I haven't looked at them all!) Google's "advanced search" permits the language to specified, revealing very large numbers of hits particularly on German, Spanish, French, and Italian sites. I estimate that about 50,000 or one-fifth of the Poe sites reported by Google are outside the United States. Of course, national location and language are not the same: Stefan Gmoser's fine Austrian site, <http://bau2.uibk.ac.at/sg/poe/poe.html>, is in English, while the Francophone http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf/Dossiers/Edgar_Allan_Poe is at a Canadian domain. Portuguese-language sites are likely to be in Brazil, while Spanish-language pages may well be outside Spain. Most of the groups below are based on language; a few national groups are given in square brackets.

Nevertheless, it is useful to be aware of national domains: Austria (AT), Australia (AU), Brazil (BR), China (CN), Czechoslovakia (CZ), Canada (CA), Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Ireland (IE), Israel (IL), Hungary (HU), Italy (IT), Japan (JP), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Russia (RU), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Taiwan (TW), United Kingdom (UK). But keep in mind that quite a few "foreign" sites are registered under the usually anglophone COM or ORG domains. Some Asian languages require appropriate fonts: on the computer used for testing, I was unable to read pages in either traditional or simplified Chinese.

All web sites are inherently unstable, but international sites may be even more mercurial than locally national ones. Perhaps half of the national sites listed in the original "Poe Webliography" in 1999 are still functioning, but virtually none of the original international sites are still responding. My method for this survey was to specify Google searches in several languages and then to select, somewhat randomly, a few sample sites from each national group. These samples are not necessarily the most definitive sites for Poe research. Nevertheless, I inspected each site to make sure it was functioning and added some brief descriptive remarks, painfully aware of my linguistically challenged ability. (Please send corrections and suggestions

to me by email at ehrllich@andromeda.rutgers.edu.) Incidentally, the number after each language heading, where available, is the number of hits reported by Google. In the case of the anglophone domains AU, CA, IE, and UK, I was also able to run domain searches on Google. These results are under “English.” I also did an unrestricted Google search and made this special notation for any international site which turned up in the first hundred hits: [Top 100]. Note: This report is also available online with live hypertext links at http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrllich/poe/eap_rev_sp03.html.

Arabic (7)

Austrian (see also German) [Austria]

Excellent general starting site, in English.

<http://bau2.uibk.ac.at/sg/poe/poe.html>

Chinese (simplified, 4210; traditional, 242) [China]

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The pit and the pendulum: Six works in Czech and English.

<http://www.oook.cz/poe/>

List of works, including titles on Poe.

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Irish (107)

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<http://www.edunet.ie/links/authorp.html>

French (6430) [France]

"House of Usher" site by Peter Forrest: French version of a premier Poe web site. [Top 100]

<http://www.comnet.ca/~forrest/francais/poe.html>

Histoires extraordinaires: Beautiful book sales site with reader forum.

<http://jeunesse.casterman.com/isbn/2-203-55359-6/?r=castducu>

German (12,800) (see also Austrian) [Germany]

Edgar Allan Poe in His Time: chronology plus works on line (in English).
[Top 100]

<http://www.heise.de/ix/raven/Literature/Authors/poe/life.html>

Must see Flash computer animation (worth the download time) with
some pages in French and English. [Top 100]

<http://www.edgarallanpoe.de/>

Gutenberg mirror site: many translations online.

