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## Letter from the Editors

In this our penultimate issue before we pass the reins of the *Poe Review* to its new editors and staff, we would like to thank the following individuals at Saint Joseph's University for their continued support—financial and otherwise: Timothy R. Lannon, S.J., President; Brice R. Wachterhauser, Provost; William Madges, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; and Jo Alyson Parker, Chair of the English Department. Thomas Malone, Carol McLaughlin, and the production staff of Saint Joseph's University Press have time and again proved invaluable for their expertise and professionalism. We also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the generous support provided by the Executive Board of the Poe Studies Association and the Board of Editors of this journal. We especially thank J. Gerald Kennedy, Louis Renza, and Lois Vines as they end their terms on the editorial board. Their keen insights and recommendations will be missed.

This issue features the first of a two-part essay by Matthew Pearl, which documents a portion of the extensive research he conducted for his new novel, *The Poe Shadow*. The final installment will appear in the spring 2007 issue. Also, Paul Jones reviews Mr. Pearl's novel in this issue.

We thank Benjamin Fisher for his elegant and fitting tribute to the late Poe scholar Kenneth W. Cameron. We also note with sorrow the passing of Kenneth Alan Hovey, whose excellent scholarship on Poe we know well.

In the spring 2005 issue, Dr. Tony McGowan's surname was misspelled. We regret the error.

Richard Fusco  
Peter Norberg

**A Poe Death Dossier:  
Discoveries and Queries in the Death of Edgar Allan Poe<sup>1</sup>**  
*Matthew Pearl*

**Part I**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This essay describes an assortment of my findings made over the course of several years of research on the Poe death narrative. These findings include (1) the identification of a source for Poe's possible visit with Dr. N. C. Brooks during his final weeks, with related events that may clarify what thwarted that visit; (2) information concerning events that occurred at Ryan's inn and tavern where Poe was discovered that further clarify the roles and motivations of the individuals who aided him; (3) the identification of what may be the earliest poem about Poe's funeral and how it might illuminate the timeline of Poe's last weeks; (4) a solution to the strange instructions Poe sent to his mother-in-law, Maria Clemm, to write to him using the name E. S. T. Grey, and the discovery of what happened to a letter Clemm wrote in return; (5) the identification of an account, believed lost, by Neilson Poe of his cousin's death; (6) a new candidate for Poe's final call for "Reynolds"; and (7) an identification of a surprising source behind the popular theory that Poe was beaten to death. I will deal with the first four points in this essay and will address the final three in part II, which will be published in the spring 2007 issue of the *Poe Review*.

**II. ELEMENTS OF POE'S DEATH**

The chief elements of the death narrative begin some time before Edgar Allan Poe was brought to the Washington College Hospital in Baltimore on the afternoon of October 3, 1849. For several years before his death, Poe lived in Fordham, New York, with his aunt and mother-in-law, Maria Clemm. He was deeply invested in two pursuits that had recurred throughout the course of his adult life: attempting to launch his own magazine and looking for a woman to marry. (By this date, his wife, Virginia, had already passed away.) He spent most of the summer of 1849 in Richmond, Virginia, where he made progress on both fronts. He became engaged, at least on a provisional basis, to his childhood sweetheart, Elmira Shelton (née Royster), now a well-off widow

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living in Richmond. He was also delivering lectures intended to raise his profile and subscriptions for *The Stylus*, his proposed magazine.

The narrative of Poe's death may fairly be said to begin when the writer departs from Richmond at the end of September 1849. Poe's stated plan was to go from there to New York, with a stopover in Philadelphia to edit a volume of poetry by Maurgerite St. Leon Loud. Poe went directly from Richmond to Baltimore. What he did in Baltimore and why he did not continue north are unknown. Approximately five days later, October 3, he was found in Baltimore, at Ryan's inn and tavern, which on that election day was doubling as a polling place. Witnesses described him as incapacitated and possibly intoxicated. A printer named Joseph Walker sent an urgent note to Poe's acquaintance Dr. Joseph Snodgrass, who subsequently arrived to assist Poe. Also present at Ryan's was Poe's former uncle by marriage, Henry Herring. Together Snodgrass and Herring dispatched Poe to the hospital where the dying writer spent four days under the care of Dr. John J. Moran. Poe called out the name "Reynolds" repeatedly on the morning he died, October 7, 1849.<sup>2</sup>

### III. POE IN BALTIMORE: THE BROOKS VISIT

*In this section, I examine a particular moment in the Poe death timeline related to a purported visit to the home of Dr. N. C. Brooks in Baltimore. Using some new evidence, I suggest that this episode be tentatively restored to the Poe death narrative.*

