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Letter from the Editor

“Let me call myself, for the present,” ... Peter Norberg.

As that opening sentence suggests, the opportunity to coedit a journal dedicated to the writings of Edgar Allan Poe inevitably brought to mind “William Wilson” and anxious thoughts about doubling and *doppelgängers*. I recalled that Poe had continual problems sharing his editorial identity and responsibility throughout his adult life. His disagreements with Thomas White, William Burton, and George Graham, ultimately led him to conclude that “in founding a magazine of my own lies my sole chance of carrying out to completion whatever peculiar intentions I may have entertained.” Fortunately, Richard Fusco and I have developed a more congenial working relationship than Poe was able to find.

“William Wilson” comes to mind for other reasons as well. Doubling is a tacit theme in this issue, which includes two essays on ratiocination, reviews of two new collections of Poe’s poetry and tales, and a fascinating interview with the poet Dana Gioia, whose early encounter with a fair-copy manuscript of Poe’s “Annabel Lee” later inspired him to write his undergraduate thesis on the *doppelgänger* motif in several of Poe’s tales and continues to inform his understanding of narrative poetry. We are grateful to April Lindner, an accomplished poet in her own right and a scholar of the “New Formalist” movement, for arranging and conducting this interview, and to Burtin Pollin for suggesting that Gioia’s insights would prove fruitful and enlightening for our readers.

The pair of essays included in this issue will redouble scholarly interest in Poe’s tales of ratiocination by stimulating further thought on the psychological dimensions of this genre. Seo-Young Jennie Chu’s “Hypnotic Ratiocination” is remarkable for its originality. Chu examines Poe’s prose-poem *Eureka* in the context of Chauncy Townshend’s *Facts of Mesmerism* (1840) and persuasively demonstrates that Poe modeled the rhetorical patterns in *Eureka* after the dialogic interaction between mesmerist and patient. Readers will find her careful attention to Poe’s language especially compelling. By relating *Eureka* to the ratiocinative, her essay makes a convincing case for understanding that work less as a departure from Poe’s earlier work and more as an extension of ratiocination into the new sensibilities that mesmerism opened up during the nineteenth century.

A. Samuel Kimball's "D-Ciphering Dupin's Fac-simile Signature: The Infanticidal Implications of a 'Dessein si Funeste'" nicely compliments Chu's exploration of *Eureka*. Focusing on Dupin's taunting signature to the letter he leaves in the Minister D_____ 's apartment, Kimball examines the emotion (and, therefore, the motive) behind Dupin's superficially emotionless method of reasoning. Kimball, of course, is not the first to explore the psychological dimensions of the game of even and odd that Dupin plays with the Minister D_____. However, his analysis of Dupin's desire for revenge encourages readers to think further about the relation between Poe's ratiocinative tales and the literary marketplace in which they were conceived.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of Saint Joseph's University and would like to thank especially Brice Wachterhauser, Provost, and John McCall, Dean for the School of Arts and Sciences, for their work securing funds for the journal. We also thank Thomas Malone, Carol McLaughlin, Carmen Croce, and Doug Traher, all at Saint Joseph's University Press, for their expertise and assistance in bringing this issue to press.

As always, the members of our Board of Editors have been diligent and conscientious in their response to our requests for manuscript evaluations. We would especially like to thank our outgoing Board members: Kent Ljungquist (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), Leland Person (University of Cincinnati), John Reilly (emeritus, College of the Holy Cross), and Lillianne Weisburg (University of Pennsylvania). We also welcome and congratulate the new members of the Board: Dennis Pahl (Long Island University), Jeffrey Savoye (Sec./Treas., E. A. Poe Society of Baltimore), Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (College of the Holy Cross), and Bruce Weiner (Saint Lawrence University).

Finally, I would like to thank my colleague Richard Fusco and the Executive Board of the Edgar Allan Poe Studies Association for allowing me this opportunity to serve as coeditor of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*. I am truly grateful for their support and encouragement.

Peter Norberg
Saint Joseph's University

Hypnotic Ratiocination

Seo-Young Jennie Chu

What is the place of ratiocination in Poe's 1848 cosmological prose poem, *Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe*? To many critics, *Eureka* is a text in which the process of methodical reasoning has no place at all. As Harold Beaver has remarked, "American and British readers have never been able to take this swan-song very seriously."¹ T. S. Eliot, for example, famously wrote that *Eureka* "makes no deep impression [...] because we are aware of Poe's lack of qualification in philosophy, theology or natural science."² And in his biography of Poe, Kenneth Silverman claims that "the work abounds in digressions, obscurities, inconsistencies, and some absurdities."³ Furthermore, many readers have noted that *Eureka* violates the aesthetic logic that Poe himself frames in his "Philosophy of Composition" (1846). Not only is *Eureka* too long to be read in one sitting, but it lacks the tightness and rigor that Poe ascribes to the ideal work of poetry.

In what follows, I argue that mesmerism provided Poe with a framework in which to reimagine logical and poetic rigor. Focusing on the relationship between *Eureka* and its 1844 prelude, "Mesmeric Revelation," I will demonstrate how Poe identified mesmerism as a way of redefining terms like "proof" and aesthetic principles like the "unity of impression." "Mesmeric Revelation" describes a genre of consciousness that I call "hypnotic ratiocination." By this phrase I mean a form of exact thinking that operates beyond the opposition between logic and feeling. Hypnotic ratiocination is inherently dialogic: specifically, it is structured like a dialogue between one unconscious participant (who is immersed in the hypnotic experience) and one conscious participant (who remains outside the hypnotic experience and who mediates the dialogue by conducting and recording it). Thus hypnotic ratiocination occurs between interlocutors in different states of consciousness: asleep and awake, passive and active, second-person and first-person. In *Eureka*, hypnotic ratiocination is an intricate figure of speech for Poe's voice. The prose poetry of this essay—an essay filled with what Poe calls "unthought-like thoughts"⁴—is actually a style of intellection. Many aspects of Poe's rhetoric (for example, his incantatory use of polyptotic schemes) and cosmogony (for example, his theory of symmetrical causality) derive from the genre in which he was thinking—namely, hypnotic ratiocination.

* * *

Before treating Poe's work in detail, I wish to clarify what I mean by "mesmerism" and "hypnotism." As Doris Falk has shown, the term "mesmerism" did not always equate to what "hypnotism" has come to mean today.⁵ Mesmerism owes its name to Franz Anton Mesmer, an Austrian physician who sought to treat illness by way of what he called "animal magnetism." In his 1779 *Reflections on the Discovery of Animal Magnetism*, Mesmer posited the existence of an invisible "fluid which is universally widespread and pervasive in a manner which allows for no void [...] and is of a nature which is susceptible to receive, propagate, and communicate all impressions of movement." Such a fluid, Mesmer claimed, functions as a medium through which physical bodies—e.g., human bodies—continually exert mutual influence upon one another. Mesmer named this mutual influence "animal magnetism" because "the property of an animal body which renders it susceptible to the influence of celestial bodies and of the reciprocal action of its environment evinces an analogy with a magnet."⁶ He believed that a physician could heal patients by passing magnets over their heads and thereby charging their nervous systems with the magnetic fluid of which both mesmerist and patient became conductors when they were "en rapport."

Falk contends that when Poe uses the word "mesmerism" he refers to animal magnetism as opposed to hypnosis. Whereas "animal magnetism" signifies a cohesive physical fluid, hypnosis is "a psychological phenomenon, a function of suggestibility, demonstrating the influence of one human will upon another."⁷ By the time Poe encountered it, however, mesmerism had already begun to take on the psychological connotations we now associate with hypnotism. One of the most popular and widely circulated books on mesmerism during the 1840s was *Facts in Mesmerism*, written by the English magnetizer Reverend Chauncy Townshend and published four years before Poe's "Mesmeric Revelation." According to Townshend, "the proper object of investigation wasn't animal magnetism but rather the unique state of consciousness commonly referred to as the mesmeric state, [whose properties] should be described in their own right, without the unnecessary imposition of laws and principles applicable to physical reality."⁸ By freeing it from the conventions of scientific inquiry, Townshend allowed mesmerism to be used as a figurative explanation for alternative states of consciousness.

Poe was clearly familiar with Townshend's work. In an 1845 piece for the *Broadway Journal*, he called *Facts in Mesmerism* "one of the most truly profound

and philosophical works of the day—a work to be valued properly only in a day to come.”⁹ Indeed, Townshend’s work had a powerful influence on Poe’s writing. As Sidney Lind has demonstrated, the language of “Mesmeric Revelation”—particularly in the opening paragraph—closely resembles the language of *Facts in Mesmerism*.¹⁰ More importantly, however, Townshend’s work allowed Poe to experiment with the philosophical and aesthetic implications of mesmeric psychology. Toward the beginning of “Mesmeric Revelation,” Mr. Vankirk proposes an innovative psychological procedure based on the following hypothesis: “Mesmeric exaltation enables me to perceive a train of ratiocination which, in my abnormal existence, convinces, but which, in full accordance with the mesmeric phenomena, does not extend, except through its *effect*, into my normal condition.”¹¹ In other words, Vankirk posits the existence of a transcendent form of ratiocination to which the mind has total access only when under hypnosis. To the hypnotized mind, this transcendent process of logical thinking is fully intelligible because it can be apprehended in its entirety: “the reasoning and its conclusion—the cause and its effect—are present together.” Yet the moment the mind wakes up from its trance, this transcendent process of thinking becomes less than fully intelligible insofar as the “reasoning” (the “cause” or agent of understanding) disappears and only the “conclusion” (the “effect” or feeling of understanding) remains. Thus, mesmerism makes possible a transcendent form of ratiocination that outlives the mesmeric experience purely through its effects—effects that are consequently felt rather than understood. Vankirk then asks the narrator of the story to hypnotize him in order to test his hypothesis. What follows is a dialogue on cosmogony between the narrator of the story (who gives a retrospective account of the dialogue) and Vankirk (who, once hypnotized, remains unconscious throughout the rest of the story). Poe himself summarized the main ideas of this dialogue in an 1844 letter to the poet Thomas Holley Chivers: “There is no such thing as spirituality. God is material. All things are material; yet the matter of God has all the qualities which we attribute to spirit. [...] There is a matter without particles—of no atomic composition: this is God. It permeates and impels all things, and thus is all things in itself. Its agitation is the thought of God, and creates.”¹²

If “Mesmeric Revelation” merely hypothesizes about the genre of consciousness that I call “hypnotic ratiocination,” then *Eureka* actualizes this genre of consciousness at the level of both form and content. In *Eureka*, hypnotic ratiocination—a dialogic form of exact thinking that operates beyond the opposition between logic and feeling—is an intricate figure of speech for the

equally intricate voice in which Poe reasons with himself and with his reader. What do I mean by “intricate voice”? Silverman has characterized this intricacy in the following way:

Often speaking with urgency, wanting to be heard and believed, [Poe] used for emphasis many of the same devices that create the fervid voices of his distraught tale-tellers, but here sow confusion: double and triple negatives, involuted syntax, reiterated dashes that race across sentences like flights of arrows, uncertainly signifying now apposition, now parentheses, now merely breathing space.¹³

Silverman implies that such stylistic features mark the absence of ratiocination. Yet I would argue that these features mark the presence of hypnotic ratiocination—that is, the presence of an ongoing dialogue between logic and intuitive conviction, between the literal and the figurative, between matter and spirit, between cause and effect, between consciousness and unconsciousness, between asleep and awake, between passive and active, between second-person and first. Poe uses triple negatives, involuted syntax, and reiterated dashes in order to account for thinking that transcends “such blundering ratiocination as that which is ordinarily employed”—i.e., thinking that follows what he describes as “those inductions or deductions of which the processes are so shadowy as to escape our consciousness, elude our reason, or defy our capacity of expression” (1274, 1276-1277). So strangely textured is the “unparticled matter” of Poe’s thinking in *Eureka* that his units of analysis—“unthought-like thoughts,” “soul-reveries rather than conclusions or even considerations of the intellect”—elude straightforward predication (1286). “There is no mathematical demonstration,” Poe declares, “which could bring the least additional true proof of the great truth which I have advanced” (1288). We are no longer in the world of “The Philosophy of Composition,” where the design of an ideal poem can be traced “step by step” with “the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.”¹⁴

Nevertheless, *Eureka* possesses its own kind of aesthetic and logical rigor. Poe describes the development of his argument here as an “unbroken [...] chain of graduated impression by which alone the intellect of Man can expect to encompass the grandeurs of which I speak” (1330). In what follows, I will suggest how this chain of graduated impression systematically advances not with the rigid

consequence of a mathematical problem but rather with the rigid consequence of a mesmeric experience, which, according to Townshend, progresses through a series of relatively distinct stages that correspond to successively deeper levels of the mind. In *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls*, Robert Fuller provides a synopsis of these levels that divides mesmeric experience into six distinct stages.

- *Phase one.* The “normal waking state,” in which “the mind is dependent upon the information supplied by the physical organs of sense.”
- *Phase two.* “Thinking becomes relatively abstracted from events in the external world. The mind is centered solely on the ‘suggestions’ supplied to it by the operator.”
- *Phase three.* “A stage of total insensibility to external sensation. Thought follows its own course irrespective of external conditions. [...] This deeper level of the mind appears to be quite independent of, almost impervious to, events occurring in the outer world.”
- *Phase four.* Catalepsy. “It is as if the mind is withdrawing from bodily life altogether.”
- *Phase five.* “A stage of expanded interior perception,” whereby “organs of interior perception are said to become active. At this level, the mind is open to impressions coming directly from the environment without reliance upon the five physical senses.”
- *Phase six.* “A final stage of lucidity or clairvoyant wisdom,” wherein the mind “is temporarily imbued with its omnipresent and omniscient properties. At this deepest level of consciousness, subjects feel themselves to be united with the creative principle of the universe. [...] There is a mystical sense of intimate

rapport with the cosmos. Subjects feel that they are in possession of knowledge which transcends that of physical, space-time reality.”¹⁵

This six-stage mesmeric process characterizes the “rigid consequence” with which *Eureka* unfolds.¹⁶ In the paragraphs below, I chart the six stages of the unfolding of Poe’s argument.

Eureka’s exordium represents the first phase insofar as it marks a departure from the “normal waking state” to a state of mesmeric experience. More specifically, the exordium evokes the beginning of a dialogue between mesmerist and patient. Here are the opening sentences:

It is with humility really unassumed—it is with a sentiment even of awe—that I pen the opening sentence of this work; for of all conceivable subjects I approach the reader with the most solemn—the most comprehensive—the most difficult—the most august.

What terms shall I find sufficiently simple in their sublimity—sufficiently sublime in their simplicity—for the mere enunciation of my theme?

I design to speak of the Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical—of the Material and Spiritual Universe—of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition, and its Destiny.” (1261)

Notice how polyptoton (the repetition of words derived from the same root) and antimetabole (the repetition of words in successive clauses in reverse grammatical order) create the effect of mesmeric passes in the question “What terms shall I find sufficiently simple in their sublimity—sufficiently sublime in their simplicity?” Meanwhile, parallelism (similarity of structure in a series of related words, phrases, or clauses) controls the pace at which the prose flows, thereby establishing a kind of regulated breathing rhythm: “the most solemn—the most comprehensive—the most difficult—the most august.” Most importantly, the complicated syntax, abrupt transitions, and hesitating dashes indicate the presence here of more than one kind of voice. There is a dialogue implicit in this exordium, and the dialogue can be paraphrased as follows:

Poe1: How do you feel?

Poe2: [After a long hesitation and speaking as if with effort.]
Humility—a sentiment even of awe.

Poe1: Why these sentiments?

Poe2: Because of all conceivable subjects I approach the most solemn—the most comprehensive—the most difficult—the most august.

Poe1: What are these subjects?

Poe2: I cannot find the words to describe them—I cannot find words that are sufficiently simple in their sublimity—sufficiently sublime in their simplicity.

Poe1: I wish you would explain yourself.

Poe2: [Hesitating for many minutes.] I design to speak of the Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical—of the Material and Spiritual Universe—of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition, and its Destiny.

The dialogic quality of Poe's voice continues throughout *Eureka*—most notably each time Poe proleptically anticipates an objection on the part of the reader: “Some person may here demand:—‘Why—since it is to the One that the atoms struggle back—do we not find and define Attraction ‘as merely general tendency to a centre?’ [...] I reply that they do; as will be distinctly shown; but that the cause of their doing so is quite irrespective of the centre as such” (1287). But we can discern the dialogic quality of Poe's voice even when Poe is not explicitly addressing the reader. Complicated syntax, abrupt transitions, and hesitating dashes indicate the presence of more than one kind of voice not just in the introduction but throughout the work as a whole. Indeed, all of *Eureka* can be translated, so to speak, into units of mesmeric dialogue.

Phases two, three, and four of the mesmeric process differ only in degree, so I will address them as a group. To re-summarize the three phases: thinking becomes relatively abstracted from events in the external world, thought follows its own course irrespective of external sensations, and then it is as if the mind is withdrawing from bodily life altogether.

We realize that we are no longer in the “external world” when, toward the beginning of *Eureka*, Poe quotes philosophical passages from an epistle found corked in a bottle floating in the ocean. The letter, we are told, was written in the year 2848—a full millennium into the future. While the detail is subtle, it has a disorienting effect: it tells us that somehow our location in reality has shifted. Not only have we been displaced from the world of linear time, but we have been abstracted from the world of sensuous experience as well. The objects of our attention at this stage in *Eureka* are not ideas about the physical world but rather ideas about ideas—like the concept of infinity, which Poe calls the “thought of a thought” (1272). Images here are neither sensory nor referential but rather virtual and disembodied. For example, Poe describes the “infinity of space” as “a shadowy and fluctuating domain, now shrinking, now swelling, with the vacillating energies of the imagination” (1275). To read such passages is to find one’s awareness receding from the world of physical objects and external sensations. It is to find one’s attention occupying an inward realm of abstract rhythms. In short, it is to find oneself passing through the second, third, and fourth stages of the mesmeric process.