<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/autoren/poe.htm>

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Horror films, including Corman films, from Verona conference. [Top 100]

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[Top 100]

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Marginalia

Poe and Campanella: Among the books in Roderick Usher’s library, there is a copy of Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun*, one of several works Usher owns describing imaginary voyages to fantastic places. In Poe’s day, Campanella, the seventeenth-century Italian philosopher, was known not only as the author of *City of the Sun*, an ideal utopian society based on Plato’s vision of the universe, but also as a pioneer of the science of physiognomy—the idea of being able to interpret an individual’s character and temperament through their facial expressions. With the reference to Campanella, Poe evokes a rich set of ideas that resonate throughout “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

Although Poe had a smattering of Italian, he likely did not read the 1836 Italian edition of *City of the Sun*. Instead, he learned Campanella’s ideas through secondary sources, including the 1836 Philadelphia edition of Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which contains multiple references to Campanella’s theory. Besides the Burton text, other resources treating either Campanella or the theory of physiognomy available to Poe include: *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1823), *The Encyclopaedia Americana* (1829), and Isaac Disraeli’s *Curiosities of Literature* (1833). The periodical literature also made reference to Campanella. An article entitled “National Postures” in the *New England Magazine* (7[1834]:226), for example, articulates a commonplace idea about Campanella: “The famous Campanella has also observed, that, if he came in contact with an individual, whose features had assumed a peculiar conformation, in order to discover the ruling emotion of that man, he had only to throw his own face into the same position, and immediately the corresponding state of mind was excited.”

Five years after “Usher” appeared, Poe would mention Campanella and make imaginative use of his theory of physiognomy within the text of “The Purloined Letter.” In this tale, Auguste Dupin explains that whenever he wishes to discern the thoughts of another, he would “fashion the expression of my face as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression. This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to...Campanella” (Mabbott ed. 3:984-85).

Though Poe did not specifically articulate these ideas until “The Purloined Letter,” they are present in “Usher” by implication.

Another work Poe drew upon frequently was Horace Binney Wallace’s *Stanley* (1838). Wallace not only discusses Campanella’s theory, but also observes that people’s temperament and thoughts can be discerned through physiognomy: “In the same manner, if we dispose our interests, and wishes, which may be called the features of feeling, into a conformity with those of others, we shall find that their thoughts and counsels start naturally up in our mind” (2:242). Burton, too, acknowledges that Campanella and other philosophers believed the imagination and sentiments of a person could be internalized by an observer.

Poe incorporates both aspects of Campanella’s intellectual legacy in “Usher.” These conceptions are exhibited within “Usher” by way of the mansion, Roderick, the guitar music, and the reading from the “Mad Trist.” All help to change the narrator’s state of mind, consequently evoking within him the sentiments of horror and madness.

Inspecting the mansion, the narrator becomes increasingly disturbed; and with Roderick’s description of the mansion’s sentience, its facade is immediately linked to that “terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family” (2:408). Furthermore, Roderick’s terrifying countenance becomes contagious—infesting the narrator. To alleviate this miasma, one pastime he engages in is listening to the “wild improvisations of [Roderick’s] speaking guitar” (2:404). With each strum, the execrable voice of the instrument’s imprisoned soul caresses the ears and minds of both witnesses.

In an effort to act as a control to any future ephemeral moments of delirium, and hoping Roderick might find relief, the narrator reads from the “Mad Trist.” Clutching this talisman and reading from the text, the verbalized action echoes throughout the mansion as Madeline breaks out of her tomb. With each utterance, the narrator cannot help but wonder if this ritual will have any influence upon Roderick. Rather than dispelling evil, the narrator invokes it. The result is the ultimate collapse of Roderick, Madeline, and the House of Usher itself.

In addition to physiognomy, Campanella's theory of utopian society also comes into play in "Usher." In *City of the Sun*, Campanella expressed his belief that the family and the state were dependent upon one another, with the soul representing the individual, and the body representing the home. Identifying the mansion as representing the "state," and the Ushers representing the "family," Poe inverses the concept of the perfect utopian society. The "state" of the Usher home and family is decaying, crumbling, and dissolving rather than prospering.

Campanella's utopian society also held the premise that an individual's private conscience and personality were to be absorbed by the collective conscience, and, as a result, family and property must be sacrificed. The estate, Roderick, and Madeline represent this sacrifice as the gaping mouth of the vortex engulfs the remains of the Usher existence.