Accounts from people who spent time with Poe in Richmond during his final months agree that he traveled by ship from Richmond to Baltimore in late September 1849, although there is no consensus on the departure day or time.<sup>3</sup> In one of the early full-length Poe biographies, George Woodberry claimed that after Poe arrived in Baltimore, he called on Dr. Nathan Covington Brooks, an educator and editor, but that Brooks was not home and possibly out of town, and so Poe "went away."<sup>4</sup> Under ideal biographical conditions, this episode would carry only slight significance. In the context of the five "lost" days Poe spent in Baltimore (between September 28 and October 3) about which we know almost nothing, Woodberry's anecdote entices.

Woodberry himself believed he stood on firm ground regarding Poe's visit to Brooks. The biographer opened his claim about the visit to Brooks with "it is

known,” while a list of other possible Poe stops in Baltimore he qualified with the phrase “it is said.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Woodberry’s book provided no ready source for the claim, and thus it ultimately dissolved into the multitude of sourceless anecdotes about Poe’s final weeks.

I have found Woodberry’s apparent source for the Brooks story and judge it substantial enough to reconsider the event. In unbound, typewritten papers of a speech on Poe by Woodberry held in the Duke University archives, the biographer describes the background of the claim more fully: “It appears that upon Poe’s arrival in Baltimore he called to see an old friend Dr. N. C. Brooks, the early Baltimore educator, who was away at the time.” Directly following this, Woodberry identifies his apparent source for the story: “Dr. Brooks had a son also a doctor, who was a reporter for the *Sun*, with whom the present writer did police district work at Baltimore in the late [18]70s.”<sup>6</sup> If Woodberry’s source for the anecdote was Brooks’s son, a *Sun* reporter whom Woodberry knew during the years he was compiling his Poe biography, its degree of reliability improves.

Of course, the Brooks anecdote is not of a visit but of an *attempted* visit. (Poe may have left his card indicating he had come, which would explain how Brooks and his son later knew of his presence there.) I found a new clue why this visit may have been aborted. In the columns of the *Baltimore Sun* for Thursday September 27, 1849, Dr. Brooks took out the following ad:

N. C. Brooks would return his grateful acknowledgments to the fire companies for their timely exertions at the fire which occurred at his dwelling; and especially to the Liberty Company, by whose unexampled promptness it was mainly arrested.<sup>7</sup>

We learn a good deal from this previously unnoticed ad. While the fire was “arrested,” it was significant enough to call in multiple fire companies. (Before the formation of professional fire departments, fire companies would be rewarded based on the speed of their response and often competed at large fires, as is suggested here by Brooks singling out the Liberty Company as the fastest.) Only a day or two after the fire, the Liberty Company’s engine underwent major repairs reported in the same newspaper, possibly from damage sustained during its last use, the Brooks house fire.<sup>8</sup>

The fire might explain why Poe did not find Brooks home that week. Poe arrived in Baltimore around September 28, only two days after the house fire. The circumstance also suggests why he could not wait for Brooks, if he had been temporarily staying elsewhere. Of course, Brooks could have been away without a fire causing his absence, but the two reports fit together nicely—Poe’s reported failure to find Brooks and the fire at Brooks’s house occurred nearly at the same time. The credibility of the former incident is strengthened by the documentation of the latter.

By reinserting the Brooks visit into Poe’s timeline with more confidence, we accomplish several things. First, we move closer toward establishing a minor action in Poe’s timeline in Baltimore before his discovery at Ryan’s. It may be, in fact, the only verifiable action Poe took during that week. Second, we indirectly address one of the more basic questions of the death narrative: Why did Poe take an apparently unplanned trip to Baltimore? It would be natural when traveling from Richmond to Philadelphia to stop in Baltimore and even to stay overnight in the event of a late arrival, but Poe’s five-day layover is another question altogether.