The presence of these three phases can be detected not just at the level of content but also at the level of form. Poe’s prose poetry here simulates the “vacillating energies” that characterize the abstract rhythms of the hypnotized imagination:

Let us now endeavor to conceive what Matter must be, when, or if, in its absolute extreme of Simplicity. Here the Reason flies at once to Imparticularity—to a particle—to one particle—a particle of one kind—of one character—of one nature—of one size—of one form—a particle, therefore, without form and void—a particle positively a particle at all points—a particle absolutely unique, individual, undivided, and not indivisible only because He who created it, by dint of his will, can by an infinitely less

energetic exercise of the same Will, as a matter of course,
divide it. (1277)

The main sentence here is one long chain of mostly subordinate clauses whose syntactic parallelism (“of one kind—of one character—of one nature—of one size—of one form”) creates a rippling effect. Meanwhile, a unity of impression is achieved by the incantatory repetition of key nouns (“particle” appears seven times) and by polyptotic inflections of the same word (“imparticularity” and “particle” are etymologically related, as are “individual,” “undivided,” “indivisible,” and “divide”). Such rhetorical schemes—much like the dematerialized nature of Poe’s imagery—induce a kind of cataleptic state in the reader. Indeed, when Poe originally presented *Eureka* as a lecture in 1848, his two-and-a-half-hour-long performance—which biographer Hervey Allen described as “a rapturous address of lyrical logic”—left the attention of the audience “fastened” and “enchained.”¹⁷ Some commentators have argued that Poe’s hypnotic rhetoric does the work of logical persuasion without actually amounting to logical persuasion per se. Barbara Cantalupo, for example, suggests that Poe’s strategy in *Eureka* is “not to convince rationally but to mesmerize an audience with an avalanche of scientific information spun circuitously through principles that overwhelm the reader into acceptance and belief.”¹⁸ Such a reading assumes that mesmerism and rational persuasion are mutually exclusive—that the two cannot exist at the same time. Yet Poe’s *Eureka* identifies a form of consciousness that allows mesmeric and rational states to coexist dialogically. The trance that *Eureka* induces in its reader—which parallels how Poe’s 1848 performance of *Eureka* apparently affected his audience—is part of the larger framework of hypnotic ratiocination I outline in this essay.

Thus far, Poe’s line of thinking in *Eureka* has been more or less as follows: Attraction and repulsion are the only properties through which matter is manifested to the mind. All phenomena are reducible to these two principles. Moreover, every particle simultaneously attracts every other particle. This attraction arises from the tendency of all things to return to their original state of absolute unity. In the next section of *Eureka*, Poe identifies the law of gravitation as the inevitable result of the “radiation and equable distribution” of matter from “one, individual, unconditional, irrelative, and absolute Particle Proper” that functioned as the origin of the universe (1304). From particles and atoms Poe proceeds analogically to planets and suns, distinguishing the limited “Universe of Stars” from the unlimited universe of space (1306-7). In mesmeric

terms, this section of *Eureka* corresponds to the fifth stage of “expanded interior perception” whereby “organs of interior perception” come to life and the mind becomes “open to impressions coming directly from the environment without reliance upon the five physical senses.” Consider, for instance, how Poe paradoxically describes himself as having some kind of sensory access to abstract truths:

I say to myself—‘Unity, as I have explained it, is a truth—I feel it. Diffusion is a truth—I see it. Radiation, by which alone these two truths are reconciled, is a consequent truth—I perceive it. Equability of diffusion, first deduced a priori and then corroborated by the inspection of phenomena, is also a truth—I fully admit it. So far all is clear around me:—there are no clouds behind which the secret—the great secret of the gravitating modus operandi—can possibly lie hidden;—but this secret lies hereabouts, most assuredly; and were there but a cloud in view, I should be driven to suspicion of that cloud.’ And now, just as I say this, there actually comes a cloud into view. This cloud is the seeming impossibility of reconciling my truth, radiation, with my truth, equability of diffusion. (1294-1295)

Notice how Poe uses words like “feel” and “see” to describe his access to phenomena that cannot be felt or seen. Coupled with the use of the simple present tense, this paradox suggests the “expanded interior perception” that characterizes the fifth stage of mesmeric experience. Notice, too, how the unparticled matter set in motion by Poe’s flow of reasoning leads to the thought of a hypothetical cloud—a nebulous image of opacity, a figure for irreconcilable ideas—that, upon being imagined, surreally materializes into an actual cloud before the mind’s eye. Shimmering between the physical and the nonphysical, between the literal and the figurative, this cloud exists at the threshold of perceptibility. It is a borderline or liminal image, the kind said to become uniquely available for representation under mesmeric circumstances.

Subsequently, Poe describes cosmic referents that are imperceptible to the naked eye:

[There is] a lenticular star-island, or collection of stars; our Sun lying eccentrically—near the shore of the island—

on that side of it which is nearest the constellation of the Cross and farthest from that of Cassiopoeia. The surrounding ring, where it approaches our position, has in it a longitudinal gash, which does, in fact, cause the ring, in our vicinity, to assume, loosely, the appearance of a capital Y. (1326)

Like the borderline image of the cloud, the Y-shaped gash in the ring surrounding the “lenticular star-island” hovers at the brink of perceptibility. Poe does not visualize this image so much as he apprehends it by way of some mysterious organ other than the five senses, or by way of optic nerves that have been enhanced by telescopes and microscopes. Elsewhere, he describes prehistoric cosmic events—e.g., the formation of the planet Neptune—as if he had witnessed these events first-hand. Such descriptions provide yet another instance of the “expanded interior perception” that characterizes the fifth stage of mesmeric experience.

The conclusion of *Eureka* corresponds to the sixth and final stage of the mesmeric experience—the deepest level of consciousness, the stage of “lucidity or clairvoyant wisdom.” Here Poe’s mind becomes imbued with omniscient properties, especially with a “mystical sense of intimate rapport with the cosmos.” Like the mesmeric subject, Poe believes himself to be “united with the creative principle of the universe” and therefore “in possession of knowledge which transcends that of physical, space-time reality.” Indeed, the final section of *Eureka* is dense with statements whose content cannot be mapped out spatially or temporally. “Space and duration,” he writes, “are one” (1340). “Symmetry and consistency are convertible terms: thus Poetry and Truth are one” (1349). It is here that the fundamental law in Poe’s universe—“complete mutuality,” “absolute reciprocity”—overcomes Poe’s own command of language. “In Divine constructions,” Poe writes, “the object is either design or object as we choose to regard it—and we may take at any time a cause for an effect, or the converse—so that we can never absolutely decide which is which” (1341). Similarly, in Poe’s constructions, the effect—the “eureka”—of understanding becomes virtually interchangeable with the cause of understanding, such that we can never absolutely decide which is which. Note, for example, how Poe’s reasoning approaches tautology:

The utter impossibility of any one’s soul feeling itself inferior to another; the intense, overwhelming dissatisfaction

and rebellion at the thought;—these, with the omniprevalent aspirations at perfection, are but the spiritual, coincident with the material, struggles towards the original Unity—are, to my mind at least, a species of proof far surpassing what Man terms demonstration, that no one soul is inferior to another—that nothing is, or can be, superior to any one soul—that each soul is, in part, its own God—its own Creator:—in a word, that God—the material and spiritual God—now exists solely in the diffused Matter and Spirit of the Universe; and that the regathering of this diffused Matter and Spirit will be but the re-constitution of the purely Spiritual and Individual God. (1357)

Not only does this passage needlessly repeat the same sense in many different words, but it aspires to the condition of an empty statement that is logically true regardless of whether its component statements are true or false. For the passage can be paraphrased as follows: *No one soul is inferior to another. Why? Because of the utter impossibility of any one's soul feeling itself inferior to another.* We have reached a point in *Eureka* where proof (evidence that compels the mind to accept an argument as true) and the effect of proof (the mind's acceptance of an argument's truth) have become the same thing. Yet such tautology is not so much a flaw in Poe's thinking as it is the formal counterpart to his conclusions: that matter will ultimately return to its original condition of one, that by sinking into unity matter will sink into nothingness, and that all individual identities will blend together into a single primordial consciousness.

* * *

The ending of *Eureka* calls to mind the ending of Poe's other hypnotic dialogues—especially “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” whose final paragraphs are haunted by a ghostly posthumous voice that speaks of death while the speaker's not-yet-dead body is still under the mesmeric influence. In some sense, this is the voice we hear in the concluding paragraphs of *Eureka*: a ghostly, posthumous voice that speaks of death—the death of the individual, the eventual death of the cosmos—while the speaker remains alive. Moreover, Poe's exhortation to “bear in mind that all is Life—Life—Life within Life” (1359) echoes Valdemar's last words: “*I say to you that I am dead!*” “dead! dead!”¹⁹ Nevertheless, there are interesting differences between the two endings. Valdemar repeats the adjective

“dead.” In *Eureka*, Poe repeats the noun “life.” “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” concludes with a corporeal image: Valdemar’s body, upon being removed from the mesmeric condition, dissolves into a heap of disgusting fleshly matter: “his whole frame at once—within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk—crumbled—absolutely rotted away. [...] There lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putridity.”²⁰ By contrast, *Eureka* ends in the least corporeal way possible: Poe’s identity, his first-person “I,” dissolves not into a liquid mass of putridity but into the diffuse and anonymous substancelessness of the vast “general consciousness” where both author and reader ultimately become one.

Notes

1. Harold Beaver, “Commentary” on *Eureka*, in *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Beaver (London: Penguin, 1976), 397.
2. T. S. Eliot, “From Poe to Valery,” in *To Criticize the Critic and other writings* (New York, 1965), 41.
3. Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 532.
4. *Poetry and Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Patrick F. Quinn (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1286. Subsequent references to this edition of *Eureka* are cited parenthetically in the text.
5. Doris V. Falk, “Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism,” *PMLA* 84 (1969), 536-546.
6. Robert C. Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982), 4, 5.
7. Falk, “Abstract” of “Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism,” in *PMLA* 84 (1969), 461.
8. Fuller, 40.

9. Quoted in Sidney E. Lind, "Poe and Mesmerism," *PMLA* 62 (1947), 1086.
10. *Ibid.*, 1088-1089.
11. Poe, "Mesmeric Revelation," in *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. III, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1978), 1031-1032.
12. Poe to Chivers, 10 July 1844, in *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. John Ward Ostrom (New York: Gordian, 1966), 1: 259-60.
13. Silverman, 532-533.
14. Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," in *Selections from the Critical Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. F. C. Prescott (New York: Gordian, 1981), 152.
15. Fuller, 42-46.
16. For a different account of the progression of Poe's argument in *Eureka*, see Alan C. Golding, "Reductive and Expansive Language: Semantic Strategies in *Eureka*," in *Poe Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, June 1978. <http://www.eapoe.org/pstudies/ps1970/p1978101.htm> (accessed January 27, 2004). Golding argues that *Eureka* progresses from "a denotatively precise language of expository discourse which seeks accurate statements about the apprehensible universe" to "a figurative, suggestive language of imaginative discourse which points toward the sublime realm beyond sensible data." According to Golding, Poe strategically uses this rhetorical progression to confront the problem of finding a language adequate to the sublimity of his subject.
17. Hervey Allen, *Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), 590. The latter description of the effect Poe's lecture had on its audience can be found in two contemporary reviews. John Henry Hopkins, Jr., a divinity student at the General Theological Seminary, wrote a glowing appraisal of Poe's performance for the February 4, 1848 issue of *The Morning Express*. Hopkins's claimed that *Eureka* "has all the completeness and oneness of plot required in a poem, with all the detail and accuracy required in a scientific lecture. [...] The conclusion of this brilliant effort was greeted with

warm applause by the audience, who had listened with enchained attention throughout.” Similarly, a February 8 review in the *Weekly Universe* noted: “Two hours is a long session—and that Mr. Poe fastened the attention of his audience for more than that period, to such a subject, is quite significant of the character of his discourse.” Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson, *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 721, 722.

18. Barbara Cantalupo, “Eureka: Poe’s ‘Novel Universe,’” in *A Companion to Poe Studies*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), 332.

19. Poe, “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” in *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 3: 1242-1243.

20. *Ibid*, 3: 1243.

**D-Ciphering Dupin's Fac-simile Signature:
The Infanticidal Implications of a "Dessein si Funeste"**

A. Samuel Kimball

I: Introduction

In "The Purloined Letter," Edgar Allan Poe's famous "tale of ratiocination," Dupin nurses a powerful emotional need behind his persona of the detached intellectual. Unwilling or unable to name this want, he nevertheless hints at it when he twice uses the imagery of infanticide in the course of explaining how he accomplished his revenge against his political rival and enemy double, Minister D_____. Embedding his vengeance within a discourse of intellection, he thereby distracts attention away from what he hides in the open—that is, in the imagery of infanticide—about the affective intensity and implications of his desire. Thus, Dupin describes his vengeance as a "good-humored" effort to even the score over an unspecified "evil turn" the Minister has done to him years before.¹ To this end Dupin characterizes his vengeance as a clever move in a game of wits—much like the game of "even and odd"—thereby masking what I will show to be his murderous, specifically infanticidal, rage. Dupin stipulates the cognitive principle but not the emotional payoff for playing this game when he explains the Prefect's inability to imagine that someone else thinks differently from the way he does. The Prefect is like the schoolboy who is outwitted by the superior "mode of reasoning" of his classmate, who always wins the guessing game and whose apparently dispassionate triumph others cannot explain except in terms of "luck" (3: 984).

As Dupin claims and the story's narrator affirms, this person's "luck" is not a matter of chance but of an epistemological labor involving an "identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent," which is superficially free of emotion and which allows him to know the mind of the other better than the other knows his own mind (3: 984). Clearly, Poe constructs "The Purloined Letter" as a series of moves in an extended version of this game, moves which enable Dupin to engage in an "identification" with the Minister D_____ that is not merely sympathy-free but pitiless, and which therefore allow him to defeat his nemesis in a manner that satisfies both his personal and political reasons for seeking revenge.²

Why, however, does Dupin pursue his revenge in the way that he does? What is the satisfaction that the infanticidal terms of his vengeance give him? Since Dupin openly alludes to the specific danger of infanticide in much the same way that Minister D_____ hides the letter in his apartment in plain view, why has this motif gone unnoticed? What does this inattention suggest about the emotional significance of the vengeful desire that Dupin makes light of as he asserts his ratiocinative mastery over the Minister? What, in other words, is the logic by which “The Purloined Letter” associates vengeance, infanticide, and the knowledge of another’s mind? Finally, what links these themes to the political economy of the world depicted in the story, a world centered on monarchial authority compromised by the king’s unfaithful wife, a suborned police force, and a black market?

II: Dupin’s Infanticidal Design

On two occasions, Dupin alludes to infanticide in the course of explaining how he has outwitted his adversary. The Minister has purloined a letter from the “royal *boudoir*” of “an illustrious personage” of “exalted station,” evidently the queen (3: 977). He blackmails her with a letter that apparently implicates her in an adulterous affair, which she wishes to keep from her husband, the king. Dupin is a “partisan of the lady” and an opponent of the Minister, whom he considers to be nothing less than a “*monstrum horrendum*, an unprincipled man of genius.” This malefic individual, Dupin declares, once “did me an evil turn, which I told him quite good-humoredly, that I should remember” (3: 993). Dupin’s efforts to help the queen escape Minister D_____’s political control over her also allows him to pursue an additional payoff in the form of his personal revenge, which he effects when he resteals the letter and replaces it with a “fac-simile” designed to delay Minister D_____’s recognition that he no longer holds the real letter—the source of his present political influence—and also from realizing that he has been duped (3: 992).

To accomplish this two-fold aim, Dupin hires “a man in my own pay” to pretend to be “a lunatic or a drunkard” and to create a disturbance in the streets, which Dupin anticipates will distract the Minister. The plan proceeds without a hitch. Engaging in seemingly “frantic behavior,” Dupin’s confederate fires a “musket among a crowd of women and children” (3: 992). When the Minister goes to a

window to see what is happening, Dupin switches the original letter with his facsimile.

The crowd's reaction to the musket shot reveals what Dupin hides in the open about his motivation. Although the gun "proved [...] to have been without ball," the crowd of women and children does not know this. The musket's "report," therefore, creates an instant panic and elicits "a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a [terrified] mob" (3: 992). Clearly, Dupin is willing to sacrifice the public peace, even to touch off a riot that endangers the lives of children and the women caring for them, in order to re-purloin the letter and protect the "honor and peace" of the adulterous queen (3: 976).³ In other words, by staging a scene of insurrection, one with potentially infanticidal consequences, Dupin flouts the law in a manner that metonymically expands the political threat implicit in the queen's adultery; that is, he makes explicit the social chaos and the reproductive costs of this chaos, which result when the paternity of the king is in doubt and the authority of the king's law is disregarded or deliberately violated. Through this deeply problematic ruse, Dupin reveals how readily desire shifts from being conceptive and reproductive to being potentially infanticidal.

Dupin's charade is an intensified, adult form of the childhood game in which the stakes are no longer a trivial object of little value—marbles—but the lives of those in whom society's future is vested. When Dupin orchestrates public pandemonium, then, he hints at the profound ambiguity of the nexus between production and reproduction that is the basis of all political economy, a point to which I shall return later. More immediately, he underscores the reproductive politics contained in the letter the woman conceals from her husband. If this man is the monarch, as the story hints, then she is engaging in behavior that is transgressive not merely of her marital relation but of her position as subject of the king. Insofar as the letter could prove her adultery, it is a metonymy of her affair, which, by upsetting the reproductive basis of the line of royal succession, imperils the paternal basis of the king's authority and thus of the law itself.⁴ If the king is rendered impotent by his vulnerability to raising an illegitimate heir, then the unstated possibility of the queen's pregnancy poses a radical challenge to the king's own legitimacy and to his governmental authority. She is, therefore, in danger not only of being discovered but also of arousing his rage and inciting him to take revenge, perhaps by destroying her illegitimate child. In this instance, infanticide would be an effort to protect the law from possible sabotage—specifically, from a sexual and reproductive transgression.

No discourse can master the transgressive force of this desire. Indeed, the Prefect, smug in his knowledge of his procedural expertise, and Dupin, utterly confident of his superior intellect, both remain captive to and repeat the queen's desire. Suborned by the queen, the Prefect directs his police to do her bidding; he thereby uses the power of the state against the very person, the king, who is the source of the Prefect's sworn duty to enforce the state's laws. The Prefect, in other words, supports the queen in her efforts to cover up her illicit affair.

So, too, does Dupin, whom the Prefect entices with the prospect of a large reward. In agreeing to regain the compromising letter for the queen, Dupin tacitly facilitates both her cuckolding of the king and her cover up of her infidelity and its political consequences. What is more, Dupin abets the queen's effort to decouple her desire from her reproductive and other political obligations to the king, and hence to the state. When Dupin orchestrates the riotous street scene, he publicly rehearses the infanticidal threat implicit in the queen's transgression and the ability of the Minister to "produce" the letter that would confirm that behavior (3: 977). Not surprisingly, Dupin saves the queen not merely by purloining the letter again but by substituting for it a simulacrum—that is, a *reproduction* of the letter. This forged document—a false or illegitimate reproduction of an apparently illicit intimacy that itself entails the possibility of an illegal conception—gives the lie to the paternal basis of the law and to the social order it underwrites.