Physiognomy was a popular belief in the 1830s and 40s, and Poe's inclusion of Campanella in Usher's library allows the tale to be interpreted in terms of both utopian society and physiognomy. Remodeling Campanella's theory, Poe not only illustrates physiognomy affects individuals, but also he allegorizes the estate as an extended metaphor representative of the corporeal existence of family and its collapse.

Priscilla Rice
University of Central Oklahoma

PSA Matters

From Richard Kopley, PSA President: At this year's American Literature Association Conference in Cambridge, MA, the PSA Executive Committee recognized its incoming officers for 2004-2005: Scott Peeples, President-elect; Richard Fusco, Vice President-elect; Mary DeJong and Noelle Baker, Members-at-large-elect. The committee also recognized the PSA's newest honorary members: J. Gerald Kennedy, Carol Peirce, and Jeffrey A. Savoye. It was agreed that Carol Peirce and Jeffrey Savoye will receive their plaques at the Baltimore Poe Society's 81st Commemorative Lecture in October 2003; Jerry Kennedy will receive his plaque at one of the Poe panels at the MLA in San Diego in December 2003. The committee agreed that all living honorary members who had been inducted before plaques were given would receive plaques; citations will be gathered and plaques made and distributed in the coming year.

The Executive Committee reviewed the bylaws revision approved by the membership, as well as the PSA's finances, ably delineated in the report of Secretary-Treasurer Carole Shaffer-Koros. The committee agreed to increase membership dues for the PSA beginning in 2004 to \$15/year for U.S. members and \$20/year for non-U.S. members. The committee also agreed that purchase of the mailing list for the PSA would cost \$100.

The editor of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, Barbara Cantalupo, discussed the journal, which is clearly thriving. The committee also discussed the possibility of a joint conference in 2006 in London or Oxford, England, with the Hawthorne Society and the Emerson Society; everyone liked the idea, and arrangements are pending. Those attending this business meeting included Jana Argersinger, Barbara Cantalupo, Mary DeJong, Dennis Eddings, Ben Fisher, Richard Fusco, Alex Hammond, J. Gerald Kennedy, Richard Kopley, Kent Ljungquist, and Scott Peeples.

From Terence Whalen, PSA Vice-President: The two Poe panels for the 2003 MLA in San Diego are as follows:

"Poe in Plain View"

- (1) Scott Peeples, College of Charleston, "Poe Biography Plays in the Early Twentieth Century."
- (2) Heyward Ehrlich, Rutgers University, "Poe as a Philadelphia Editor." Presiding: Terence Whalen, University of Illinois at Chicago.

“The Undisclosed Poe”

- (1) Paul Gilmore, California State University at Long Beach, “Otherwise than Finite: Rethinking Race Through Poe’s Aesthetic Machinery.”
- (2) Dawn Ketley, Lehigh University, “Poe’s Parturient Women.”
- (3) John Gruesser, Kean University, “The Narrator of ‘The Fall of the House of Usher.’”

Presiding: Richard Kopley, Penn State University.

From Scott Peeples and Richard Fusco, Members-at-large: Two panels were sponsored by the PSA at the American Literature Association in Cambridge, MA. Session VIIc on Thursday, May 22, 2003, entitled “Poe in the Classroom” was presented as a panel discussion. Chaired by Dennis Eddings, Emeritus, Western Oregon University, the panelists included: Barbara Cantalupo, the Pennsylvania State University; Richard Fusco, St. Joseph’s University; Benjamin Fisher, University of Mississippi; and Scott Peeples, College of Charleston.

Session XXVIIIh held on Saturday, May 24, 2003, “Poe and His Sundry Readers,” was chaired by Richard Fusco, St. Joseph’s University and included the following papers: “Poe’s Moon Shot: The Art and Science of Antebellum Print Culture” by Marcy Dinius, Northwestern University; “Fellowship Between Poets: the Poe-Ide Correspondence” by Kent Ljungquist, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; and “Poe’s Tell-Tale Tale” by Louis Renza, Dartmouth College.