If no reliable clues exist regarding his activity once in Baltimore, then Poe’s purpose for the extended visit becomes difficult to assess, particularly considering the attractive editing task that awaited him in Philadelphia.<sup>9</sup> With additional substantiation that Poe may have sought out Brooks, however, we gain incidental insight into the larger purpose of the trip. Poe had invested time and energy into his plans for the *Stylus* that summer. Brooks was a well-known member of the Baltimore literati. Poe and Brooks had previous professional contact. Brooks published Poe’s “Ligeia” in an 1838 issue of the Baltimore magazine *American Museum*. Between 1838 and 1841, we know of one letter from Brooks to Poe and three letters (one of which is still extant) from Poe to Brooks.<sup>10</sup>

An 1841 letter from Poe to Dr. Joseph Snodgrass dealt with a new magazine to be established in Baltimore, with Poe presumably hoping either to get in on the ground floor or to know about the competition.<sup>11</sup> Eight years later, Poe possibly hoped to speak with Snodgrass’s onetime partner, Brooks, about another new magazine—this time, Poe’s own. While it is hard to imagine a visit to Brooks as Poe’s single motivation for stopping in Baltimore, I feel confident that the Brooks visit may help to suggest Poe’s overall motivation

for the stop—to renew and strengthen his Baltimore contacts and support for the *Stylus*.

It is likely that Poe was disappointed with the meager financial support he found in Richmond.<sup>12</sup> This might explain why his Baltimore visit was a late idea, one he never mentioned in his detailed letters to Maria Clemm. Poe had lived in Baltimore at several points in his life and knew people in the publishing and literary community there. During the five days prior to his arrival at Ryan's, Poe may have made other calls to the literary community comparable to attempt to contact Brooks.

In the next section of my essay, I will consider what happened when printer Joseph Walker encountered Poe at Ryan's inn and tavern on October 3 and sent a note to Dr. Snodgrass. However, it is worth excerpting Walker's note to Snodgrass in context of Poe's solicitation for his magazine: "[Edgar A. Poe] says he is acquainted with you, and I assure you, he is in need of immediate assistance."<sup>13</sup> Based upon this wording, we cannot be certain whether Poe asked that Snodgrass be called in to help him; in fact, it is not clear from Walker's note that Poe was asking for help at all. What is clear, however, is that Poe spoke of Snodgrass as an acquaintance. This is also Snodgrass's understanding of the events in an article years later: "he had been *heard to utter my name as that of an acquaintance*" (my emphasis).<sup>14</sup> Snodgrass's home was near Ryan's inn. I therefore suggest a possibility that on the afternoon of October 3 Poe was on his way to see Snodgrass for the same reason that he had earlier tried calling on Dr. Brooks—to renew literary ties. Poe may have been heard in Ryan's speaking of Snodgrass in this professional context, rather than in an expression of distress (though Walker correctly judged that Poe was on the verge of a crisis).

#### IV. POE AT RYAN'S: SNODGRASS AND THE HERRINGS

*In this section, I look at Joseph Evans Snodgrass and Henry Herring, two figures who played roles in the events at Ryan's inn and tavern where Poe was discovered in an incapacitated state. I also include a poem by Snodgrass about Poe's death. I introduce new evidence about how and why Henry Herring came to Poe's aid.*



There are a number of accepted facts regarding Poe's time at Ryan's inn and tavern. We know Poe was in poor condition. We know a printer named Joseph Walker came to his aid. Upon encountering Poe, Walker sent a note to Dr. Joseph Snodgrass after Poe mentioned Snodgrass's name. The original note no longer exists, but fortunately for the historical record it was transcribed. Here is the most complete version of it, including header at the top and addressee after the signature. William Hand Browne, a literature professor and the editor of *Maryland Historical Magazine*, transcribed it from the original note during the late nineteenth century:

Baltimore City, Oct 3d 1849

Dear Sir, -

There is a gentleman, rather the worse for wear, at Ryan's 4<sup>th</sup> Ward polls, who goes under the cognomen of Edgar A. Poe, and who appears in great distress, & he says he is acquainted with you, and I assure you, he is in need of immediate assistance,

Yours, in haste,  
Jos. W. Walker

To Dr. J. E. Snodgrass<sup>15</sup>

In February 1909, Browne wrote to Poe biographer Ingram giving the following physical description of the Walker note, which I believe has never before been published: "It was in pencil, on coarse paper, which, no doubt he [Walker] got at Ryan's. It was written in a good round hand, accurately spelled and punctuated, as one would expect from a printer, and the signature was free and flowing, as a man signs his own name."<sup>16</sup>

Joseph Snodgrass wrote several different accounts of his intervention on Poe's behalf. One appeared in an 1856 issue of *Women's Temperance Paper* and was reprinted in other publications. A second account appeared in *Beadle's Monthly* for March 1867. In both of these, Snodgrass alludes to the note calling for him to assist Poe.