The queen, the Prefect, and Dupin thus play the law against itself. Each undermines the king while simultaneously upholding the appearance of his authority, upon which they all attempt to capitalize. In this way, each seeks to maintain the seeming legitimacy of the law and the social order it guards while mocking the law's impotence. The result is twofold. On the one hand, as a paternal force the law is without the foundation and legitimacy traditionally attributed to it. On the other hand, desire, including its reproductive outcome, can subvert the state and its law. Infanticide is the trope Poe employs to figure this turning of the law's authority against itself.

Between the lines of the purloined letter, the narrative joins the themes of illicit sexual congress, reproductive politics, and revenge. These motifs reveal one of the tale's central ironies: the intersubjective relations among the characters take shape as triangular Oedipal contests (King, Queen, and the Minister D_____);

then the Prefect, Minister D_____, and Dupin). The potentially illegitimate outcome must be checked or even destroyed, at least figuratively, in order for Dupin to save the queen's "honor" and consign his foe to "political destruction" (3: 976, 993).⁵

To this double end Dupin makes his second allusion to infanticide when he gives the Minister a "clue" regarding "the identity of the person who had outwitted him." He "just copied into the middle of the blank sheet" a quotation he has cited before in a manuscript with which the Minister "is well acquainted [...]" "Un dessein si funeste, / S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste" (3: 993). The citation—"So deadly a scheme, if not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyestes"—is from a 1707 tragedy by Prosper-Jolyot de Crébillon, *Atrée et Thyeste*. Crébillon was an official censor of the French Academy and thus another player in a politically motivated game of linguistic hide and seek. His work retells the story of how Atreus takes infanticidal revenge against his brother Thyestes. When he learns that his wife has been seduced by Thyestes, Atreus slaughters his brother's three sons and serves them as a cannibalistic meal to the unsuspecting father. Thus, when Dupin—unmarried and childless, hence doomed to a reproductive dead end—invokes the cross-generational consequences attending Atreus and Thyestes' war, he insures that the Minister D_____ will understand the fratricidal-cum-infanticidal implications of his defeat.

Dupin's allusion underscores his own hunger for revenge. He clearly relishes the thought not only of the Minister's "downfall" but of the moment when the Minister will recognize the author of his destruction. With the distaste of the Minister's treachery in mind, Dupin all but smacks his lips over the letter he has "carefully prepared at my lodgings," as if he were preparing a textual version of the horrific meal Crébillon describes. No wonder, then, that he "imitat[es] the 'D' cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread" (3: 992). As Servanne Woodward notes, it is a seal formed *du pain* or *Dupin*; it is, I would add, a seal formed of the pain that Dupin has suffered from the Minister's "evil turn."⁶

The result is that Dupin performs a profane Eucharist—bloodless, denatured, and inverted—whereby he sacrifices the other to himself in the name of an economizing pitilessness when he returns the letter for a large reward: "I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends" (3: 993). Dupin here repudiates the salvific force of the ritual he invokes: Jesus inaugurates the

Eucharist in order to commemorate the way he sacrifices himself to the other in the name of unreserved love; Dupin “prepares” his meal in order to commemorate his enemy’s political death if not literal execution in the name of a hatred from which he will profit enormously.

Dupin’s desire for revenge is as psychologically inflationary as it is monetarily so. On one hand, he waits until the reward has doubled before he produces the letter; on the other, he does not return the Minister’s earlier evil for a like evil in a tit-for-tat response. That would be too “simple,” too mimetic of the Prefect’s lack of poetic imagination. “The business is *very* simple indeed,” the Prefect claims; Dupin, however, knows better. He recognizes that what makes the “business” both “simple and odd” is the chance not of evening the score with the Minister but of exposing him as politically impotent, of crushing him (3: 975). For this reason, Dupin escalates the evil the Minister has “turned” against him.⁷ In consequence, he becomes indistinguishable from his enemy double: he takes on the “dessein si funeste” that he sees in the Minister; he assumes the baneful design that is worthy of both Atreus and Thyestes, neither of whom got the last word.

The infanticidal consequences of the enmity between the two brothers in the myth preclude the possibility of a victor. As the myth unfolds, Atreus avenges the betrayal of his brother only to have his descendants retaliated against in turn. In seeking revenge, Atreus repeats the infanticide of his grandfather Tantalus and subjects his future descendants to the very reproductive curse by which he would obliterate his brother’s lineage. Tantalus invites the gods to a banquet, kills his son Pelops, and prepares a stew from the dismembered body, which he then serves to the gods, ostensibly to test their omniscience. Resurrected by Hephaestus, Pelops eventually sires Atreus and Thyestes.⁸ After Atreus destroys his sons, Thyestes incestuously begets an heir with his daughter, Pelopia. This child, Aegisthus, grows up, kills his uncle, and repeats his father’s adultery by sleeping with Clytemnestra, wife of his cousin Agamemnon (son of Atreus and Aerope), whom he and Clytemnestra slaughter when the king returns home from Troy.⁹ Clytemnestra conspires against her husband, of course, because he had sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia. Over and again, the myth of the house of Atreus turns on the spectacle of infanticide.

The trope of infanticide in Poe’s story—unnamed as such but readable in Dupin’s facsimile signature to the letter that accomplishes his revenge—encapsulates

Dupin's unspoken, infantile, murderous rage. The trope encrypts the fury that no words or intellectual formulations can "admeasure," a fury that compels Dupin to attempt just such an admeasurement of his enemy (3: 985). "I reflected," he says, on the Minister's "daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity" so as to imitate those very qualities of mind in carrying out his own infanticidal vengeance (3: 990). By the trope of infanticide, Dupin both accuses the Minister of a life-negating aggression and confesses that a similar aggression fuels his own "dessein si funeste" against his antagonist. Thus, the citation from Crébillon, in which the perfidy is worthy of either brother, applies as much to Dupin as to the Minister.

The fates of both Atreus and Thyestes bespeak not just the ratiocinator's victory over the Minister but Dupin's symbolic self-destruction. Thus, Atreus wins only for the moment; when Thyestes discovers his brother's savagery, he invokes a fatal curse against the house of Atreus, one that condemns his brother's lineage to infanticidal self-destruction. But it is also a curse that ironically consumes Thyestes' own lineage. So, too, does Dupin put himself in the position of triumphing—but only for the moment and with no recognition of its temporariness or the way it might elicit the Minister's retaliation.

Whether or not Dupin achieves a final triumph over the Minister, it is telling that he thinks he does and even more telling that he imagines his victory in terms of infanticide, a violence that marks not his ratiocinative generativity but his viciousness and lethality of mind. The result reveals the economy of "The Purloined Letter" to be predicated not on a conceptive epistemological principle of exchange but on a primitive, contraceptive emotionality. The trope of infanticide signals the dispossession of reason by this irrational passion to destroy the other.¹⁰

III: False Belief, the Poverty of Consciousness, and the Nihilism of Revenge

Paradoxically, the irrationality of this passion is rooted in the rationality it upsets. In *The Mystery to a Solution*, John T. Irwin examines the astonishing subtlety and condensation of allusion by which Poe plays the rationality of mathematics against itself to discern an irreducible irrationality at its algebraic roots. Irwin does so in order to elucidate how Poe figures "the mysterious nature of self-

consciousness.”¹¹ This mystery can be formulated in logical terms as the set of all paradoxes that result from the mind’s ability to represent itself—including its representations of its representations of itself, its representations of its representations of its representations of itself, and so on—in theory, for infinity, without ever attaining a final, all-encompassing, meta-level of representation that would provide an escape from this self-referential cognitive abyss.

According to contemporary cognitive scientists, the ability to represent the other’s representations—specifically, the recognition that another can have a different point of view from one’s own—marks the accession of a child to a rudimentary theory of mind that enables the child to pass what is called the “false belief test.” In one version of this test, an experimenter introduces the young child to two dolls, Sally and Ann. In the imaginary theater that follows, Sally places some candy under a pillow on a chair and then leaves the room, whereupon Ann takes the candy and puts it in her pocket. When Sally returns, the experimenter asks, “Where does Sally think the sweets are?” Before the age of four, the child says they are “in Ann’s pocket.” By the age of four-and-a-half, most children know otherwise: “Under the pillow,” the child says, often “adding with a conspiratorial glee, ‘but they aren’t there!’”¹² The child here has achieved the ability to engage in a second-order representation of another’s representation—specifically, to project how a situation appears to someone else who does not know that some feature central to the initial situation has altered. The child now understands that someone else can have a false belief.

More generally, the child has begun to understand that individuals experience themselves as having an unmediated, private, and privileged access to their own self-consciousness but only a mediated, public, and secondary access to the self-consciousness of others. Individuals seem to be able to know themselves directly—by an immediate, self-present intuition of themselves—but only to know about another’s self-perception. The result is a knowledge barrier in the form of an epistemological asymmetry that prevents individuals from knowing others or being known by them in the way that each individual knows (or thinks he knows) himself.

Initially, the child represents the other’s belief not as different per se but as false. That is, the child privileges its own perspective. Eventually, however, all children discover that they themselves can entertain a false belief. Moreover, at the very moment of thinking they knew “the truth” (the moment they believed

that they knew what they knew), they were in fact wrong.

This discovery can be restated in terms of the Cartesian illusion of self-certainty: if I mistakingly believe a falsity to be true, I cannot simultaneously know that I am in error. The present tense is crucial: I can recognize that a belief I once held is false, and thus I can have had such mistaken knowledge. But only others can know in the present moment that I am mistaken. They can also know that because I believe what I believe, I do not and cannot presently experience the falsity of my belief. Indeed, the other is able to occupy an epistemological position that is denied me: the other can recognize that I am wrong, that I do not recognize that I am wrong, that I am unaware that someone else might be able to see what I do not, and that I am not merely ignorant but abysally self-ignorant at precisely the moment I am convinced I know.¹³

The other's consciousness of me, in short, is in principle superior to my consciousness of myself; the other is more capable than I am of an accurate "admeasurement" of my seeming mental presence to myself. Thus, insofar as the object of its knowing is subject to an indeterminate future falsifiability, the epistemological basis of self-consciousness is radically provisional. Indeed, it is a source of epistemological self-impoverishment. The mystery of self-consciousness is not its capacity for infinite regress via a series of self-inclusive self-representations but the fact that it can only represent the error of its representations belatedly.¹⁴

The moral dilemma posed by this incapacity, which structures consciousness around a secret it keeps from itself, is that one can never know, until some future moment, whether or not one's present beliefs reflect anything other than self-interest.¹⁵ The moral challenge is to recognize that one can achieve certain knowledge only after one's sense of certainty has proven to be false—for example, one can realize one has made the wrong decision only after one is committed to a course of action. Confronted with this conundrum, Dupin ruthlessly capitalizes on his knowledge of his enemy's ignorance concerning the limits of his own capitalizing calculations (of the Minister's ignorance that his threat of blackmail has been rendered impotent and that Dupin now has the queen in his debt). At the end, then, knowing that the Minister does not know that the letter has been recovered, knowing that the Minister does not know that he does not know, Dupin anticipates and takes on the nihilism of the modern market: he makes a symbolically infanticidal *killing*. Thus, he delivers his enemy a political coup de

grâce by means of a psychologically murderous performative signature. In effect, he signs his substitute letter, “You are as if an infanticide. C. Auguste Dupin.”

Near the end of *The Mystery to a Solution*, Irwin writes that “Poe’s aesthetic task [...] was to find mysteries that would serve as dramatic correlatives for the central mystery of the human condition, and the fact that the mysteries he created were ones associated with the commission of crimes simply evokes the ancient sense that the structure of self-consciousness [...] is basically transgressive” (416). I would qualify this characterization of Poe’s own artistic labor: to give oneself over to the transgression, as the Minister D_____ and Dupin do, is to capitulate to a despairing rage over the poverty of self-consciousness, a reaction evident in the infanticidal imagery by which Dupin indicates the affective violence at the heart of his intellection. This violence is a lethal aggressivity that will politically isolate the other, reducing him to the same condition to which Dupin had been “reduced” in “The Murders of the Rue Morgue” by “such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it” and by which “he ceased to bestir himself in the world.”¹⁶ In “The Purloined Letter,” Dupin comes back from the dead, as it were; but if he is reanimated, it is to engage the living (his narrator friend, the Prefect, the Minister, and the confederate) so as to haunt the Minister, whose downfall provides Dupin with the monetary resources for a new life. The cost, however, is that Dupin damns himself in sentencing the other to a fratricidal revenge that is either impotent, contraceptive, or anti-reproductive. He thus surrenders himself and his enemy to an ontologically self-evacuating, infanticidal aggression.

IV: The Violence of the Market

This aggression links the story’s insight about the poverty of consciousness to its implicit criticism of, and perhaps Poe’s ambivalence toward, the market economy that stimulates such violence. Writing at a time when the literary marketplace was rapidly expanding and the literary text was becoming increasingly commoditized, Poe might seem to let Dupin, the narrator, and the reader have their cake and eat it too—by permitting Dupin to cash in on his vengeance, and by extending Dupin’s payoff both to the narrator, who acquires the material for his story, and to the reader, who receives the opportunity to experience vengeance as a highly profitable and aesthetically rich motivation. In this view “The Purloined Letter” capitalizes on the way the marketplace transforms primitive desires—here the violence of escalating revenge—into a

contractual service and a literary commodity.

Such an interpretation implies that the market functions psychoanalytically to relieve the participant of the aggression and hatred that would otherwise disrupt a peaceable, culturally stabilizing process of commercial exchange. To this end Jeffrey Mehlman argues that by exchanging the letter for money, Dupin escapes the intersubjective blindness that initially overtakes him as it has the others who have possessed the letter. Mehlman reads the “devastating quotation” with which Dupin signs the substitute letter as an “expression of [the] *blind* rage” that accompanies the narcissistic false belief that he sees without being seen. Because Dupin is alert to this emotional and cognitive trap, however, he quickly gets rid of the letter by selling it to the Prefect. Mehlman concludes that this exchange frees Dupin of the “venom” which “the counterfeit letter betrays.”¹⁷ The market accomplishes this end presumably by associating the individual’s furious emotionality, and the absolute value it has for the infuriated individual, with some good or service, the value of which is relative to what the market will bear. The result is to convert charged affect into an object the symbolic value of which must be negotiated by entering into an exchange process in which one realizes one’s own point of view is subject to the inspection and differential valuation of the other. The appeal of this interpretation is the psychic relief it provides Dupin, the narrator, and any reader who identifies with the narrator’s tale of Dupin’s success.

In fact, however, the fictional market of “The Purloined Letter” ironizes such a putative Aristotelian catharsis. Rather than purging Dupin of his aggression, the market rationalizes it. When Dupin sells the letter to the Prefect, he deepens his collaboration in the queen’s betrayal of the king. The market then legitimizes his and everyone else’s role in the political conspiracy by inscribing the covert exchanges among the colluders in a system of overt, rationally self-interested exchanges. In this way the market substitutes a public, legal tender for a private, illegal letter. The story’s marketplace thereby hides desire in the open—in the neutral monetary signs that substitute for the signs of the socially problematic, appropriative desire that motivates the circuit of exchange. For his part the narrator reproduces the market’s reappropriation when he converts Dupin’s vengeful motivation and self-congratulatory account of his intellectual superiority over Minister D_____ into an aesthetic good. Readers, too, risk buying into this process, especially if they neglect the rationalized aggression that underwrites the story’s transactions.

Poe is critical of, if ambivalent about, the relation between monetary exchange, psychic economy, and violence. Indeed, in “The Purloined Letter” the productivity of the market enacts the paradox that underlies *Eureka*: “*In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.*”¹⁸ The aboriginal productivity of the world undoes itself in an oxymoronic movement of “germinal” self-destruction. Daniel A. Underwood and Paul G. King have articulated a modern version of this insight concerning the limits of human economy, which inevitably “increase[s] the entropy of the universe and diminish[es] the future productive potential of the biosphere.”¹⁹ The physical laws of universe imply its eventual and inevitable death.

In the infanticidal—that is, anti-generative, unbegetting, future-destroying—imagery Dupin employs to secure his revenge and to make a symbolic killing on the black market, “The Purloined Letter” provides an encrypted glimpse of what remains all but inconceivable to those who have yet to accept the epistemological blindness that blocks them from recognizing their own infanticidal self-interestedness. Such blindness becomes manifest whenever individuals or groups think they see a truth their opponents do not and, in seeking to take advantage of their opponents’ blindness, fail to see they share a common fate. In that moment is born the denial of the infanticidal “germ” Poe intuits.

Notes

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1. “The Purloined Letter,” *Edgar Allan Poe: Tales and Sketches*, Vol. 3: 1843-1849, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard UP, 1978), 993. Subsequent references to this edition of the story will be included in the text.

2. Commenting on Dupin’s desire to answer the Minister’s “evil turn,” John T. Irwin notes that Dupin’s answer to the Minister’s earlier “evil turn” “will constitute an evening of the score between them at one apiece only if the Minister does not allow Dupin’s trick to end the series,” for the last “trick” turns the gesture of “trying to *get even*” into the paradoxical act of “being *one up*.” See *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994), 29.

3. In *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* (1838), published seven years before “The Purloined Letter” (1845), the only time Pym uses the word “purloin” is in the course of describing an infanticidal scene of predation among the penguins and albatrosses, the cooperative nesting behavior that he describes at length. Having evoked the mathematical arrangement of the “rookery” shared by the two species of bird, between whom “the most singular friendship exists,” Pym then notes that the eggs of either bird “are never left uncovered at all—while one bird leaves the nest, the other nestling is by its side. This precaution is rendered necessary by the thievish propensities prevalent in the rookery, the inhabitants making no scruple to purloin each other’s eggs at every good opportunity.” See *Poetry and Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Patrick F. Quinn (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1119. In a forthcoming article, I examine the larger pattern of infanticidal implication in *Pym* as well as in *Moby-Dick*. See “Travel, Travail, and the Biblical Itinerary of the Word: The Contrasting Examples of Poe and Melville,” *Les écrivain en voyage: Nouveaux mondes, nouvelles idées (Writers and Their Travels: New Worlds, New Ideas)*, ed. Sharon Fuller and Roy Fuller, forthcoming 2006.