From Carole Shaffer-Koros, Secretary-Treasurer: As of 31 March 2003, membership is 325. For 2002, the initial checking account figure was \$6,706.00, adding in Money Market of \$3,565.11 and CD for \$4,140.00, the total was \$14,411.11. Income for the year including conference registrations, contributions and interest totals \$33,109.60. Expenses for the conference, *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, mailings, etc., totaled \$25,388.59, for a net income of \$7,721.01. Overall balance as of December 31, 2002 was \$22,132.12, which includes our checking account of \$13,328.91, Money Market of \$3,614.56 and CDs of \$5,188.65.

Checking account activity for 2003 so far: income from dues and contributions of \$2,605.00; miscellaneous expenses and *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* total \$2,555.19 for a net income (excluding interest accrued on CDs and Money Market) of \$49.81. The overall balance for all accounts as of April 1, 2003 was \$22,132.12 + \$49.81 or \$22,181.93.

Brief Notice

- The world premiere of Daniel Pinkham's opera adaptation of "The Cask of Amontillado" was presented on February 6 & 9, 2003, as part of the week-long Opera Unlimited project at the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston.
- Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education Star Schools Program, Maryland Public Television's new educational site on the web, "Knowing Poe," (http://knowingpoe.thinkport.org/default_flash.asp) "[brought] Poe to life (albeit digitally) for middle and high school students" on January 19, 2003. "Actor John Astin appears throughout site on digital video as virtual tour guide...[with] over ten interactive activities for students and many primary sources," reports Rebecca Penovich, MPT, Education Marketing. "The section 'Classroom Connections' helps teachers match the activities to appropriate reading levels and unit topics."
- On January 18, 2003, Grover Silox performed "The Tell-Tale Heart" at the Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site in Philadelphia.
- On Saturday, March 22, 2003, Major William Hecker, Assistant Professor of English at West Point, gave a talk, "Shedding Light on Poe's Military Career" at the German Society across the street from the Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site in Philadelphia. Daniel Hoffman introduced Dr. Hecker's talk.
- The Baltimore Poe Society's 81st Edgar Allan Poe Commemorative Lecture will be held in the Edgar Allan Poe Room at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 Cathedral Street, 2nd floor, on October 5, 2003. This year's speaker, Dr. Barbara Cantalupo, Penn State University, will give a talk entitled "Not Merely a Bust of Pallas or Psyche in a Window-niche: Poe and the Visual Arts." Preceding the lecture, a tribute will be made to Poe at his gravesite in the Westminster Burying Ground at Fayette and Greene Streets at 1:15 p. m.
- Peter Scholing, Assistant Editor and Web Developer for *Mississippi Quarterly*, has apprised us of an online version of the "Checklist of Scholarship on Southern Literature," commissioned by the SSSL (Society for the Study of Southern Literature). The list currently contains 1243 entries on Poe, and it can be accessed at <http://www.missq.msstate.edu/sssl/view.php?wid=26>.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

It's rather hard for me to gauge how much attention Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* has received in the U.S., but his novel, which won the prestigious Man Booker Prize is, to my mind, well worth reading, especially for fans of Poe's *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*. There are many echoes of *Pym* in the recent novel. The Montreal writer's novel traces the hair-raising adventures of a boy, Pi, adrift at sea in a narrative of survival. The account is written in the first person and, at one point, slips temporarily into straight diary entry. A tiger, strangely enough named Richard Parker, figures predominantly in the story. Bizarre creatures and life forms are encountered. The adventure strains credibility and the end of the novel is marked by some confusion (although such pales besides the enigmatic note concluding *Pym*.) In both texts, all restraint succumbs to the desire for survival.

Martel has been asked about the links to Poe's earlier sea tale. His reply somewhat surprised me:

Some people compare it to Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, which I actually hated. It's a terrible novel. He was not a novelist. It's his only novel, it was done on commission, it's slapdash, it's internally incoherent, it's really a shoddy piece of work, and the only reason it has survived is that it was written by Poe. (From an Interview with Adam Langer, *Book Magazine*, Nov/Dec 2002.)