In his 1856 account, Snodgrass writes, "on a chilly and wet November [sic] afternoon, I received a note, stating that 'a man, answering to the name of Edgar Allan Poe,' who claimed to know me, was at a drinking house in Lombard-street, Baltimore, in a state of deep intoxication and great destitution."<sup>17</sup> In his

account of 1867, Snodgrass describes the Walker note this way: “It stated that a man claiming Poe’s name, and to be acquainted with me, was at Cooth & Sergeant’s tavern in Lombard Street, near High Street, (Baltimore), in a state of beastly intoxication and evident destitution, and that he had been heard to utter my name as that of an acquaintance.”<sup>18</sup>

In an 1881 *New York Herald* article, which was the first to publish the text of the Walker note, Edward Spencer criticizes Snodgrass for his public versions of the events, remarking of Walker’s note that Snodgrass “utterly perverted its contents” in his recounting. Spencer writes that Snodgrass “failed to report correctly even the facts which came under his own observation,” getting the date, the name of the tavern, and Walker’s words all wrong. Of the latter, Spencer calls Snodgrass’s version “an absolutely false and illusory statement of the printer’s representations as to Poe’s condition.”<sup>19</sup>

Though Snodgrass is far from a perfect Poe chronicler, Spencer’s criticisms seem overstated. We can dismiss Spencer’s complaint about the accuracy of the tavern’s name. Like many public establishments then, Ryan’s went by several names, including Gunner’s Hall and the Fourth Ward Hotel, and it was indeed owned by Baltimoreans Coath and Sargeant until 1849. (Snodgrass can be forgiven for misspelling “Coath” as “Cooth”). The dating as November rather than October is not much of a disqualifier, either; Snodgrass’s 1856 article came seven years after the event and before the details of Poe’s biography had been formalized in a way easily accessible to “fact check.” As for the Walker note, we can assume Dr. Snodgrass was writing from memory (as Spencer himself assumes) and not from the note itself, since he would likely have corrected the date if he had easy access to the note.<sup>20</sup>

Snodgrass does phrase one rather innocuous part of his description of the note as a quote in his 1856 article (that “a man, answering to the name of Edgar Allan Poe”); however, the rest of both of Snodgrass’s descriptions of the note are presented as paraphrasing without quotation marks. In fact they are rather impressive if he is working from memory of a three-line note from years earlier. Snodgrass undoubtedly presumes that Walker’s words characterize Poe as intoxicated. The doctor might be wrong about Walker’s meaning, but he certainly leaps to one valid interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

In literature on Poe's death, Snodgrass is often referred to as a dedicated temperance advocate. We must examine Snodgrass's motives and his involvement in temperance activism not only by what Snodgrass writes years after Poe's death in temperance journals but also by what he experiences during the week of Poe's death. Retracing Snodgrass's footsteps that week in October is as fruitful as tracking Poe's.

October 3, 1849, the day Snodgrass is called to Ryan's to aid Poe, was an election day for congressional and state delegates in Baltimore. Among the featured issues was the Temperance Sunday Law. The Sunday Law faction announced its own candidate named John Watchman for the House of Delegates. But that same week, a scandal leaked into the papers. Watchman, the temperance candidate, had been caught drinking at a tavern. On October 2, the Baltimore *Sun* included a notice of a meeting of the Friends of the Sunday Law announcing that they were withdrawing their support for Watchman, with the public comment coming from none other than Dr. Joseph Snodgrass—this occurring only one day before Snodgrass and Poe would cross paths at Ryan's.<sup>22</sup> Snodgrass had been deeply and personally invested in the local temperance movement possibly winning a seat in the legislature (or at least making a public point) and had been embarrassed as this political goal publicly crumbled one day before Poe's discovery. The results of the scandal were devastating, with Watchman losing in all twenty wards of Baltimore and coming dead last behind the other nine candidates in all but five of the wards (the five being Whig strongholds, including the Fourth Ward where Poe was found).<sup>23</sup> Whether Poe was actually "beastly" intoxicated or not, Poe's status as a public figure going from a tavern to his deathbed may at the time have seemed a moral "victory" substituting for the temperance movement's dismal election campaign. The connection between Snodgrass's temperance activity and the circumstance that Poe's demise coincided with a temperance scandal that influenced a local election should be included in a fuller picture of the atmosphere surrounding Poe's death and those who came to his aid.

Snodgrass has also left us another account of Poe's death that, as far as I know, has gone unstudied. This poem by Snodgrass was published in the *Baltimorean* in November 1875, on the occasion of the memorializing of Poe's gravesite.