4. Dennis Porter points out that the story is, among other things, a “fascinating tale of loins.” See “Of Poets, Politicians, Policemen, and the Power of Analysis,” *New Literary History* 19.3 (Spring 1988), 501. As Irwin notes, “In the final Dupin story, of course, the queen is the victim not of physical but of psychological violence (blackmail); and once again the violence has a sexual dimension, for the letter the Minister holds over her head apparently implicates her in an adulterous affair.” See *The Mystery to a Solution*, 237-38. And yet, as Ross Chambers observes, the letter’s contents “are unknown to the reader; they are a

secret that is never disclosed. (Is it a love letter? Does it contain evidence of a political plot?).” See “Narratorial Authority and ‘The Purloined Letter,’” in John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, eds., *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988), 290.

5. In his “Seminar” on Poe, Jacques Lacan traces the transit of desire back to the story’s reenactment of the Freudian “primal scene,” in which the child sees or imagines the parents engaged in intercourse. The primal scene stimulates the child’s “instinct for knowledge” by raising two questions: what is the nature of sexual difference, and where do babies come from. The primal scene provides an initial—terrifying—answer insofar as children experience the event, Freud believes, as aggressive, violent, and destructive and as the source of a potentially life-shaping anxiety. See *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 62. Freud links the child’s dread to two threats, which he all but describes as infanticidal threats: the mutilating threat of castration and “the threat to the bases of [his or her] existence offered by the discovery or the suspicion of the arrival of a new baby and the fear that he may, as a result of it, *cease to be cared for and loved*” (60-61). The phallic power of the father and the birthing capacity of the mother deliver the child to a fearful self-consciousness of its vulnerability to castration and infanticidal replacement. The primal scene, in other words, stages the advent both of life and of the child’s initial consciousness of itself in terms of a life-subtracting, life-revoking peril.

Lacan, like Freud, has trouble explicitly naming as infanticidal the implications of the primal scene because of the way he conceives the Symbolic Order. Lacan locates the primal scene in Poe’s story in the “intersubjective” triad of the queen, the king, and Minister D_____, which is then displaced onto a second triad constituted by the Minister, the Prefect, and Dupin. Lacan discerns in this repetition nothing less than a force that “impregnates our acts” and “delivers” us to our identities within the Symbolic Order. That is, Lacan himself conceives of the letter in terms that transfer reproductivity from the body to language, within which all birthing is shown to be linguistically circumscribed. See Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” in Muller and Richardson, eds., *The Purloined Poe*, 41 and 39.

In criticizing Lacan, Derrida examines the disseminating rather than inseminating character of language. He thus refuses the metaphor of conception as an adequate

means of apprehending the inscription of the human subject within a field of forces that are simultaneously erotic *and* thanatotic, life-producing *and* death-producing. See “Le Facteur de la Vérité,” in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), 413-96.

6. “Dupin’s intellectual feat is mainly motivated by an unintellectual common denominator for humanity, a need for bread (*du pain* if one adds an ‘a’ to Dupin’s name.) This pun is made by Dupin himself when he makes his ‘D-cipher’ out of bread in order to sign his *fac-simile*.” See “Lacan and Derrida on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” *Comparative Literature Studies* 26.1 (1989), 42. Lawrence Howe also discusses Dupin’s “signature pun which signs off the detective series,” in “Poe and the Critical Pun; or The Revenge of the Detective Tales,” *LIT/Literature, Interpretation, Theory* 3.3 (1992), 200.

7. The motif of intensification is a fundamental aesthetic feature of Poe’s work. Here it takes the form of an escalating violence, as it does in “The Cask of Amonitillado,” where it develops according to the psychodynamic sequence René Girard has outlined: admiration leads to emulation, envy, and eventually a hatred that, sufficiently intensified, erupts into murderous aggression. See, for example, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977). In other works—for example, “Descent into the Maelström,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and “The Tell-Tale Heart”—the intensification takes the form of increasingly lurid, sensational, and harrowing experiences or increasingly acute and even psychotic perceptions.

8. In the meantime, his sister Niobe, wife of the legendary cofounder of Thebes, boasts of her superior reproductivity to Leto and, consequently, twelve of her fourteen children are killed by Apollo and Artemis.

9. Believing Aegisthus to be his son by Pelopia, Atreus summons him to destroy Thyestes. When Aegisthus learns from Pelopia that Thyestes is his real father, however, he turns on Atreus and stabs him from behind. See Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth*, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001), 513. The theme of false paternity in the myth of Atreus and Thyestes adds to the suggestion that the lady of “The Purloined Letter” may be pregnant and that the issue of paternity is in question. Whether or not her adultery led to conception, the theme of dubious paternity converges with the issue of delivering the letter back into the hands of the woman.

10. It is overdetermined, then, that he will take his revenge against the Minister by symbolically “screwing” him: “Dupin does not use his acumen merely to grasp the Minister’s maneuvers (as his friend understands his arguments); he uses it also to penetrate the Minister’s duplicity and to reveal the fraudulence of his techniques.” See Chambers, “Narratorial Authority and ‘The Purloined Letter,’” 295-96.

11. See Irwin, *The Mystery to a Solution*, 10.

12. See Robin Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (Cambridge: Harvard UP), 86. Dunbar continues: “Having a Theory of mind means being able to understand what another individual is thinking, to ascribe beliefs, desires, fears and hopes to someone else, and to believe that they really do experience these feelings as mental states. We can conceive of a kind of natural hierarchy: you can have a mental state (a belief about something) and I can have a mental state about your mental state (a belief about a belief). [...] These are now usually referred to as orders of ‘intensionality.’ [...] There is good reason to believe that humans are capable of keeping track of, at most, six orders of intensionality, and after that they probably have to see it written down” (83-84). Daniel C. Dennett provides an extended discussion of intensionality in *Kinds of Mind: Toward an Understanding of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books/ HarperCollins, 1996).

13. R. D. Laing translates the intersubjective binds (the “knots” of his title) that can arise in the course of representing representation—one’s own and that of the other—into a series of logically contradictory statements and dialogic exchanges. See *Knots* (New York: Pantheon/Random House, 1970).

14. This incapacity is intrinsic to the experience of one’s own consciousness. As Jacques Derrida has explained, consciousness, especially as conscience, seems to occur as an unmediated self-voicing in which one’s thought is available to oneself as a signified that is seemingly independent of any signifier and that therefore has a completely non-material being, a non-material presence to the subject who hears itself thinking. “This experience of the effacement of the signifier in the voice is not merely one illusion among many—since it is the condition of the very idea of truth. [...] This illusion is the history of truth.” See *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974), 20. For this reason the truth of the truth—the truth that the experience

of truth derives from an illusory experience of seeming self-presence—is not able to be introjected, not able to become the non-illusory basis of the experience of one’s self-consciousness.

15. In his exposition of Poe’s story, Lacan frames the problem of intersubjectivity in terms of the epistemological asymmetry between (1) “a glance that sees nothing: the King and the police,” (2) “a glance which sees that the first sees nothing and deludes itself as to the secrecy of what it hides: the Queen, then the Minister,” and (3) a glance that “sees that the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whomever would seize it: the Minister and finally Dupin.” See “Seminar,” 32. What the third glance for its part does not see is that the self-limitations of the first two glances traverse the entire intersubjective hierarchy such that the third glance is as vulnerable as the others to the destructiveness of its desire.

16. See *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. 2, *Tales and Sketches: 1831-1842*, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard UP, 1978), 531.

17. See “Poe Pourri: Lacan’s Purloined Letter,” *Boundary 2* (1974),” 55.

18. See *Poetry and Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1261.

19. See “On the Ideological Foundations of Environmental Policy,” *Ecological Economics* 1 (1989), 322. Underwood and King explain that “the more society relies on an increase in material flows to satisfy an increasing demand for production, the greater will be the level of pollution and the disamenities associated with it; the greater will be the demand placed on the assimilative capacity of the biosphere; and finally, the smaller will be the productive potential of the biosphere in the future” (323n10). The consequences are inevitable: “a global society with an endlessly increasing thirst for material production dependent upon a coinciding flow of resources is doomed to extinction,” for the laws of thermodynamics and conservation impose an absolute energy limit in the form of “absolute scarcity” (322). Quite simply, the carrying capacity of the earth is not inexhaustible but thermodynamically bounded. “The fact that there are no known exceptions to the laws of thermodynamics should be incorporated into the axiomatic foundations of economics” (329).

Interview with Dana Gioia

April Lindner

Dana Gioia is the first poet to serve as Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. An advocate for the revival of rhyme, meter, and narrative in contemporary poetry, Gioia has published three poetry collections: *Daily Horoscope*, *The Gods of Winter*, and *Interrogations at Noon*, his most recent collection, which received the 2002 American Book Award. He also has published three collections of literary criticism. His 1991 essay “Can Poetry Matter?” sparked a debate on the role of poetry in contemporary American intellectual life. Gioia argued that poets had ceased writing for a general audience and proposed a series of practical steps for winning a wider audience back to poetry. He also has edited numerous anthologies, including *Literature; An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry & Drama* (with X. J. Kennedy), *The Longman Anthology of Short Fiction* (with R. S. Gwynn), and *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (with David Mason and Meg Schoerke). His opera libretto, *Nosferatu*, was written for music by the composer Alva Henderson, and has been performed by Montana’s Rimrock Opera Company and published by Graywolf Press. With Michael Peich, Gioia cofounded the West Chester Poetry Conference in 1995. The Conference is the only ongoing yearly gathering devoted to poetry in form and narrative. Gioia and Lindner spoke via telephone.

Lindner: In your essay “The Hand of the Poet: The Magical Value of Manuscripts,” you describe hearing, from an early age, your mother recite “Annabel Lee” from memory. How did that early experience affect the poetry you would go on to write as an adult?

Gioia: My earliest memories of art come from my mother reciting poems. My mother is a California-born Mexican-American who never went beyond high school, but she knew a great many poems by heart. She also owned several poetry anthologies, including one crumpled old book, which had belonged to her mother. She often read or recited poems to me—mostly old anthology favorites by Kipling, Longfellow, Whittier, and Poe as well as once popular but now forgotten poets such as Ella Wheeler Wilcox and James Whitcomb Riley. One of her favorites was “Annabel Lee,” which she recited to me many times in childhood. It wasn’t until I was in middle age that I understood that one of the things that she was telling me with this poem were the many sorrows of her life that she could not express directly.

My mother's recitations influenced me enormously as a writer in ways I am still in the process of understanding. First, she endowed me with the conviction that poetry is not an elitist art that belongs to a small intellectual coterie. Poetry is an art for all of humanity—that conviction has led me to reject many recent academic assumptions about poetry. Second, my mother's delight in reciting poetry led me to understand that poetry is primarily an aural art. It is physical, performative, and experiential. Few people enjoy reading poems, but most people like to hear good poetry. Finally, I've gradually understood from the importance poetry had in the life of my mother (and many other working people whom I grew up around) that poetry is a way of communicating things that are otherwise not easily said. Consequently, I've come to believe that poetry presents two subjects simultaneously—both a surface and a secret message.

L: In "The Hand of the Poet," you also describe how, at twelve, in southern California's Henry E. Huntington Library, you stumbled across a fair copy of "Annabel Lee" in Poe's own hand. Can you explain the impact of that moment?

G: It would be hard to describe how culturally limited my childhood was. We had a great many books and records in our house, which were the legacy of my dead Mexican uncle Theodore Ortiz, but that private treasury had nothing in common with the outer world. Hawthorne, my part of Los Angeles, had no public cultural institutions of any kind except the library. Not only had I never been to a museum or gallery, a theater or concert hall, an opera or ballet; neither had any adult I knew. Culture was something that happened elsewhere, to other people, or in books.

Nonetheless, at the age of about 12 or 13, I convinced my parents to take me to the Huntington Gallery to see the paintings. I had not understood that one of North America's greatest libraries was also on the property.

As we wandered through the exhibits, I came across a fair copy of Poe's "Annabel Lee" elegantly written in the author's hand. Seeing a manuscript of a poem I knew by heart struck me with the impact that a pilgrim of an earlier age might have felt in seeing a fragment of the True Cross. I had hardly imagined such things existed and was astonished that such an object resided in southern California. I felt like John Keats's fictive Cortez, standing on a peak in Darien seeing a vast ocean of possibility before me.

L: Why did the handwritten object itself have so much more of an impact than the published version?

G: I was raised Catholic in an age that still venerated the relics of saints. Such objects were assumed to contain residual grace from their original owners. I believe that literary manuscripts, especially those of acknowledged masterpieces, have a magical quality that exceeds their scholarly or historical importance. Seeing this manuscript of “Annabel Lee” was the first and most startling such transaction that I had experienced. But I had experienced similar awe and wonder seeing other manuscripts, like the typescript of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* with Ezra Pound’s corrections in the New York Public Library’s Berg Collection.

L: Did Poe have any other influence on you as a writer?

G: Poe had such a profound and decisive influence on me that it may be hard to understand unless I state it explicitly in very personal terms.

I am a West Coast Latin Catholic—a mixture of mostly Italian and Mexican stock—which is to say a very American mixture. Growing up in working-class Los Angeles, hearing Italian and Spanish spoken every day, and attending twelve years of Catholic school, I never felt any deep connection to the early classics of American literature, which grew out of Puritan Protestant New England. Although I was born and raised in Hawthorne, California, Nathaniel Hawthorne seemed a very foreign author to me as a young man. I felt equally remote from Emerson, Edwards, Melville, even Whitman. The definitions of American literature I was given in high school seemed utterly remote from my life experience as a West Coast American.

By contrast, Poe always felt *simpatico*. His internationalism seemed much closer to my experience than the regionalism of Northeastern writers. He wasn’t obsessed with Puritanism or Protestant ideas. He seemed unconfined by history or politics. His settings were mythic and archetypal. One didn’t need to have traveled to understand them. His characters were not bound by class, race, or profession—another help to a young reader who was not yet familiar with the ways of Eastern society. I know I am praising Poe for precisely the qualities for which many critics have damned him, but I’m telling the truth. He paved my way to Baudelaire and Balzac, Nabokov and Kafka, Calvino and Borges.

L: As a senior at Stanford, you wrote on Poe's fiction. Can you say a bit about that project?

G: Poe's poetry was one of my earliest literary experiences, but I was slow in coming to his fiction. Although I was a devotee of fantasy and science fiction, I read only a few of Poe's short stories growing up, largely those which I had encountered in anthologies of horror fiction, like "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Pit and the Pendulum," and "The Premature Burial." My ignorance was compounded by a false sense of familiarity from movies. Poe's stories were everywhere apparent through the dreadful film adaptations by Roger Corman, which were quite popular in my childhood. I also watched the earlier Universal films like *The Black Cat* and *The Raven*, which had virtually nothing to do with their source material. Those particular films never much appealed to me, especially those ghastly Vincent Price vehicles.

In college, however, I became interested in German Romantic literature. As a senior writing an honors essay at Stanford, I began an ambitious project to look at the *doppelgänger* motif across a dozen writers from E. T. A. Hoffman to Joseph Conrad. Mine was initially a typically unfocused undergraduate enterprise. Gradually, however, I narrowed my focus to a handful of stories in Poe that used this motif. I discovered certain structural principles in these stories that I believe no one else had yet noticed, and wrote an elaborate and ambitious essay on the subject. Competition must have been sufficiently weak that year because I won the departmental prize, which allowed me to graduate *summa cum laude*. I had the advantage of working with David Halliburton at Stanford, who himself was in the process of writing a phenomenological analysis of Poe.

L: Can you summarize your thesis on Poe's fiction?

G: I took the precise narrative structure of "William Wilson" and demonstrated that its sequence of episodes was replicated in about eight other stories, often with missing steps. If the missing step or steps were provided from the structure of "William Wilson," that addition never seemed inconsistent with the narrative line, and its addition clarified obvious paradoxes, contradictions, and mysteries in the narrative. My underlying thesis was not new, namely that Poe's genius used obsessive situations, images, and characters. What was novel about my

approach was that precise hidden patterns common to stories that contained highly refracted versions of these obsessive elements, and their consistent relation to the idea of the double.

L: Did this scholarly work affect your general views on fiction?

G: My study of Poe's fiction changed my sense of the possibilities of the storyteller's art. It showed me how non-realist fiction achieved its effects in poetic ways—suggestion, symbolism, and style. In many ways, my study led me to understand the importance of romance as a narrative mode equal in every respect to the novelistic realist mode. That belief, I hasten to add, was an indefensible intellectual position back then. Interestingly, several years later, Northrop Frye served as the Norton chair at Harvard, and he lectured on the importance of the romance as one of the basic modes in which humanity tells its stories.

*L: Has your study of Poe's plots taught you anything that you used in your opera libretto, for *Nosferatu*?*

G: The subject, style, symbolism, and characters of *Nosferatu* all owe a certain debt to Poe. *Nosferatu* was an attempt to take the mode of Gothic horror and use it successfully to create a poetic tragedy. The entire opera is written with Poe's aesthetic of the unity of effect always in mind. The two major characters have a complex relation that can only be fully understood by reference to the *doppelgänger* motif in literature. Poe himself, I hope, would have been smitten by my heroine, Ellen, a beautiful but neurasthenic woman.

L: I can certainly see that. You've written on the strange chasm between critical opinion of "The Raven," which has tended to be negative, and the poem's enduring popular appeal. And how do you account for that chasm?

G: Respectable critics have always been uncomfortable with horror and supernatural literature. They consider it cheap, sensational, and formulaic. They have also generally been suspicious about any work too beloved by young or nonliterary audiences. The purpose of criticism, after all, is to make the critic seem more intelligent than the reader. I tend to be an empiricist in literary matters. If a poem or story remains popular for a hundred and fifty years, I tend to think it must have merit, even if its particular virtues seem baffling to critics. Poe's

“The Raven” has been enormously popular since the day it first appeared in 1845. Its enduring ability to bewitch the average reader surely deserves our respect and curiosity.

Poe’s “The Raven” is a wonderfully hybrid work. It is quite similar to Poe’s fiction—a narrative work written in a lyrical style. Any critic who judges it purely as a narrative will find problems just as any critic who judges it purely as a lyric will. The trick is to understand what the author intended, which was a rather bold, stylistic experiment. Only then can it be judged accurately. The same issue has complicated the evaluation of Poe’s fiction. Curiously, the very allowances that critics make modernist authors like Gertrude Stein or James Joyce rarely seem to be granted to Poe. Like them, he created experimental works that blur the usual boundaries between poetry and prose.