In a similarly critical vein, Paul Gessell, in a review of *Pi* in *The Ottawa Citizen* (November 12, 2000) rates *Pym* and *Pi* giving a significant nod to Martel's work, scoring it a 9/10, while awarding Poe's work a meager 5/10.

I can't say I agree with those evaluations. *Pym* has always been—and continues to be—a source of excitement and especially intrigue to me. Nonetheless, I do think *Pym* lovers will enjoy Martel's work and should weigh in on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of these two texts.

Sincerely,

Michael Tritt
Marianopolis College
Montreal, Canada

April 29, 2003

Barbara—Here’s a little Poe-esque puzzle, which we’ve come upon in the process of annotating *Poe Review* articles for our next “International Poe Bibliography”: In the “Marginalia” section of the Fall 2000 issue, the item on ciphers attributed to Stephen Rachman reads as if it were by Shawn Rosenheim (there’s a first-person reference to CRYPTOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION and a third-person reference to Rachman). Was this a misprint? Am I misreading? Or, perchance, was someone feeling hoaxy?!

If a misattribution happened, I’m wondering whether to include a note in the annotation.

Thanks for any illumination you can give!

Jana Argersinger
Coeditor, *ESQ/Poe Studies*

April 30, 2003

Barbara: I think I can explain what happened. When the story broke about the cipher in October 2000, Shawn prepared a press release and suggested that we jointly write an article. So I wrote a lengthy email to Shawn about the situation, the bulk of which ended up in the article. When you asked for a brief account, Shawn spliced together what I had written with his description of the contest, and it was my understanding that we would have it printed under both of our names. I think Shawn was toying with the notion of a mild hoax or a bi-part essay that would take advantage of the fact that our names share the same initials and just sign it SR. In any event, he did not edit his parts to remove the first-person and make it consistent with the person and p.o.v. of my commentary. It was published under my name and, as you can see, puzzled many readers. I received several solicitous inquiries as to whether or not I was undergoing some kind of identity crisis. “Did I really believe I was Shawn Rosenheim? Had I killed him and taken over his body?” Gerry Kennedy asked me with a twinkle of amusement in his eye. So I can see why a reader might wonder if a hoax were taking place. A botched hoax, I suppose, pure Poe *n’est-ce pas?*

Steve Rachman

April 30, 2003

Dear Barbara:

Plausible-sounding, isn't it? If only it were so. It pains me to have to discuss this, after having tried not to draw attention to Prof. Rachman's behavior, but I don't see a way around this. In fact, Rachman and I haven't been in contact for several years, since we had a terrible falling-out after going to the movies one night. "The Fight Club," I think it was. Once the cipher was decoded, I wrote a press release and brief article for the *Poe Review*, then sent it to Prof. Rachman as a matter of courtesy, since, in sunnier times, he had agreed to serve as a judge for the cipher contest. Rachman then rewrote the piece to make it seem as if HE were responsible for the bulk of the piece, and sent it on to you, making it appear as if the email had come from me. I think he must have been feeling nervous, or guilty, but I don't think the "SR" at the end is likely to fool anyone who reads the piece.

When I figured out what happened, I planned to expose him, but, on the advice of my attorney, decided to look the other way, and hope it was a momentary lapse of judgment. Since then, however, Rachman has opened two credit card accounts in my name (those are the ones I know of), and has apparently had the audacity to give a paper under my name at an obscure literary conference he knew I wouldn't attend (at SPASJC, the South Pacific-American Studies Joint Conference, held at the Apia Hilton in early March).

Really, this has gone on too long. Please ask Professor Rachman to stop this foolish hoaxing, and give me credit for my own autonomous identity, beginning with the piece in question. Regardless, he—and if need be, the Poe Studies Association—will be hearing from attorney, Lawrence Detwiler (of Griswold, Detwiler & Salamensky, Manhattan).