My thoughts run backward to the day  
When thee, from cold and vacant stare

Of reveling men we bore away  
 Unconscious of the presence there  
 Of one who, in thy normal hours,  
 Had marveled while he worshipped powers  
 Transcendentally beyond compare.

Oh! 'twas a saddening scene to find  
 Thy proud young heart and noble brain  
 Steeped in the demon draught—thy mind  
 No longer fitted for the strain  
 Of thought melodious and sublime,  
 Which from the “Bells” rang out in rhyme,  
 Or toned the “Raven’s” weird refrain,

Fain would I cease to brood, for aye  
 Upon the sadly memoried time,  
 When thy great spirit passed away,  
 Before was spent thy manhood’s prime;  
 It were more pleasing to revert  
 To scenes which did profusely skirt  
 Thy path of minstrelsy sublime.

But haunts me still that funeral scene!  
 In shame and sadness oft I trace  
 Thy burial—sadder none hath seen—  
 In that neglected resting place!  
 For casket of thy wondrous mind  
 I deemed it hard they did not find  
 A more befitting burial space.

There, all unmarked until this day  
 By rudest tablet, or grave-stone,  
 Thy ashes, friend, lie hid away,  
 By our own neglect we frankly own!  
 Up then be reared fit monument,  
 Wherewith shall rise a proud content,  
 When to the stranger it is shown!<sup>24</sup>

This poem's final stanzas provide Snodgrass's most descriptive account of Poe's funeral, at which he was one of the small handful of known attendees, and the state of Poe's grave before a monument was put up in 1875. When Poe was buried, the grave did not have a tombstone and, as we are told in Snodgrass's poem, remained "all unmarked" twenty-six years later. The poem also provides another version of Snodgrass's narrative of his encounter with Poe at Ryan's. These verses should be put alongside Snodgrass's articles and evaluated accordingly.

According to both of his articles, after arriving at Ryan's, Snodgrass decided that Poe should stay in a room in the hotel portion of Ryan's. This is an undervalued detail, as are Snodgrass's explanations of how the plan shifted from keeping Poe there at a hotel room to sending him to a hospital. Here are Snodgrass's two accounts of this important turning point in the timeline. First, from the 1856 article:

*I immediately ordered a room for him, where he could be comfortable until I got word to his relatives – for there were several in Baltimore. Just at that moment, one or two of the persons referred to, getting information of the case, arrived at the spot. They declined to take private care of him, assigning as a reason, that he had been 'very abusive and ungrateful on former occasion, when drunk,' and advised that he be sent to a hospital. (my emphasis)<sup>25</sup>*

And from the 1867 article:

*I at once ordered a room for him. I had already accompanied a waiter up-stairs, with a view to selecting a sufficiently retired apartment, and had done so, and was returning to the bar-room for the purpose of having the evidently undesired guest conveyed to his allotted chamber, when I was met, at the head of the stairway, by Mr. H—, a relative of Mr. Poe's by marriage. He suggested a hospital as a better place for him than the tavern. (my emphasis)<sup>26</sup>*

“Mr. H.” is Henry Herring, whose wife, Poe’s paternal aunt, had died by 1849. Herring, a Baltimore lumber merchant, was one of the few mourners at Poe’s funeral and later he claimed to have provided the coffin.

Snodgrass ordered a room for Poe upstairs and then prepared to call for one or more of Poe’s Baltimore relatives, for he correctly believed “there were several in Baltimore.” But when Snodgrass reached the bottom of the stairs, one or two of Poe’s relatives were already waiting—before Snodgrass has called for them. Snodgrass found Herring’s spontaneous appearance odd enough to dramatize the moment. Kenneth Silverman notices the odd timing, remarking in his synopsis of Poe’s death narrative that Herring “somehow” learned of Poe’s condition and arrived before Snodgrass sent for him.<sup>27</sup> How did Herring know to come at that very moment? Does this apparent coincidence have significance in understanding the events?

Ryan’s was not only the location for the fourth ward’s polls on October 3, it was also a gathering place for the local Whigs (and a Whig voter stronghold, judging from election results showing that it was one of only five wards where the Whigs outpolled Democrats). A “Mass Meeting of the Whigs of the Fourth Ward will take place at Ryan’s Hotel, Lombard Street,” we are told in an advertisement on September 25 in the *American*.<sup>28</sup> This is reported the day after it took place as “a large and enthusiastic meeting.”<sup>29</sup> This is how the September 25 ad is signed: “Geo. W. Herring, Pres.” There was another meeting at Ryan’s at 7:30pm on October 2, only hours before Poe’s discovery there on the afternoon of the third. The ad for this meeting requested attendance at “Ryan’s Hotel, Lombard St., across from the Engine House” signed again “Geo. W. Herring, Pres.”<sup>30</sup>