*L: You are a vocal proponent of the New Narrative, a movement of poets who argue that poetry can attract a popular audience by incorporating plot and character development—the elements of fiction. A number of novels in verse—notably Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate* and Brad Leithauser’s *Darlington’s Fall*—have sprung from this belief. What do you make of Poe’s assertion, in “*The Poetic Principle*,” that the long poem is “a flat contradiction in terms,” and that even *Paradise Lost* is best viewed as a “a series of minor poems”? He also writes, “If, at any time, any very long poem were popular in reality, which I doubt, it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.” How would you reply?*

G: I think Poe was mostly right. Never forget that Poe’s greatest study after literature was literary marketing. He was a great editor and was always trying to understand what the public wanted and how those desires might be reconciled with what the artist created. Poe understood that the long poem would never occupy the popular place that fiction had usurped, and indeed literary history has proved him right. He also understood that a long poem does not operate as a stretch of unbroken lyricism but modulates the narrative between moments of differing intensity. Poe saw that necessary modulation as a defect. I see it as sound structural design.

L: If the plot or characters are enticing enough, then the reader will follow the exposition to get to the high lyrical moments.

G: I think you're right. Modernist verse was in many ways a response to Poe's challenge to the long poem. How do you create extended poems that sustain great intensity and suppress the more mundane responsibilities of linear structure? In general, Poe's requirement for constant intensity is responsible for the great failure (or perhaps more politely, the mixed success) of the long American modern poem—*The Cantos*, *The Bridge*, *Paterson*, *A*, *The Maximus Poems*—in which poets try to create epic works without sufficient support of structure. He was also, however, responsible for the greatest American modernist long poems, like *The Waste Land*, and *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*. Poe also lurks around the edges of Robinson Jeffers' best long poems like *Cawdor* and *The Double Axe*, which borrow elements from the horror and supernatural traditions.

To my judgment, the greatest works of the New Narrative have been poems of middle length, like Sidney Lea's "The Feud," David Mason's "Spooning," Andrew Hudgins's "Saints and Strangers," or R. S. Gwynn's "Cléante to Elmire." Perhaps the longest of these narrative poems that would be considered an unqualified success would be Mason's "The Country I Remember"—a small masterpiece. Quite often, one finds a book-length poem like Mark Jarman's *Iris* or Robert McDowell's *The Diviners*, which begin magnificently and then gradually lose intensity. The opening sections of both of those poems are thrilling, but the authors find it difficult to sustain that high level of achievement. I find both *Iris* and *The Diviners* more substantial than most prize-winning novels, but they don't fully achieve the epic ambition to which they aspire. The same criticism would be made of Frederick Turner's brilliant but uneven epic poem, *The New World*. Epics are terribly hard to bring off. Even for Frost and Pound—not to mention John Keats!

L: In his recent essay, "Out of the Republic, Into the Madhouse," in *Poetry*, the critic Adam Kirsch examines Poe's essay "The Philosophy of Composition." Kirsch writes:

An obsessive and emotionally wounded poet, Poe preferred to present himself as controlled, deliberate, and logical. Even if we accept the basic premise of Poe's claim that he created the poem systematically from abstract goals, we are entitled to comment that only an author full of raging emotions would insist on the necessity for such complete artistic control.

Poe's stance toward composition, while extreme, bears some resemblance to that of contemporary New Formalist poets, who often use received forms as "asbestos gloves" for grappling with intense emotion.

G: I don't believe a word of Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" as a literal account of the actual composition of "The Raven." But I do accept it all as a sort of allegory of poetic consciousness. The art of poetry is a bizarre union between intellect and emotion, physicality and imagination. How does one take a preverbal emotional impulse and transform it into a verbal formula that awakens similar energies in the reader? Poe understood the odd nature of this undertaking and presented it in allegorical terms in "The Philosophy of Composition." The essay, of course, also has its unintentionally sad aspect. It unwittingly reveals an emotionally troubled author pretending complete intellectual and artistic control.

L: Could you comment on the relationship between "raging emotions" and "artistic control" in your own composition process?

G: My friends are kind enough to regard me as a reasonable, well-balanced, and stable individual. I wish they were right. My poems come from a darker and more impulsive part of me. They are ways of channeling unstable and potentially destructive forces. The process of writing and revision shapes those emotional and intuitive impulses into something that will communicate them to a stranger. One doesn't control the emotions; one only shapes them. What Poe made explicit in his criticism was the goal of giving personal emotion an impersonal form.

L: What might Poe have thought of the last fifty years of American poetry, given that he says that "music, in its various modes of meter, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance"?

G: I agree. The exhilarating pleasure of sound shaped both for physical stimulation and expressive intensity is the heart of poetry. If a poet decides to give up verbal music, then he or she must use virtually every other trick in the book to make a poem succeed. Poems can be written without meter, but it is much harder. The best free verse tends to adopt certain sonic, or visual patterns to intensify the attention.

A poem operates primarily by enchantment. It seeks to create a verbal spell, usually through auditory means that focus the reader's attention. The spell also induces a mild trance state that weakens the normal resistance people bring to their everyday lives. With the reader in this heightened and vulnerable state, the poem does its dirty business—piercing the reader's humanity and eliciting the responses of the heart and mind. Poems also speak to our bodies. Great poetry possesses enormous physicality.

L: Poe also wrote, "There can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development." Among the New Formalists, we've seen a revival of interest in writing poems expressly for music. Would you comment on your work as a librettist, and as a promoter of the art song?

G: Poetry and song were once the same art. All Greek lyric poems were sung, just as choral poems were sung and danced. I originally hoped to be a composer, and I have always been particularly susceptible to the pleasures of music. I have delighted in my many opportunities to collaborate with composers both for songs and opera. It seems to me that whether the composer is adapting a preexisting poem for musical setting or asking for a new text to be set to music, we are always operating close to the center of the poetic art. If words spoken in a musical cadence have a special power, how much greater are those words set to the perfect melody?

L: To end almost where we started, with your early encounter with the handwritten "Annabel Lee," you write that the experience gave you a sense of "how the text of a poem balanced between two lives—the author and the reader." You also write, "The value our culture has placed on literary manuscripts reflects an admirable and ineradicable human impulse—the desire for a direct and authentic relation between art and its audience." It strikes me that much of your work as a literary critic, anthologist, and, more recently, an arts administrator, has been about promoting more opportunities for a "direct and authentic relation" between artist and audience. Would you agree?

G: I have dedicated myself at the National Endowment for the Arts both to broadening the audience for art and to foster a new generation of Americans who love theater, literature, music, dance, and the visual arts. The important

thing to remember is that such an enterprise rests on faith in art itself. There is no purpose to bringing mediocrity to millions. The challenge is to make the best of the arts—classic and contemporary in all their diversity—available to the broadest audience possible. I refuse to believe that the potential audience for Shakespeare or Beethoven, Martha Graham or Frank Lloyd Wright consists only of a tiny, privileged elite. I serve as a public official in a democracy. I refuse to allow the audience for the arts to be limited to the affluent or the privileged. The expansion of the audience for serious art will benefit both artists and society at large.

**G. R. Thompson, ed. *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*.
New York: Norton, 2004, liii + 960 pp. \$16.35 Paper.**

The Norton Critical Edition series aims to provide readers with authoritative primary texts, relevant contextual and source materials, a wide range of interpretations, and suggestions for further reading. The absence of a Poe volume in this series has long been an anomaly in the field of academic publishing. In this substantial edition of selected writings, G. R. Thompson, founding editor of *Poe Studies* and former editor of *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, brings to bear his considerable erudition and scholarly expertise as well as his long experience of reading and writing about Poe.

After an ample Introduction (“Edgar A. Poe: An American Life”) in which he suggests that Poe’s themes reflect the divisions in antebellum America, Thompson presents 31 poems, 33 tales, the complete text of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, and selections from *Eureka*. Two of Poe’s longer poetic efforts, “Tamerlane” and “Al Aaraaf,” appear along with Poe’s major lyrics and dreamscapes, including two versions of “Fairy-Land.” A generous selection of Poe’s comic and satiric tales (e.g., “Loss of Breath,” “Lionizing,” “King Pest,” “The Man That Was Used Up,” “Never Bet the Devil Your Head,” the *Blackwood* satires, “Some Words with a Mummy,” “Hop-Frog”) accompanies Poe’s major achievements in the Gothic genre. (For a brief point of comparison, Benjamin F. Fisher’s *The Essential Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* [Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004] presents 17 poems and 33 tales.)

The first section of “Backgrounds and Contexts” contains letters, essays, and reviews by Poe. Taking issue with Mabbott’s choice of copy text, Thompson, with a few exceptions, follows the texts of poems, tales, and reviews from original book and periodical sources rather than the latest revision. (Suspect textual principles, Thompson suggests, allowed Mabbott to reprint versions from Griswold’s *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe*.) For hard-to-find works—the manuscript preface to “The Tales of the Folio Club,” the prospectus for *The Penn Magazine*, and the self-referential “A Reviewer Reviewed”—Mabbott’s Harvard University Press edition is followed. The texts of essays and reviews follow original magazine sources, and the reader is grateful for such a broad range of Poe’s critical writings. In addition to often-anthologized major statements on the craft of poetry, Thompson includes all three of Poe’s pieces on Hawthorne as well as selections from less frequently reprinted critical essays (e.g., the reviews of Morris

Mattson's *Paul Ulric*, Robert Montgomery Bird's *Sheppard Lee*, Thomas Moore's *Alciphron*, and Henry Wadsworth's Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery*). The last item appeared without attribution in an 1845 issue of Thomas Dunn English's *Aristidean* magazine, and Thompson suspects with some justification that the editor allowed Poe to publish it there to give vent to antiabolitionist sentiment in his continuing campaign against Longfellow. A later anonymous review in the same magazine of Poe's *Tales* is also included as an example of self-promotion.

Other editors might have chosen more documents that focus on the controversies engendered by Poe's conduct, his critical style, and the circumstances surrounding his death, but Thompson includes in "Backgrounds and Contexts" selections designed to show Poe's preoccupation with elements of German Romanticism. A selection by Frederic Henry Hedge from the American anthology, *Prose Writers of Germany* (1847), is offered to introduce philosophers pertinent to Poe's world view and his artistic theories. Brief selections from the German critics Friedrich and A. W. Schlegel as well as Jean Paul Richter illustrate theories of humor and irony. According to Thompson, these foundation sources for an "Alternative Romanticism," complement his later reprinting of essays by critics Floyd Stovall and Robert C. McLean, who trace the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and George Tucker on Poe's poetic theory.

Scholars have long debated Poe's interest in physical features (the study of the human face and the shape of the human skull) that may reflect moral character or personal idiosyncrasies. In a section on "Sciences of the Mind," Thompson reprints brief excerpts from works by Johann G. Spurzheim, Orson Fowler, and Thomas C. Upham to underscore contemporary interest in physiognomy, phrenology, and other physically oriented psychological theories. Students intrigued by the ways in which Poe links the "physique" and the "morale" of human character, perhaps most notably in "The Fall of the House of Usher," will find these excerpts useful sources for tracing theories of the mind that had significant currency during his time.

In an 1832 letter, Coleridge, writing to William Blackwood, called his magazine "an unprecedented Phenomenon in the world of letters." For Coleridge and other writers on both sides of the Atlantic, the *Blackwood's* blend of raucous humor and Gothic terror asserted enormous popularity and influence. Another important context for Thompson is the *Blackwood's* tale of sensation, three of which he

offers as examples for possible impact on Poe's tone, style, and choice of genre. This section is of most obvious relevance as a context for the comic and satiric tales contained in the volume. Thompson, acknowledging the work of Michael Allen, suggests that Poe was writing for a dual audience—ordinary readers taken in by elements of surface horror and a more sophisticated readership aware of Poe's penchant for parody and tongue-in-cheek satire. This section will invite contemporary students to ponder parallels in the popular culture of our own day as well to join the critical discussion over levels of irony and satire in early tales like "Metzengerstein" and "The Assigination." Thompson claims that the author of "The Buried Alive" (1821) is anonymous, but this tale, mentioned in "How to Write a Blackwood Article," is clearly by John Galt (1779-1839). Galt was a contributor to *Blackwood's* for over fifteen years and was the author *The Steamboat* (1822) in which his brief narrative of premature burial appeared.

In previous scholarship, Thompson has claimed that Poe's comments on race were limited and that his regionalist sentiments thin. (See his "Poe and the Writers of the Old South" in the *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, 1998.) It is therefore somewhat surprising that he rounds off "Backgrounds and Contexts" with a section on "The South and Slavery." He reprints the "Paulding-Drayton" review, an article by Nathaniel Beverley Tucker in the 1836 *Southern Literary Messenger* that many contemporary critics have attributed to Poe as evidence of Poe's racism. Thompson also includes J. V. Ridgely's 1992 essay on the Paulding-Drayton review, which finds the case for Poe's authorship weak. This section of the volume anticipates discussions by later critics of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, the text upon which debates about Poe's racial views focus. Thompson argues for a broader discussion of the historical context of Poe's works, a perspective that includes aesthetic and philosophical concerns as well as political and economic matters.

With regard to selections of modern criticism, no one would quarrel with Thompson's choices of Richard Wilbur's essay on architectural symbolism, James W. Gargano's on Poe's narrators, and Joseph J. Moldenhauer's on connections among Poe's aesthetics, psychology, and moral vision. All three essays have been widely cited since their initial publication and have helped to chart the course of Poe studies. Among the other contributors to the section on modern criticism are Grace Farrell, Barton Levi St. Armand, J. Gerald Kennedy, and John T. Irwin. The Poe texts referred to recurrently in the sampling of

modern critical essays are “Usher,” *Pym*, and “The Purloined Letter.” Rather than essays that focus so recurrently on these texts, one might have hoped for more critical attention to “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” the angelic colloquies, and his landscape sketches. Thompson might have also chosen studies that focus on Poe’s anticipation of existential themes, his apocalyptic imagery, his humor, his prose style, his concept of authorship, or his journalistic practices. Whatever the limitations of his editorial choices, students who use Thompson’s volume should derive from it a stronger understanding of Poe as a sophisticated and cosmopolitan craftsman.

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Benjamin F. Fisher, ed. *The Essential Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004. xlv + 642 pp. \$7.95. Paper.

Benjamin Fisher offers us a new collection of Poe's poetry and tales as part of the Barnes and Noble Classics series. The texts are well chosen and presented with notes intended to make Poe's writings accessible to a general audience. Above all, the volume is affordable and, for that reason, should find its way into the classroom. Accordingly, Fisher's introduction provides an overview of Poe's oeuvre that is suitable for students and general readers alike. Rather than presenting Poe's poetry and tales within an historical or theoretical framework, Fisher argues that Poe's "horrors" continue to fascinate because they "touch on timeless, existential anxieties common to people everywhere" (xli). The selection of poems and tales he provides more than justifies this claim.

Fisher's introduction warns readers to avoid associating Poe's stories with his life. "Poe is not the protagonist in his tales and poems," he observes, even though the line indicating "where Poe the person stops, and where Poe's creative writings begin" is often blurred (xv). Instead, for Fisher, Poe is an artist working out of the Gothic tradition who consciously constructed scenarios meant to evoke the anxiety of attraction and repulsion often experienced in situations of trauma. Poe's contribution to this tradition was his ability to "bend Gothic conventions toward a greater psychological plausibility," and this "psychological realism," contributes much to his ongoing popularity (xxxii). Fisher, of course, realizes that this psychological dimension of Poe's writings is also what makes his fiction a rich resource for historical analysis. He points out that the emotions evoked by Poe's tales reflect the anxieties of "the developing cultural nationalism of a self-consciously American civilization" (xxxiii). Because his introduction focuses on the thematic content of the poetry and tales included in the collection, however, Fisher provides historical and biographical details only as needed to keep his discussion within the context of Poe's career. A useful chronology precedes the introduction and places key biographical details in the context of significant literary and historical events.

The 17 poems chosen for this edition reflect the themes and imagery of the Gothic tradition, and compliment the psychological scenarios central to some of the better known tales. Although he later acknowledges that "Poe's tales continue to be the most admired part of his literary legacy," Fisher compellingly shows

that, in his best poems, Poe combines lyricism, visual symbolism, and vivid imagery to draw readers into imaginary settings and complex psychological situations that often involve the death or loss of a loved one—a “visionary” lyricism which Fisher at one point describes as “a means of hypnotic outreach” (xix, xx). This description accurately captures the incantatory sound, as well as the sense, of poems like the “The Sleeper” or “The City in the Sea.” The editor’s judicious selection is less a survey of Poe’s poetic career and more a presentation of those poems that best exemplify Poe’s definition of poetry as “the rythmical creation of beauty.” Although I hoped to find “The Philosophy of Composition” included as a companion piece to “The Raven”—perhaps with some other instances of Poe’s criticism—this omission is understandable given that we have *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* in its entirety.

The 33 tales included in the volume provide a rich sampling of the various genres Poe experimented with in his short fiction. The mix of sensational tales, detective fiction, and satires accomplishes what Poe defined as his primary “aim” in publishing: “*to please*; and this through means of versatility, originality, and pungency.” In his introduction, Fisher provides a succinct summary of the series of interlocking tales Poe attempted to publish as “Tales of the Folio Club,” which suggests that Poe’s dual interest in the sensational and the satiric was part of his strategy to earn both popular and critical acclaim—useful information for the first-time reader trying to come to terms with the disconcerting mix of humor and horror in tales such as “King Pest” or “Hop-Frog.” Ultimately, though, the selection favors those tales that exhibit the psychological complexity that Fisher identifies as Poe’s major contribution to the gothic tradition.

The Essential Tales and Poems is an accessible collection of Poe’s poetry and tales. The notes are scholarly and informative, and the brief bibliography will lead the curious to some of the better known criticism on Poe. Fisher’s judicious introduction will serve well both first-time readers and those returning to Poe’s work to rediscover the particular pleasures of his poetry and prose in an edition unbiased by biographical speculation, uncomplicated by historical context, and unclouded by psychoanalytic abstractions.

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Stuart and Susan Levine, eds. *Eureka*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004. xxxiv + 191 pp. \$35.00 Cloth.

Richard Benton's 1975 edition of *Eureka* appends eleven essays by Poe scholars meant to "illuminate Poe's intention in writing *Eureka*. Notwithstanding their rich insights, we are still only part way through that labyrinth." Thirty years later, the labyrinth continues to puzzle scholars and scant research has been done to find a way through its twisted paths, especially when we compare work done on *Eureka* with the extensive research on Poe's other works.

This most recent edition of *Eureka*, edited by Stuart and Susan Levine, promises to invite more exploration of this most important work of Poe's, one that he considered the culmination of his literary efforts. As the editors acknowledge, this edition was "originally conceived as part of Burton Pollin's *The Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, [and] this project bears evidence of his attention and suggestions." Editors Susan and Stuart Levine use the "Hurst-Wakeman" version of *Eureka* as the basis of the text and follow Burton Pollin's suggestion to number the paragraphs as T. O. Mabbott had done in his preparations for the edition he had planned.