Sincerely,

Shawn Rosenheim

11th February 2003

Dear Barbara,

As you may be aware, I have been a member of the Poe Studies Association for a number of years.

Although I do not consider myself an expert on the works of Poe, I became addicted to EAP at the age of 13 (back in '63) and have read and re-read his short stories—and to a lesser extent his poetry—ever since. I also collect biographies and leaflets of Poe's tales and would appreciate your and PSA colleagues' advice on two items which came into my possession in 1997.

The first is a collection of newspaper cuttings (21) and portraits and illustrations (40) spanning the period 1850 to 1877 which have been bound, in an amateurish fashion, and from which the 'title' page (which presumably might have revealed the compilers' name) has been removed. I already have a small collection of cuttings dated 1880, but I found this collection particularly exciting.

Throughout the book, the compiler has made a small number of pencilled annotations, especially to the articles such as Griswold's obituary where he (and I am assuming the compiler to be a 'he') corrects the facts in the case of EAP. Against a portrait of Margaret Fuller, the compiler has appended a small piece of paper and recorded:

'Thomas Hicks tells me that this head of Margaret is from his portrait of her. Saturday Jany. 24. 1880.'

From my research I have learned that Thomas Hicks (1823-1890) was an American portrait painter who attended the Pennsylvania Academy and the National Academy of Design. I understand that Hicks studied under Thomas Couture in Paris in the 1840s and painted portraits of, amongst others, President Abraham Lincoln and Longfellow. I am wondering if this—perhaps tenuous—link between the artist and Poe has ever been realised before.

At the end of a *New York Herald* article of 1875, which includes *'The Thrilling Story of the Attending Physician,'* the compiler has written the single word: 'Humbug.'

On one of the pages which features a cutting from the *New York Times* in 1879 there is a fading photograph which bears the pencilled legend 'Mrs. Lewis.' To me it is a singularly beautiful photograph of Poe's 'Stella.' I do not recall seeing one like this before.

However, what I personally feel to be the most exciting part of the collection is a picture of the Battle Monument, Baltimore. A note appended by the compiler reads

**‘The last time the maker of this book saw the author
of the “Raven” was near the battle monument.
Baltimore.’**

I am sure you can imagine the thrill I feel of owning a book which was compiled by a (presumably young) contemporary of Poe’s! To my eternal regret there is nothing within the volume that aids the reader in identifying the compiler.

Any views or suggestions that you or any of your colleagues may have would be appreciated.

The second item upon which I seek the advice of the PSA is a dilapidated copy of James A. Harrison’s *New Glimpses of Poe* published in 1901 by the University of Virginia. It is not so much the book that is of interest, but the inscription inside. It reads:

**‘John Cooper Powys
from his friends
Col. [FORENAME IS ILLEGIBLE] T. Cooke
Norfolk December 17th 1915.’**

I am aware that the British born poet and essayist John Cowper Powys (1872-1964) spent much of his time in the southeast of the USA. I am, therefore, thinking that (a) Colonel Cooke has spelt the poet’s name incorrectly and (b) that the ‘Norfolk’ of the inscription is not the county of Norfolk, England, but Norfolk, *Virginia*.

I am unfamiliar with the work of Powys but am keen to make a connection between him and Poe’s work. Do colleagues in the PSA know if there is any record of Powys’ love of Poe’s work or that he was influenced by him. (I am also keen to learn more about Colonel Cooke.)

Any response would be most appreciated; please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

Best wishes,

Patrick Chaplin

Dear Editor,

In December 2001, the American magazine 'Sky & Telescope' published a 6-page article on Poe and *Eureka*, "Wondering in the Dark" by Ken Crosswell. It suggests that Poe was the first to solve the 'Olbers paradox' (in my opinion a question that has not been solved altogether), but, anyway, it is a nice article. A copy or reprint can be ordered from www.skyandtelescope.com. The opinion that Poe solved the Olbers paradox was also repeated in March 2002 in *Scientific American*, in a section of the article, "The Cosmic Reality Check" by Gunther Hasinger and Roberto Gilli. This article can be downloaded from www.sciam.com.

Best wishes and regards from your Dutch connection,

René van Slooten
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Special Offers

The Gordian Press is offering to members of the PSA a 25% discount on all volumes of *The Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe: Vol. 1: The Imaginary Voyages, Vol. 2: The Brevities, and Vol. 5: Writings in The Southern Literary Messenger*. Each has a list price of \$75 and is available to members at \$57.25. Vols. 3 and 4: *The Broadway Journal* with a list price of \$100 per set is available at \$75 per set. Pollin's *Word Index to Poe's Fiction* is available at a special price of \$25 when ordered with any of the volumes of *The Collected Writings*.

All orders are shipped postage-paid. Orders should be sent to The Gordian Press, P. O. Box 40304, Staten Island, NY 10304, and the member discount should be mentioned.

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The annual journal, *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*, is pleased to offer a 20% discount on subscription rates to PSA members: \$8.00/one year and \$14.40/two years. Foreign subscribers should add \$5.00/year for postage and handling. Please address all subscription requests and inquiries to Subscriptions Manager, Department of English, Washington State University, Box 645020, Pullman, WA 99164-5020 USA; brownjl@wsu.edu. You may also see a copy of the journal on-line at <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~english/PoeStudies.html>.

Member



Council of Editors of Learned Journals

Notes on Contributors

Jana Argersinger is coeditor of *ESQ* and *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*, and serves as an officer of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. Her research interests center in nineteenth-century American women's writing: she has published on Susan Warner and is currently working on Elizabeth Stoddard as well as Northwest regionalist Carol Ryrie Brink.

Charles Cantalupo's books of poetry include *Anima/Animal and Other Spirits* (Spectacular Diseases) and the forthcoming *Light the Lights* (Red Sea Press). He is author of three books of Tigrinya poetry in translation: *We Have Our Voice* and *We Invented the Wheel* (selected poetry of Reesom Haile published by Red Sea Press) and the forthcoming *Contemporary Eritrean Poetry in Tigrinya, Tigre, and Arabic* (Hedri Publishers). Cantalupo's poetry and translations have appeared in many journals including *Sulfur*, *Talisman*, *Exquisite Corpse* and the *NYTimes*.

Heyward Ehrlich is associate professor of English at Rutgers, Newark. His "Poe Webliography" was first published in *Poe Studies* in 1999 and is updated regularly online at <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrich/poesites.html>. His edition of Poe's reviews and notices in Philadelphia magazines is in preparation for the *Collected Writings*.

Richard Kopley, associate professor of English at Penn State DuBois, is the author of the forthcoming volume, *The Threads of the "Scarlet Letter,"* (University of Delaware Press) and of various journal articles on Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau.

A. A. Markley, associate professor of English at Penn State Delaware County, coedited editions of William Godwin's novels *Caleb Williams* and *Fleetwood* for Broadview Press, and edited a volume of poems and translations in Pickering and Chatto's *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives*. He has also published on Gothic fiction and Victorian poetry.

Scott Peeples, associate professor of English and coordinator of American Studies at the College of Charleston, is the author of *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited* (Twayne, 1998) and numerous essays on Poe.

Burton R. Pollin, professor emeritus from CUNY, has published seven books on Poe's works and five volumes of the critical edition of Poe's *Writings* (1981-1999). He has written over 130 articles on Poe, many showing Poe's influence on prominent writers as well as on hundreds of composers and artists.

Stephen Rachman is associate professor of English and Director of American Studies at Michigan State University. He is the co-editor of *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe* and did the notes to the recent Random House edition of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

Priscilla Rice is a graduate student in American literature at University of Central Oklahoma.

Terence Whalen is associate professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago and author of *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton, 1999).