The introduction by the editors "stress[es] the strong connections between *Eureka*, the works that Poe used in preparing it, and the rest of his writing." The Levines provide a brief overview of the historical, philosophical, and poetic contexts for *Eureka*, and conclude that, despite many of the satiric passages in the text, "it would not be accurate to call it a 'satire.'" At one point, they call *Eureka* "a transcendental treatise," while, later, they suggest that "portions of *Eureka*, moreover, are simply wild." The introduction gives the reader a sense of the complexity of *Eureka*'s labyrinth, but, as the editors remind us, in creating this lengthy prose poem, Poe clearly "remembered the importance of dramatic impact, of memorable effect."

Included in the Appendix is the 29 February 1848 letter to George Eveleth that Poe called a "postscript" to his New York Society Library talk. The editors note that this published version of the letter "is more complete than any we know." Indeed, the letter at the Baltimore Poe Society web site (copied from the Mabbott reprint) only goes up to what the Levines list as para. 5 and elides the twelve paragraphs included in this new edition. Both versions, nonetheless, end with the same sentence: "How will *that* do for a postscript?" In their "Note on the

Text,” the Levines indicate that they used the University of Virginia version of the letter, a copy made by Eveleth of the original by Poe. Despite being the most “complete,” this version, according to the editors, may include “at least portions [that] are inauthentic.”

Over two hundred and fifty notes follow the text; a seven-page bibliography is also included. Most of the notes appear to be a scrupulous mix of those contributed by Burton Pollin, often from his *Writings* or elsewhere, scientist Bruce Twarog, those culled from T. O. Mabbott and Harold Beaver, and, of course, the editors’ own discoveries. Since the annotated Beaver edition of *Eureka* is no longer in print, this edition is an invaluable resource for scholars and students alike.

Not only is this edition of *Eureka* helpful to scholars, it is handsomely produced. Its large, clear font on acid-free paper and the handsome gold-and-brown dust jacket design, which exactly matches the University of Illinois 2000 edition of Mabbott’s 3-volume *Tales & Sketches/Poems*, make this edition of *Eureka* a perfect addition to a Poe collection on anyone’s bookshelf.

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Richard Kopley. *The Threads of the Scarlet Letter: A Study of Hawthorne's Transformative Art*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003. 201 pp. \$39.50.

In *The Threads of the Scarlet Letter*, Professor Richard Kopley, an established scholar conversant with the cultural context of Edgar Allan Poe's life and works, turns his attention and his considerable scholarly skills to Nathaniel Hawthorne's great novel. Echoing in reverse Hawthorne's own metaphor of embroidery, Kopley unravels and traces back Hawthorne's complicated weavings of source material. Three strands in particular structure the discussion: those of Poe, Lowell, and Ebenezer Wheelwright.

With meticulous research, Kopley carefully constructs a web of connections between Hawthorne and Poe, ultimately centering on "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), which, he argues, was indebted to Hawthorne's own 1838 sketch of editor Thomas Green Fessenden. Sharing a common interest in themes of sin, guilt, and confession, Hawthorne, in turn, transformed Poe's tale in the tenth chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*. Instead of a young man spying on and murdering an old man whose beating heart appalls him, an old Chillingworth pries into the heart of a young man. Hawthorne "spiritualizes" Poe's tale of murder, "turning it into the violation of 'the sanctity of the human heart'" (32).

Kopley next makes the case for another important new source of *The Scarlet Letter*, James Russell Lowell's narrative poem "A Legend of Brittany" (1844, rev. 1849). He deals in a nuanced way with Hawthorne's transformation of the erotic elements in Lowell's poem and his focus on the "consecration" of sexual love. In linking Hawthorne to Lowell, Kopley makes sure not to lose sight of Poe, whose connections to Lowell nicely enrich Kopley's own narrative. In fact, we begin to see here a deft use of accumulated scholarly details in the manner of Positivist criticism. In addition to establishing important new sources, Kopley creates a web of literary interactions and his analysis begins to morph from Positivist into cultural criticism.

Perhaps Professor Kopley's most dramatic discovery is that of Ebenezer Wheelwright as the author of the 1842 novel *The Salem Belle: A Tale of 1692*, a discovery that leads him not only to identify this work as a source for the final third of *The Scarlet Letter* but to make a case for references to Edenic and antinomian subtexts. His meticulous research is here again displayed and leads

him to a final chapter that intertwines the threads of his three sources. He discusses their shared themes of sin and guilt, and Hawthorne's transformation of these themes into a providential vision.

All too often, source studies are presented in a vacuum, but Kopley richly contextualizes his sources—linking, mixing, letting one comment upon another, and always making interpretive correspondences. Among the delights of this book are the myriad intersections of Poe, Hawthorne, Lowell, and Wheelwright in the literary world of antebellum American, with its wide range of aesthetic and intellectual concerns. Both scholars and students will find his appended “Bibliographical Overview” to be of great usefulness. This book shows Professor Kopley as a systematic, careful, and reliable reader who does not trade research for theoretical vogue and easy acclaim. He is, in short, a scholar, one who always builds his arguments on foundations of solid, painstaking, historical research.

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Roberto Cagliero, ed. *Fantastico Poe*. Verona: Ombre Corte, 2004. 305pp. € 18.00

In his introduction to this collection of nineteen essays, Roberto Cagliero deftly and succinctly surveys the history of Poe criticism, noting the shift from earlier psychoanalytic and post-structuralist analyses to more recent investigations of Poe's place in the history of American publishing and his writings' relation to discourses on slavery and national myth-making. The present volume offers students of Poe a rich diversity of critical approaches brought to bear on a broad range of the author's poetry, narrative and critical prose. The various essays demonstrate the continued vitality of Lacanian and Freudian readings, while emphasizing the wealth of insight provided by new historicism, cognitive anthropology, and analyses of the rhetoric of cultural alterity.

Cagliero has organized the essays thematically into sections on history, poetry, the short story, Italy, and the Arts, and the volume includes a useful bibliography of "Studies on Poe in Italy, 1960-2003," as well as reproductions of 40 fascinating images. The pieces included here are by necessity all quite brief, and while each is written with admirable clarity, a few selections (Monti's discussion of Alfonso Sastre's play about Poe's life and Golahny's piece on Alberto Martini's illustrations of Poe's work) are more description and summary than analysis. However, most readers are not likely to be familiar with the fascinating texts these critics discuss—the Spanish play from 1989-90 and the Italian pen-and-ink drawings from the early twentieth century—and so lengthier description is not unwarranted. Because of the brevity and diversity of the essays included, the collection provides a valuable survey of possible lines of inquiry. For example, the opening piece by Gerald J. Kennedy, translated into Italian as "Incubi nazionali di Poe," shows how Poe's work from 1844 critically, though clandestinely, engages the contemporary ideology of Manifest Destiny. Kennedy persuasively demonstrates how the motif of the cadaver becomes a metaphor for "the internal problems of the American body politic" and "the site of a symbolic vendetta against the violent appropriation of tribal lands" (26, 29). Kennedy presents a more developed version of this argument in "A Mania for Composition: Poe's Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building," *American Literary History* 17 (Spring 2005): 1-35. In contrast, Richard Kopley's intratextual study, "Poe e la memoria," leads readers through an impressive range of Poe's works, foregrounding the theme of memory and its links to pleasure, pain, and man's relation to the divine.

While the volume provides an excellent map of current itineraries in Poe studies for students and scholars, it also proves a valuable resource for courses on criticism and “theory” in general. Many of the contributors preface their analyses with succinct accounts of their methodological apparatus. Giovanni Bottiroli’s insightful investigation into “La logica del diviso in ‘William Wilson’” rehearses the salient principles of Lacan’s work, which are then brought to bear on Poe’s development of the motif of the double. More than simply an embodiment of the protagonist’s “super-ego,” the double, in Poe’s hands, “stages the ambivalence, the hatred toward the self, towards one’s inability to coincide with one’s I” (132). Readers unfamiliar with cognitive anthropology will find a useful introduction to this field’s relevancy for literary criticism in Francesco Ronzon’s summary of Gerald Edleman’s work in his “Ai limiti del possibile: Il Sovrannaturale in E. A. Poe tra letteratura e antropologia cognitiva.” Ronzon analyzes Poe’s depiction of the supernatural and invisible, focusing (1) on the “the connection with environmental indexes”—how the supernatural becomes a “material and immanent reality” through its presentation in “visible traces”—and (2) on the “socio-cultural experiences of readers”—specifically contemporary interest in spiritualism and exposure to voodoo through contact with the culture of African slaves (147). In her wittily entitled “Poe *spoetizzato*: l’esotismo tarchettiano,” Nicoletta Pireddu elucidates and deploys Said’s work on Orientalism in an analysis of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

The methodological shift described by Cagliero has been framed as an American reclaiming of Poe from the French. One of this volume’s major contributions is in offering Italian perspectives. For example, in her “Poesia fantastica: la scrittura in versi di Edgar Allan Poe,” Nicola Gardini pulls the interpretive lens back, as it were, to examine the interplay between Mallarmé’s “French” vision of Poe and William Carlos Williams’s insistence on the author’s “americanità.” Reading the substitution of “Italian” for “eternal” in the version of “For Someone in Paradise” that appears in “The Assigination,” Gardini elegantly proposes a poetic of “the dim,” an unfolding in the tension between the concrete and the ideal. Similarly, the above-mentioned essay by Pireddu sheds new light on *Pym* and other Poe works through a comparison with the Italian writer I. U. Tarchetti’s “Re di ventiquattrore” (“King for a Day,” published posthumously in 1869). Pireddu moves deftly from the specific images of black and white teeth employed by both writers to the larger question of cultural alterity. Ultimately, she argues that Tarchetti at best represents a kind of “kitsch” version of Poe, evacuated of

the irony through which Poe's writing "forces his culture to confront its own discontinuities" (164). Cagliero's own contribution, "Racconti del cuore. Lingua e traduzioni di 'The Tell-Tale Heart,'" uses Italian translations of "The Tell-Tale Heart" to reveal fundamental aspects of the original that might otherwise remain undetected. Focusing on the *rhythm* of text and exploiting to great effect the double meaning of "refrain," Cagliero convincingly demonstrates the narrator's failed attempt to become a poet: to control and transcend his individuality and to connect with the universal "heart" (113).

In her elegant study of "The Red Room," "Edgar Allan Poe: la stanza rossa," Bianca Tarozzi explores Poe's use of the color red, employing Hawthorne as a counterpoint. The color motif leads to a discussion of space and specifically of richly furnished rooms: "that which Poe describes is thus the internal chamber of the poet's dreams: defended by the curtains from the natural light, where the poetic imagination acts undisturbed by external reality" (64). "External reality" and "tyrannical time," however, seem to have caught up with the "poet eternally in flight from history" (66). The critical paths exemplified in this volume foreground the interplay of Poe's texts with their social, economic, and political *milieu*, and claim Poe as a source of creative inspiration for other artists. Pulling back the curtains of the "dream rooms," these studies shed a fascinating light on the works of "fantastico Poe."

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John May. *Poe & Fanny: A Novel*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2004. 323 pp. \$24.95.

John May is not a career academic but a Greensboro, NC, textile executive with degrees in English from University of North Carolina-Greensboro and Bennington College in Vermont. His extensive research for his first novel, *Poe & Fanny*, is evident in descriptions of antebellum New York streets, architectural and commercial landmarks, taverns, and fashions, as well as references to contemporaneous events such as the Millerite lunacy, Ole Bull's concerts, popular plays, literary soirees, and, significantly, the proliferation of political and literary periodicals. "Another new magazine," thinks N. P. Willis, after tipping and shooing away two Irish boys hawking *The Aristidean* outside his office (3). Sketching the literary culture of the 1840s, May uses as headnotes editorials from the *Broadway Journal* and the *New-York Mirror*, then coedited by Willis. May's vivid portrayal of Willis—ironic, more fastidious about manners than morals, irked by his reputation for triviality but determined to publish all that he could, intermittently generous but shallow—provides a context for the struggles of the title characters, who are equally passionate about poetry but who lack the editor's shrewdness.

Witness this early, telling description of "an odd pair" strolling toward the Battery: "Willis tall and a perfect cut of fashion in his ten-button, double-breasted overcoat, top hat glistening in the sun," tapping his walking stick on the brick pathway; "Eddy shorter, his shoulders bearing the slope of misfortune, and his unpressed suit showing wear at the seams. He never carried a walking stick, considering the habit a silly affectation of the Upper Ten, and his top hat was as dull as a buggy harness" (35). May captures not only the men's demeanors but also Poe's typical deprecation of things he cannot be, have, or do. Not much later, during his celebrity as author of "The Raven," he briefly carries a walking stick. But he remains an outsider and eventually must acknowledge that Frances Osgood, who brings what he calls "magic" into his hectic existence, cannot redeem him from loneliness and shame inconceivable to Willis.

Covering the same ground as twentieth-century Poe biographers and John Evangelist Walsh's *Plumes in the Dust: The Love Affair of Edgar Allan Poe and Fanny Osgood* (1980), May allows himself to "speculate" knowledgeably about "what really happened" between Poe and Osgood (299). That is a creative writer's prerogative, though readers of historical fiction tend to expect responsible

interpretations of known facts. This historical novel remains generally faithful to Poe's documented biography, taking license in ways that reduce complications without substantially damaging the "truth" of the portrait—for instance, the hostile sub-editor called "Hiram Stoddard" in Chs. 1, 3, and 21 is a composite of Hiram Fuller and Richard Henry Stoddard.

Poe & Fanny is not a reliable source of information about Frances Osgood, however. May calls her sister Elizabeth Harrington "Anna" and invents a brother, John, to manage her money and curb her independence. Osgood is not, as May alleges, "all but forgotten" (299)—not at least among Poe scholars and students of nineteenth-century women's poetry. Granted, novelists should not be held to the same standards as historians. Yet, since Osgood's poetry has only recently been recovered, it is disheartening to read a narrative that attends almost exclusively to the few poems she submitted to and wrote for Poe (those published in 1845-46 are presented in an appendix). Since there is as yet no substantial scholarly biography of Osgood, it is frustrating to see "Fanny" acting at times as literary historians have long cast her, as the forward, modestly talented little flirt who, after all, learned to care for Edgar Allan Poe. Again, in my judgment, May underestimates the restraints of nineteenth-century ladyhood when he has the nearly nine-months pregnant Mary Willis attend the theater, or when he makes Osgood initiate kissing and touching (once in a hotel hallway!) with men other than her estranged husband. I recognize, however, that this bold, liberated Osgood sets in motion several chains of events necessary for the historically based plot and to speculate on the question "Who fathered Fanny Fay Osgood?" More important, May's portrayal succeeds in realizing her as a person as no scholarly study has been able to do. Overall, May's adjustment of facts and anecdotes enables him to invent comic scenes and suspenseful adventures, as when Frances tells her husband, Samuel Stillman Osgood, how to paint Edgar's portrait while he remains unaware of the depth and complexity of her feelings for Poe, or when Willis prevails upon Poe to escort runaway slave Harriet Jacobs to Five Points, out of the reach of bounty hunters haunting the Astor House.

Poe & Fanny, then, imaginatively recreates a memorable year—from late December 1844 to January 1846, months that saw the international celebrity of "The Raven," the Longfellow War, Poe's lecture on American poetry before the New York Historical Society, Osgood's residence apart from her artist husband, her contributions to the *Broadway Journal* during Poe's editorship, his poems in response to hers as they carried on a literary romance in print, their private

meetings and letters, Poe's disastrous reading at the Boston Lyceum (a scandal compounded by his claim that he deliberately "quizzed" the Frogpondians), his struggle to raise financial support for *The Stylus*, Osgood's pregnancy in the winter of 1845-46, rumors about her relationship with Poe which lead to their parting, her reconciliation with Sam, and Poe's erratic efforts to make amends to "Sissy" (his consumptive wife, Virginia). The major players—Poe, Osgood, Willis, and "Muddy" (Poe's mother-in-law, Maria Clemm)—frequently come alive because events are narrated not from their points of view but in the third person. Using free indirect discourse, May exposes their pockets of ignorance, rationalizations, and half-recognized motives along with their conscious strategies. The problems of the two central characters are shown to be rooted both in their stars and in themselves.

As for the star-crossings, Osgood and Poe are chronically short of money and frustrated by others' failures and interference. Making an honest living by one's pen takes steady hard work, self-promotion, and a thick skin. In the nineteenth-century publishing world May recreates, competition is fierce, cliques can make or break reputations, and corrupt reviewing is commonplace. Editors and publishers do not pay contributors promptly. Not even the facile, well-connected Willis feels financially secure. Both protagonists of *Poe & Fanny* have marriages that are unsatisfying in ways they could not predict when they married for love. In 1845 they choose, for different reasons, to become entangled in a romance that is hopeless and, in Poe's mind, a cruel betrayal of Sissy.

Able to confide in Osgood as in no one else, Poe encourages her to believe that he needs her. Meanwhile, he frequently succumbs to his craving for alcohol in an effort to drown his rage, to overcome debilitating self-doubts, and to relieve a conscience troubled by assorted misdeeds. When he stumbles home reeking of liquor, a surprisingly spunky Sissy refuses to talk to him or sleep beside him. They have not made love for a year. He terrifies himself with a dream of Sissy in her coffin, men "gaz[ing] upon [her] as they might gaze at the portrait of a woman by a great artist, admiring her beauty and amazing pallor and stillness." Once the dream coffin is lowered into the ground, Poe imagines himself inside it, hearing "the muted sound of earth falling on earth" and then "a faint static pulsing like the distant roar of a furnace" (190). Though not completely lacking in self-knowledge (he names his own perverseness), May's Poe denies that he is powerless to resist alcohol. Sometimes he wonders why he is unpopular; he asks himself about his own tomahawk-style reviewing: "Why was he always so

critical? Willis didn't seem to notice, but others did" (85). (Nevertheless, Willis does notice, and Poe tardily perceives how Willis uses him.) Eddy, as he is called at home, is cowardly, "corrupt" by his own standards, and undisciplined enough to swear at his mother-in-law (164). This portrayal anticipates the unflattering 1848 daguerreotype of Poe's haggard face, eyelid drooping.

As May characterizes her, Frances Osgood is a sensitive, talented, intelligent woman with literary ambitions and a deep appreciation for great poetry. Dazzled by Poe's genius, she assertively claims his friendship, mentorship, and more—generously or idealistically exaggerating his soul's affinity with hers, discounting rumors about his drunkenness and dishonesty, concealing from herself that their furtive "friendship" damages Edgar, Sissy, her own family, and herself. Having fallen in love with Poe, she breaks off with a wealthy potential second husband (in this novel, Ned Thomas, based on the actual New York merchant who repeated a charge that Poe had committed forgery). Although at times he sustains the Griswold image of Osgood as Poe's good angel, May enlivens her with sexual desire, resourcefulness in fibbing, unsaintly anger at Elizabeth Ellet, and occasional swearing in private—the latter a behavior I doubt that the consciously lady-like Osgood would have indulged in. Then again, during 1845-46 she suffered no lack of reasons to swear.

Untrammelled by the expectations of scholarly prose, May can give "Fanny" and "Edgar" physical presence. Fanny poses herself on staircases and fusses over her clothing, adjusting her neckline in light of her plans for the people who will be gazing at her. Sleeves rolled up on a hot July day, she is embarrassed to have Poe see her blackberry-stained fingernails. Edgar waits for Tom Chivers to leave the house so that he can use the chamber pot. Asleep with his head on an oyster bar, he "snort[s] cracker crumbs that [catch] in the web of his mustache" (9). John May has created an engaging novel that should appeal to a wide audience. I hope he continues to write. No doubt he could make a compelling story of the collision of Rufus Griswold and Elizabeth Ellet.

Mary DeJong
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Smithsonian Legendary Performers: Edgar Allan Poe. Cedar Knolls, NJ: Radio Spirits, 2004. CD \$33.23. Audio Cassette \$23.73.

In association with the Smithsonian Institution, Radio Spirits has released a collection of twelve radio adaptations of works by Edgar Allan Poe. These classics of old time radio originally aired from the 1930s to the 1950s on programs such as *Suspense*, *The CBS Radio Workshop*, *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*, and *The Weird Circle*. The broadcasts feature such popular personalities as Vincent Price, Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff, and Agnes Moorehead—several of whom also starred in adaptations of Poe’s works on the big screen. The 32-page booklet that accompanies the collection provides background on both the radio plays and the Poe stories on which they are based, as well as photographs and points of trivia that the author, Stephanie Fitzgerald, dubs “Gory Details.”

Poe fans should not purchase the collection expecting literal adaptations of Poe’s works. Time constraints and dramatic license led producers to alter the tales and stories, sometimes radically. For instance, “The Cask of Amontillado,” which aired on *The Hall of Fantasy* in 1953, specifies Montresor’s motive for taking revenge on Fortunato. In Poe’s tale, Montresor’s motive derives from his rather indefinite charge that Fortunato insulted him. His ambiguity on this point forces the reader to suspect that, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge says of Shakespeare’s Iago, Montresor may be guilty of “the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity.” The same cannot be said of the radio adaptation. Fortunato so openly and boorishly insults Montresor and his family that the listener cannot help but yearn for his “immolation,” as Poe puts it. In short, the clarification of Montresor’s motive does not ruin the tale, but it does make the main character less psychologically complex, arguably a necessity given the time constraints of a weekly radio program.

A more radical adaptation is the version of “The Tell-Tale Heart” that aired on *Inner Sanctum Mysteries* in 1941. “A faithful retelling of the 2000-word tale would have lasted but a heartbeat,” writes Fitzgerald, dubiously, “so producers added some new wrinkles to the story” (20). In this freewheeling adaptation, Boris Karloff plays the recently institutionalized Simon, a man who possesses an acute sense of hearing: “I can hear the grass growing, the sap rising in the trees. I can hear stars moving in their courses. I can hear things that no man ever heard before.” Simon takes up residence with a man named Oliver, played by

Everett Sloane, whose eyesight is as keen as Simon's hearing. Things proceed vaguely, as in Poe's tale, but the drama's denouement includes an ironic twist that has nothing to do with Poe. As it turns out, Simon is deaf and Oliver is blind. Other than this clever point of irony, however, the only real draw of this play is Karloff's sonorous voice.

Still, several of the adaptations are first-rate. Vincent Price, for instance, stars in a particularly good version of "The Pit and the Pendulum." Broadcast on *Suspense* in 1957, this adaptation flows freely from the pen of John Dickson Carr, the master of locked-room murder mysteries. According to the "Gory Details," it aired on *Suspense* on four different occasions between 1943 and 1959, starring at various times Henry Hull, Jose Ferrer, and Raymond Burr in the lead role of Jean, a man sentenced to death by the Inquisition. As was the case with "The Cask of Amontillado," this play also clarifies motive. Jean, a soldier in General LaSalle's army, is imprisoned by the Inquisition for firing upon a church filled with munitions, a reason that develops the implicit tension between the Inquisition and the French army, which exists only peripherally in Poe's tale. Significantly, the drama uses much of Poe's original language, opening with the first line of the tale: "I was sick—sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me." The drama also employs fanciful dialogues between Jean and his wife, and Jean and the Grand Inquisitor, which help build dramatic tension and increase listener sympathy for Jean.

Two unexpected adaptations in the collection are "Metzengerstein" and "Never Bet the Devil Your Head." The former, broadcast on *Columbia Workshop* in 1937, includes a "menacing score" by Bernard Herrman, who also wrote the theme for *Suspense* and scored *Citizen Kane* and *Psycho*. This play expands on the original tale by developing the heartlessness of the Metzengersteins, especially the cruelty of the young baron. As the old baron, who figures prominently in the play, says while lying on his death bed, "If I thought the worst that I could think about my son, I would still be flattering him." Nevertheless, the fundamental elements of the tale survive, including the feud between the Metzengersteins and the Berlifitzings, the tapestry, and the supernatural steed.

"Never Bet the Devil Your Head" was an unlikely choice for a 1957 *CBS Radio Workshop* presentation. According to the "Gory Details," the tale's conclusion,

in which the narrator disinters the freshly buried corpse of his friend and sells it “for dog’s meat” to recoup the funeral expenses, would have been too much for network censors (17). Still, this play aired with much of Poe’s mordant wit intact and, in doing so, tested censors’ tolerance. Fitzgerald points out that some of the show’s language bordered on offensive: “The narrator’s repetition of Toby’s last name—‘Dammit, what are you about?’ and ‘Toby ... Dammit!’—most likely created quite a stir” (16).

Other adaptations include “The Black Cat” (starring Peter Lorre), “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Purloined Letter” (starring Adolphe Menjou), “The Gold-Bug” (hosted by Maureen O’Hara), “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.” One additional show is of particular interest: a 1941 *Cavalcade of America* presentation on Poe’s life. Not historically accurate, Fitzgerald explains, the play dramatizes “what listeners might *assume* about Poe’s life rather than actual facts” (28). The show is worth listening to, though, because, as Fitzgerald points out, it illustrates how Poe “struggled with tragedy, disillusionment and personal demons throughout his life” (29). Thus, listeners receive an emotional portrait of Poe rather than a literal one. Bill Johnstone, who starred in *The Shadow*, plays publisher George Graham with “malicious glee,” to use Fitzgerald’s phrase (31), and Agnes Moorehead and Jeanette Nolan appear as literary groupies who pester Poe with inanities. Radio veteran Karl Swenson plays Poe. Also, the drama makes creative use of snippets from “Annabel Lee,” “The Raven,” and “MS. Found in a Bottle.”

Despite some liberties, this collection offers an entertaining selection that should please Poe fans overall. In fact, listeners will find that the best of these programs actually adapt Poe’s material more closely than do films of the same era, such as Robert Florey’s *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) and Roger Corman’s *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960). Such films, generally, are more likely to alter Poe’s tales than radio adaptations because of aesthetic considerations and the greater emphasis on formulas and conventions that film audiences expect. *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, for instance, alters Poe’s tale by incorporating German expressionist techniques and the horror convention of the evil scientist and his subhuman associate. Likewise, *The Fall of the House of Usher* adds the formula of the star-crossed lovers to Poe’s atmosphere of decay to create a vehicle for Vincent Price, whose performance as the pathological Roderick Usher critic Leonard Maltin calls a “tour de force.” A simpler medium, radio depends

on comparatively straightforward dialogue and sound effects to create drama, and many of these programs, in addition to being based on Poe's tales, reveal old-time radio at its uncomplicated best, with eerie organ music, sound effects from rain to orangutan grunts, and quality performances by well-known actors.

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Poe In Cyberspace

The New Google-Amazon Overload

Is it high time to turn off our computers? Have wired campuses created a critical impasse of “information overload”? In “Knowing When to Log Off” in the 22 April 2005 *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jeffrey R. Young asks whether we now devote so much time and attention to contemporary email, online databases, and electronic texts that we are in serious danger of undermining our traditional habits of reading, researching, and thinking. However individual Poe scholars respond to these questions, it should be clear that the rapid and near-universal spread of digital literacy during the last decade has altered modern print culture—just as that print culture previously transformed medieval manuscript culture and even as writing itself had once threatened classical speech and memory. Surely the novelty of quick and free scholarly information has not yet worn off, and computer addiction (and its opposite, computer avoidance) is far from unknown. In this column, however, I would like to balance the extremes of logging on too much and never logging on at all. Is it possible to log on intelligently, to enjoy the benefits, and to avoid the dangers? The first step is to recognize that Poe in cyberspace has expanded in extraordinary ways within the last few months, thanks to innovations by the two big players, Google and Amazon.

The ultimate tribute to the success of Google as a search engine is that “google” is now a common verb in conversation. A recent search for “Edgar Allan Poe” on Google produced an astonishing report of 1,270,000 hits on Google and a similar 1,250,000 on Yahoo. The same search on the following day produced 872,000 hits on Google and 1,210,000 on Yahoo. But these numbers have little practical meaning apart from bragging rights. For one thing, if one could look at 100 sites per day, it would take 24 years to browse the growing Google offering. For another, only a tiny fraction of these hits can be accessed in any one session, since the browser limits itself to 805 hits on Google and 979 on Yahoo. In practice most searchers confine themselves to examining a few dozen hits on the first few screens. Nevertheless, the million potential hits can be reduced by narrowing the search to “Edgar Allan Poe criticism” (322,000 hits), “Edgar Allan Poe Eureka criticism” (4,400 hits), or “Edgar Allan Poe Eureka postmodern criticism” (206 hits).

To avoid the many amateur and redundant Poe sites, instead of *www.google.com*, try the more recent service, *scholar.google.com*, which limits itself to printed, academic sites. Here the results would be “Edgar Allan Poe” (2,900 hits), “Edgar Allan Poe criticism” (892 hits), “Edgar Allan Poe Eureka criticism” (34 hits), or “Edgar Allan Poe Eureka postmodern criticism” (7 hits)—these much more manageable results prove that less is more. What you will find will vary in nature: it may be a full text, a description, or just a citation. In any event, Google is obviously trying to be more than a better Yahoo. It strives to be the most powerful search engine available by overcoming its initial limitations as a global word index or concordance, which can tell you where the words “Edgar, Allan, Poe, Eureka, postmodern, and criticism” appear together on one page but that still does not respond to the implied question, “What is the state of postmodern criticism of Edgar Allan Poe’s *Eureka*?” To surmount these issues, Google has added search prefixes, such as “book” for publications, “define” for word definitions, and “link” for site addresses. In addition, it understands common synonyms: type in “(~child)” and you will get results for child, children, kids, childhood, youth, etc. In addition, Google can save your display preferences: if 10-hit screens are too skimpy for you, then increase your personal default up to 100 hits. So much for the old Google. By the way, if you want to see what Google is up to, look at *labs.google.com* for new features in Google such as search history, maps, videos, desktop search, wireless, Froogle, Blogger, and Picasa picture editor.

The new Google, perhaps the Google of the future, was announced in fall 2004 in the form of the Google Library Project, a collaboration with Michigan, Harvard, Stanford, and Oxford Universities as well as the New York Public Library to scan and then to make freely available on the internet the texts of 15 million books, all out of copyright, all printed before 1923 in the United States and before the 1900s in Europe. Google will bear the costs, about \$10 per volume, and the project will take about five years to complete. Google will accept the books themselves with permissions and then scan them, returning both book and a digital copy to the originating library, or it will accept the library’s digital scans in the popular PDF format. Many questions remain to be answered, however. Will entire books be made available, or only portions according to some quota? Since PDF files can be quite large (a sample 11-page magazine article I tested was half a megabyte), what sort of download capability will be necessary to access a complete book, and how long would it take? Although conversion of images to electronic text by OCR (optical character recognition)

for purposes of searching, copying, or printing is a standard feature of Adobe Acrobat's PDF software, the accuracy of such texts is always questionable, especially where the printed originals have uneven, dirty, unusual, or complicated typefaces—as is often the case in older editions, precisely the kind to be used in Google's library project. Moreover, OCR cannot distinguish the author's end-of-line hyphens from the typesetter's end-of-line hyphens, causing problems for the textual scholar when the syllables created by the latter happen to make sense as words. Electronic texts created in this way will likely have links to book vendors as well as to some sort of advertising.

It is a compliment to Google that a whole industry has sprung up around it. The site *www.logoogle.com* sells Google books (there are now fourteen) and merchandise. For the technically minded, *www.kuro5hin.org/story/2005//95844/59875* gives hints on how Google uses "cookies" to identify its users, explains how they can be faked to extend results, and suggests ways in which Google responds differently to book titles with and without quotation marks.

To stay competitive, Yahoo has exploited the structural weakness of Google as a word index by adding subtopics as an editorial feature. The Poe subtopics I encountered in one recent search included: biography, poems, The Raven, short stories, pictures, quotes, The Tell Tale Heart, criticism, Annabel Lee, works, The Fall of the House of Usher, books, bibliography, Annabelle Lee, death, literary criticism, information, The Pit and the Pendulum, life, timeline, To Helen, history, facts, Eldorado, info, Masque of the Red Death, critics, The Purloined Letter, museum, themes, autobiography, The Murders in the Rue Morgue, essays, The Cast of Amontillado, Lenore, The Black Cat, complete works, awards, analysis, The Bells, The Gold Bug, reviews, when born, critiques, A Dream, literary works, when did Poe die, short biography, the sleeper, writing style, images, obituary, lesson plans, newspaper article, interview, Ligeia, literature, and Hop Frog. This collection still retained a somewhat miscellaneous character. Nevertheless, an attractive feature of Yahoo remains its directory capability: "Poe" produced 78 hits.

It was Amazon, not Google, that took the lead in the major new projects. In October 2003, about a year before Google announced its Library Project, Amazon launched its "Search Inside the Book" project (SITB), initially covering 190,000 books from 190 publishers. Here sample pages of books still in copyright are offered gratis on the internet. Although conventional wisdom presumes that

making electronic copies freely available will cut print-book sales, early reports are that the procedure actually stimulated rather than hurt book sales. The Amazon home page is unusually complex, being one of the most interactive user interfaces of any web site—energetically using “cookies” to identify visitors and thereby to customize information according to the pages opened on previous visits, to purchases previously made, and to purchases made by other visitors. Consequently, it may be easy to overlook the Search Inside the Book feature. Or if you do explore it, the display may seem similar to copyright-observant page-tease policies elsewhere, which are limited to browsing the title page and Table of Contents and to showing a vendor’s description or responses by other readers.

Search Inside the Book is genuinely different in how it surmounts the supposedly insurmountable copyright barrier. You may use SITB on the particular book page itself or from anywhere elsewhere on *Amazon.com*. Start by searching for a distinctive character, place, word, or phrase. The internal concordance will return a list of places where the search string appears in KWIC (key word in context) format, surrounded by two lines of text, including the page number, if necessary showing multiple books titles. Such a search for snippets can be useful in research to verify page numbers, to locate alternate instances, and to see context. But here is where SITB gets interesting: each of these concordance items also serves as a link to its own entire page in PDF format. Even if the reader is supposedly limited initially to 20% of a book’s pages within a given month, this ability is a major innovation in electronic research, despite the possibility of minor differences between pages as images and pages as electronic text. So SITB becomes a way for researchers to sample pages of books still under copyright. And for those whose budget matters more than author royalties, Amazon also provides links to sellers of used copies of books, which are occasionally offered for little more than the price of postage.

As Amazon itself was quick to realize, however, the bazaar atmosphere of *amazon.com* was not conducive to research or academic book sales. So it launched an informational site, *www.a9.com*, a must-see address. Through A9, Amazon distributes licensed electronic informational material from existing channels (there were 161 of varying significance in April 2005). The user can select whether to display these channels as full screens, shared columns, or not at all. In my first visit I was identified as an Amazon book buyer and found the screen divided among five channels: the web, SITB, images, movies, and reference. The web channel came from Google, Search Inside the Book(r) from

Amazon.com, Images from Google, movies from Internet Movie Database, and reference from GuruNet (definitions), *The American Heritage Dictionary*, *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, and a Chronology by Daniel S Burt. On your first visit, do take time to read about the features of A9.

I added the optional channel for Books and hid some of the others. Searching for "Edgar Allan Poe," I was not able to determine the order in which the 12,130 claimed Poe titles were displayed, the vast majority of which were of no interest to me at the time. Then the first title to strike my eye was the 1997 reissue of A. H. Quinn's 1941 biography. Using Search Inside the Book I found references to Lowell (79), Longfellow (44), and T. D. English (10). I then discovered that these search hits also acted as links or a reverse concordance to entire pages that could be read as graphical images. At first I assumed that only older material was available in this way. But then I found two useful titles from the Library of America, *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews* (1984) and *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry and Tales* (1984), as well as *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Eric W. Carlson (1987). From the 1990s I found *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849* by Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson (1995) and *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* by Terence Whalen (1999). Two very recent titles that struck my eye were *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (2001) and *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Kevin J. Hayes (2002).

Evidently, A9 and Amazon were integrated in their use of Search Inside the Book. I could also use Amazon to focus on a particular title and then access SITB from there. It is also evident from A9's use of Google channels that Amazon and Google have discovered synergy in dividing the electronic information spectrum largely along the fault lines of copyright protection. In addition, A9 is cooperating with AOL, which owns Netscape, since an A9 toolbar is available in Mozilla. I only had time to glance at the research channels in A9, but it was apparent that they used high quality sources suitable for university and professional use. Unlike Microsoft's *Encarta*, originally based on *Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia*, A9 uses *The American Heritage Dictionary*, *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, and Daniel S Burt's excellent chronology. In the current atmosphere, other major new projects are announced almost monthly. In April 2005, the Library of Congress and National Endowment for the Humanities announced their sponsorship of the National Digital Newspaper Project, initially to cover U. S. newspapers published from 1900 to 1910. In collaboration with

the holdings of the Universities of Virginia, Florida, Utah, California (Riverside), and Kentucky (Research Foundation), as well as the New York Public Library, the project will create PDF files and etexts and may be expanded to the period 1836-1922.

Of course, it takes more than Google and Amazon to make a world. Two catalogs of topic-specific search engines and databases are *www.GeniusFind.com* and *www.Beaucoup.com* — the latter featuring *www.beaucoup.com/3refeng.html*, a source for search engines and databases that specialize in literature. *AskJeeves.com* has improved much during the last year or two, specializing in answers to natural language questions. Another natural-language answer engine for queries is *www.brainboost.com*. The site *www.InfoPlease.com*—evidently a shortening of Information, Please!—contains almanac-based information. Professional standards are maintained on *www.lii.org*, the Librarians' Index to the Internet, which has detailed entries, each signed and dated, featuring the unusual use of Library of Congress subject headings, with links to similarly classified material. An open-text encyclopedia generated by users is *www.wikipedia.com* — if you don't like an entry, edit it yourself! A very useful compendium of tips on web information services is *www.batesinfo.com/tip.html*—where I found several of these leads.

This essay is also available with live links at *andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrich/poe/*.

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Marginalia

***Poe's Heart and the Mountain Climber* by Richard Restak.** Students of Edgar Allan Poe's works and influence might well wonder why a prominent neurologist and neuropsychiatrist would link Poe to a "mountain climber" in his title to a new Random House book issued for the general reader. A hint of the connection is provided by the book's subtitle: "Exploring the effect of anxiety on our brains and our culture" and also by the upper and lower cover illustrations of Poe above a fully geared climber triumphantly touching the tip of a mountain peak. Restak is using the same tantalizing approach he employed in his 2001 book, *Mozart's Brain and the Fighter Pilot*, the subtitle of which, "Unleashing Your Brain's Potential," refers to how humans confront and control situations of widespread stress. There, too, he pictures on the cover two symbols: the upper shows Mozart's head above the cockpit of a fighter plane. Mozart's astonishing achievement of reproducing a complicated Baroque choral work after only two hearings is then imperfectly joined thematically to the Dutch army's attempt to increase the attention spans of their fighter pilots (68-69, 182-84, 141-42).

In *Poe's Heart*, the author justifies the pictorial juxtapositions by first declaring, "the most artful depictions of anxiety can be found in the works of Edgar Allan Poe" (36-37). From his favorite story, "The Tell-Tale Heart," Restak cites the narrator's angst over the old man's "vulture" eye, as well as the victim's anxiety preceding the murder itself. This situation leads to a "new anxiety" when a neighbor overhears the old man's "heart beats" pervading the house, heartbeats that grow even louder when the police respond to an overheard scream. But his anguish about these heartbeats—his own, of course—becomes an intolerable "agony" stopped only by his confession. Instead of citing other Poe uses of anxiety themes, as in "The Imp of the Perverse," Restak contrasts the "The Tell-Tale Heart" with Dickens's depiction of Mr. Snagsby's "anxiety disorder" and "sense of foreboding and worry" in *Bleak House*—"less severe" than in Poe's character but "equally pervasive" (38-39, 42). Later, Restak justifies a mountain climber's egoistic "anxiety" as a type of super-confidence or surging challenge to fear and danger (173-78). The author could have readily cited many instances in Poe's writings, as in *Pym*, for instance.

These books are fascinating for the wide scope of their examples, drawn from multiple arts as well as from many types of mental conditions and commonplace experiences. His thirty or more published works, all well written and highly articulate, will likely appeal to those who recognize the practical psychology portrayed in Poe's literary works.

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Abstracts for PSA Sessions
at the 16th ALA Annual Convention
in Boston, MA
26-29 May 2005

Session 9d. Out-sourcing Poe, Making Poe Connections

27 May 2005, 9:30-10:50 am

Presiding: Noelle A. Baker, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

(1) “Poe’s Detective Fiction: A Tool for Teaching about Race and the Construction of Racial Identity in U. S. Popular Culture Forms,” *Tish Crawford, Bucknell University*

No abstract received.

(2) “Democratizing and Masculinizing Poe’s Deadly Game: The Creation and Refinement of Hard-Boiled Fiction,” *John Gruesser, Kean University*

No abstract received.

(3) “‘Eyes that Behold’: Poe, Daguerreotypes, and the Science of Vision,” *Laura Saltz, Colby College*

In his enthusiastic review of the new medium of daguerreotypy, Poe dubs it “perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science.” But despite Poe’s extensive and well-documented borrowings from the scientific writings of some of the most important figures in the development of photography—Sir John Herschel, Sir David Brewster, and Sir Humphrey Davy—references to photography per se are virtually absent from Poe’s tales. This paper seeks to understand the significance of this absence by analyzing the visual epistemology of two tales, “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall” and “The Domain of Arnheim.” Although different in subject and tone, the stories share an understanding of visual experience as rooted in the body and sensation—in “the [human] eyes which . . . behold” the earth’s landscapes. Drawing on the work of Jonathan Crary, I connect Poe’s representations of vision to a larger scientific and cultural shift (epitomized especially in Brewster’s work) in the understanding of vision as subjective and embodied rather than universal and transcendent. For Crary, photography—with its links to the objectivizing camera obscura—is

marginal to this shift. However, by demonstrating that photography was commonly understood through the discourse of “natural magic,” which emphasized the dual roles of science and perception in the production of optical wonders, I argue both that early photography was consistent with subjective models of vision and that Poe’s use of these models connects his texts to a photographic aesthetic, despite photography’s literal absence in his tales.

Session 12h. Problems and Solutions in Teaching Poe

27 May, 2005, 2:00-3:20 pm

Presiding: Mary DeJong, Penn State Altoona

(1) “Taking Poe Seriously,” J. T. Barbarese, Rutgers-Camden

Poe’s shorter lyrics, so often overshadowed by his longer narrative work in prose and poetry, are valuable evidence of Poe’s struggle with the Romantic tradition and specifically Wordsworth over the value of childhood, the nature of the child, and the restorative power of imagination itself. Although Poe’s indebtedness to Romantic idealism is never in doubt, he was consciously aware of the counterpressure of the classical tradition and remained profoundly skeptical, a stance that contributed to the evolution of American Romanticism. Read in its entirety, Poe’s work makes a subtle difference in and a greater contribution to the way American literature carried on its conversation with British Romanticism. The impact of one poem in particular, “The Raven,” is both antagonistic and indispensable.

(2) “‘The gross but common error of compounding the unusual with the abstruse’: Reconsidering Poe’s Place in the Antebellum Survey,” Duncan Faherty, Queens College, CUNY

Most traditional studies of American literary history—and thus most undergraduate surveys—figure Poe as an anomaly in the development of U.S. literary history. My paper seeks to display the “legitimate results” of presenting in a survey of antebellum U.S. literature Poe’s sensational tales as born from “legitimate sources.” By charting the connections between Poe’s tales and his social nexus, I question his often marginal position in such survey courses. In attending to Poe’s narratives as social texts in the classroom, an instructor can create a counternarrative to traditional histories, which posit national literature as evidence of seamless cultural development. By treating Poe’s texts

as registers of social practices, we open up areas of inquiry into literary history instead of providing students with a set of preformulated questions. In thinking through Poe's legitimate terror in the classroom, my goal is to make students dissatisfied with uncomplicated approaches that seek to pigeonhole his work as simply "timeless." Reading Poe's tales against the cultural contexts of late Jacksonian democracy, I will define techniques and strategies to register the possible connections between the legitimate "terror of the soul" and the flux of identify that ensued from the ceaseless political and social changes of the period. By emphasizing contextualization of subject matter as a means of extending close readings, we can encourage students to engage in the messy, probing, and ultimately productive work of active reading and thick description. When plotting America's literary past, we too often repeat what Dupin calls "the gross but common error of confounding the unusual with the abstruse." By refashioning our relationship with Poe's work, we can readdress how that misapprehension has distorted the shape of undergraduate survey courses. By asking students to consider Poe's tales as social texts, they will encounter the uncertainties of the past (and the uncertainties of academic readings as well) and will potentially develop a deeper appreciation for how art can function as cultural commentary. Ultimately, such an approach will lead students toward more nuanced reading and writing practices.

(3) "Edgar Allan Poe: From Page to Stage," *Rebecca Jaroff and Domenick Scudera, Ursinus College*

Our paper details an interdisciplinary project that incorporated Scudera's stage adaptation of several of Poe's most popular works into Jaroff's American literature class. Scudera's play *Poe on Poe* focused on "The Raven," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Philosophy of Composition." Students in Jaroff's class read these works as they normally would, discussed dramatizing them with Scudera, who also directed the play, and finally attended the performance. Their reactions were inspiring. In one scene, students watched the character of Poe explain how "The Raven" was composed during a comic exchange with the actors performing the poem, who improvised alternative and inferior versions of the classic. As one student observed, "the close and interactive relation of the two worlds (what's in Poe's head and what's in Poe's work) really makes this production unique." Students also observed that "poetry came alive in this production" and that watching the

play “expanded and enlightened my understanding” of Poe. Naturally, the production cannot be performed every semester; however, we have created a classroom exercise in which students create their own poems using the principles from “Philosophy” and then perform “The Raven” using the play’s script. While not as complete an experience as watching the actual play, these students experience the difficulty and challenge of poetic composition, and gain a deeper appreciation of Poe’s language and technique as they engage in performance.

**Transatlanticism in American Literature:
Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe**

**Oxford, England
July 13-16, 2006**

**Sponsored by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, the Nathaniel
Hawthorne Society, and the Poe Studies Association**

**Hosted by the Rothermere American Institute, Oxford University, with
accommodations at nearby St. Catherine's College.**

The conference organizers encourage proposals for papers that discuss Emerson, Hawthorne, or Poe in terms of transatlantic literary culture in their era (for instance, questions of transatlantic travel, influence, slavery, the Civil War, marketing, reception, and copyright). We also welcome proposals relating the three authors to each other or to their British/European contemporaries, as well as proposals focusing on any topic related to Emerson, Hawthorne, or Poe in these contexts.

Some possibilities: What friendships and misunderstandings do we find among writers on either side of the Atlantic? How did Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe read Britain and Europe and how did the British and Europeans read them? Do cultural nationalism and national mythologies play a divisive or more complex role among them? Does a colonial relationship persist among representatives of British and U. S. culture? In what relation to ongoing colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean? How do these authors define class difference, or conservative and radical positions, in comparison with their British/European counterparts? What attracted Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe more to some British/European writers than to others? How have these affinities shaped (or how might they alter) the way we conceptualize “our” authors, “their” authors, and even these national literatures? What is the afterlife of the nineteenth-century transatlantic encounter in popular or academic culture of the present day?

Please send 1-2 page abstracts for 20-minute papers to Sam Coale, 39 Pratt Street, Providence, RI 02906 or samcoale@cox.net. The deadline for submission is September 15, 2005.

All conference participants must be members of at least one of the sponsoring author societies at the time of registration.

For other information about the conference, contact Rosemary Fisk at rmfisk@samford.edu.

PSA Matters

From Scott Peeples, President: I'd like to encourage everyone in the Poe Studies Association to consider proposing a paper for the July 2006 conference the PSA is co-sponsoring with the Hawthorne and Emerson Societies. The conference theme, "Transatlanticism in American Literature: Emerson, Hawthorne, Poe," should encourage thinking about Poe in a number of contexts, including the European literary traditions Poe responded to, the transatlantic print culture of the mid-nineteenth century, American contemporaries such as Hawthorne and Emerson, and Poe's legacy in European literature. All proposals related to Poe, Emerson, or Hawthorne will be considered, but the program committee encourages work that reflects the conference theme in some way. We're very excited about the collaboration among the three author societies, and about our location in Oxford, England, at the Rothermere American Institute and nearby St. Catherine's College. Please see the call for papers on p. 79 of this issue of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*.

Attendance was impressive at both of the PSA's sessions at the Modern Language Association meeting in Philadelphia, as were the papers. I'd like to thank Richard Fusco for putting those panels together. I hope to see many of you at our sessions at the American Literature Association conference in Boston. Both sessions, as well as our annual business meeting, are scheduled for Friday, May 27.

If you'll forgive me for stating the obvious, the Poe Studies Association is only as strong as its members are involved, so please continue to participate by maintaining your membership, by attending and reading at our panels and conferences, and by submitting your work to *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*. You might also consider some other ways to help our organization, such as asking your home institution's library to subscribe to the *Review*, encouraging colleagues interested in Poe to join the PSA, and sharing your ideas with me and other members of the executive board. The business meeting at ALA is one place to do that, but feel free to contact me with suggestions or questions at peepless@cofc.edu at any time.

From Barbara Cantalupo, Vice-President: The PSA panels for the December 2004 MLA Convention in Washington, D.C., follow. Abstracts for the papers will be published in the fall 2005 issue of this journal.

Panel I: “Poe in Place”

Chair: Barbara Cantalupo, Penn State Lehigh Valley

- (1) John E. Reilly, Emeritus, College of the Holy Cross, “‘We write this with no books before us’: Poe and Street Paving”
- (2) Susan Amper, Bronx Community College, CUNY, “Why *Will* You Say That He Is Mad?”
- (3) Peter C. Molin, United States Military Academy, “Who was ‘Uncle Ben’?: A New Look at the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter* Contest”
- (4) GERALYN STRECKER, Ball State University, “The Emergence of Gothic Revival Architecture in Poe’s Baltimore and New York”

Panel II: “*Eureka* Once Again”

Chair: Carole Shaffer-Koros, Kean University

- (1) Eric Touya de Marenne, Adelphi University, “Poe ‘over there’: Mallarmé’s *Eureka*”
- (2) Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University, “In Defense of Poe’s ‘Art-Product’: Alexander Von Humboldt’s Influence on *Eureka*”
- (3) Andrew Sutherland, SUNY Buffalo, “Oneness: A Pragmatic Reading of *Eureka*”

From Mary DeJong and Noelle Baker, Members-at-large: The PSA panels for the 26-29 May 2005 ALA Convention in Boston (at the Westin Copley Place Hotel in Boston’s Back Bay) follow. Abstracts for the papers begin on p. 75 of this issue.

Session 9d: “Out-sourcing Poe, Making Poe Connections”

Friday, 27 May 2005, 9:30-10:50 am

Chair: Noelle Baker, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

- (1) Tish Crawford, Bucknell University, “Poe’s Detective Fiction: A Tool for Teaching about Race and Construction of Racial Identity in U. S. Popular Culture Forms”
- (2) John Gruesser, Kean University, “Democratizing and Masculinizing Poe’s Deadly Game: The Creation and Refinement of Hard-Boiled Fiction”
- (3) Laura Saltz, Colby College, “‘Eyes that Behold’: Poe, Daguerreotypes, and the Science of Vision”

Session 12h: “Problems and Solutions in Teaching Poe”

Friday, 27 May 27 2005, 2:00 - 3:20 pm

Chair: Mary DeJong, Penn State Altoona

(1) J. T. Barbarese, Rutgers-Camden, ”Taking Poe Seriously”

(2) Duncan Faherty, Queens College, CUNY, “‘The gross but common error of compounding the unusual with the abstruse’: Reconsidering Poe’s Place in the Antebellum Survey”

(3) Rebecca Jaroff and Domenick Scudera, Ursinus College, “Edgar Allan Poe: From Page to Stage”

Edward Wagenknecht

Edward Wagenknecht, Professor Emeritus of Boston University, author of over seventy books, mostly on literature and culture, died at the age of 104 in St. Albans, VT, in May 2004. Among his many biographies, *Edgar Allan Poe: The Man Behind the Legend* (Oxford UP, 1963) occupies a significant place in the history of Poe criticism. In his 1964 review in *American Literature*, Floyd Stovall noted that while the biography did not introduce new facts regarding Poe’s life, Wagenknecht exercised great tact in refuting unhealthy analytical trends: “When he does criticize, he is careful to present the available facts and to treat them with respect. He is to be congratulated for his courtesy towards critics and biographers with whom he disagrees and also for his success in avoiding, in his own interpretations, the pitfalls of psychoanalysis, the careless misuse of imaginative works as autobiographical documents, and other ‘modern’ methods of insinuating ideas without indisputable factual evidence.” Moreover, Wagenknecht’s selection of Poe for a biography came at the end of a period during which Poe’s reputation within the American canon was greatly restored. Thus, *Edgar Allan Poe: The Man Behind the Legend* and monographs published by other American generalists during the early 1960s signaled the widespread acceptance of Poe’s pivotal role in the antebellum literary landscape. As a corrective of our own abuses and errors, Edward Wagenknecht’s scholarly legacy will continue to illuminate us in the years to come.

Notes on Contributors

Barbara Cantalupo is associate professor of English at Penn State, Lehigh Valley. She is the founding editor of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* and has published extensively on *Eureka* and its relation to Poe's other works. She currently serves as Vice President of the Poe Studies Association.

Seo-Young Jennie Chu is a graduate student at Harvard University. Her dissertation examines Poe's science fiction in the context of other writers including Mary Shelley, Olaf Stapledon, William Gibson, and Philip K. Dick.

Mary DeJong is associate professor of English and Women's Studies at Penn State, Altoona. She has published a number of articles on Frances Osgood, Lydia Sigourney, and George Eliot, and currently serves the Poe Studies Association as a Member at Large.

John Dern is lecturer in English at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Gwynedd Valley, PA. He has published a book on Martin Amis and essays on various topics in *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, and *Literature/Film Quarterly*.

Heyward Ehrlich is associate professor of English at Rutgers University, Newark. His feature "Poe in Cyberspace" has appeared regularly since the first issue of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*. His edition of Poe's reviews and notices in Philadelphia magazines is in preparation for the *Collected Writings*.

Grace Farrell is Rebecca Clifton Reade Professor of English at Butler University. She has published extensively on Lillie Devereaux Blake and matters of race in nineteenth-century American culture.

A. Samuel Kimball is associate professor of English at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville. He has published essays in a variety of journals, including *American Literature*, *ATQ: American Transcendental Quarterly*, and *Literature and Psychology*.

April Lindner is assistant professor at Saint Joseph's University. Her book of poems *Skin* (2002) won the Walt McDonald First Book Poetry Prize, and her

poetry has appeared in numerous journals including *Prairie Schooner* and *The Paris Review*. She also has published on the New Formalist movement in poetry.

Kent Ljungquist is professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a former president of the Poe Studies Association. He has published extensively on Poe, Melville, Emerson, and other nineteenth-century American writers.

Peter Norberg is assistant professor of English at Saint Joseph's University and coeditor of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*. He has published on Melville and Emerson, including his recent edition of *Essays and Poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson* in the Barnes and Noble Classics series.

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

Maria Truglio is assistant professor of Italian at Penn State University. Her specialty is nineteenth-century Italian literature, and she has published articles on the poetry of Giovanni Pascoli and Primo Levi.