That the politically active Whigs of the ward were present at Ryan’s throughout election week—including the day before elections—strongly suggests some would also be at Ryan’s (which was also their polling station) on election day itself. It is reasonable to assume, at the very least, that the president of the ward’s Whig group, George Herring, would be present for the election. There were several Georges in the Baltimore Herring clan, but after a review of genealogies, I conclude that this George appears to be Henry Herring’s uncle, who may have met Poe in the past through his nephew’s family or simply had known of Poe through Henry. Possibly, Walker sent for Henry Herring at the time he sent for Snodgrass, but there is no evidence to prove this speculation.

Also, presumably Walker would have informed Snodgrass, who then would have no reason to plan to send for Poe's relatives. More likely, George Herring was at Ryan's when it became clear that Poe was in a problematic state, and his first thought may have been to send for his nephew Henry. Thus, a reasonable explanation backed by documentary evidence emerges for Henry Herring's previously unexplained appearance at the bottom of the stairs.

Furthermore, Snodgrass's memory seven years later that "one *or* two" (emphasis added) of Poe's relatives met him at that moment after he secured a room for Poe could be accounted for if both George and Henry Herring approached him at Ryan's to deal with Poe's situation (although, of course, George was not a relative of Poe's, and, technically speaking, even Henry was an *ex*-relative).<sup>31</sup>

These facts might also indicate another reason why the Herrings were quick to move Poe to the hospital even though Snodgrass, who was a medical doctor, had already secured a room upstairs for Poe to rest. Although Snodgrass emphasizes Henry Herring's recollections of Poe's drinking, it may well be that the political concerns of George Herring, desiring to have a trouble-free election day at his Whig's fourth ward headquarters, equally influenced the removal of a potential problem—in this case, the potential embarrassment caused by Poe's "great distress." Regardless of whether Henry arrived by coincidence or from a note by Walker or George Herring, any instinct on the part of the Herrings to deal with a potential problem would have been the same.

For many years, there have been suggestions that political thugs caused Poe's death. While there is no great evidentiary support for the so-called "cooping" theories, issues wrapped up in the election and framed by it—including the John Watchman drinking scandal and the Herrings' Whig connections—may well have shaped some of the events of these final days.

There is an interesting digression we may add here to illustrate the way narratives travel and transform over time. In the early twentieth century, Poe family descendent Elizabeth Ellicot Poe published two accounts of Poe's death in the Baltimore *Sunday Herald* on June 7, 1903, and in the *New Orleans Picayune* January 17, 1909, that suggest an interesting tie to the Herrings' probable involvement at Ryan's to the hospital.

Ellicot Poe tells us her version of Poe's death narrative is straight from "family traditions and records":

On the night of October 3, then, George Poe, Sr., my grandfather and a first cousin to Edgar, was hurrying down Calvert street, when he saw lying beneath the steps of the old Baltimore Museum, at Calvert and Baltimore streets (where the B & O building now stands), a man in, as he thought, a drunken stupor. Pity for the unfortunate caused him to stop and investigate, when to his horror he saw it was his cousin Edgar. Quickly calling a carriage and sending a messenger for Neilson Poe, who lived nearby, he took the drugged poet to the Washington University [Hospital].<sup>32</sup>

Viola Poe Wilson apparently agreed that this was the "family version of what actually happened as it was often told by her father George in family discussions at the dinner table."<sup>33</sup> Outside the date and the decision to send Poe to the hospital, hardly a single detail about Poe's discovery in the anecdote is accurate. Yet, the presence of that moment of a relative or quasi-relative—interestingly named George—coming upon Poe in distress by surprise or coincidence and sending for another family member, parallels what was probably the true version of events, in which George Herring came upon Poe at Ryan's and sent for Henry. This account may have been repeated privately within the family circle and passed all the way into the twentieth century in warped but still somewhat recognizable form.

#### V. POE IN PHILADELPHIA?: "THE STRANGER'S DOOM"

*In this section, I focus on Poe's planned stop in Philadelphia and show how it led to what may be the first poem written about Poe's funeral, "The Stranger's Doom" by Marguerite St. Leon Loud, and how that poem in turn may hold a clue to the timeline of Poe's final days.*

In his final months, Poe had an easy, relatively lucrative opportunity waiting for him in Philadelphia to edit wealthy "poetess" Marguerite St. Leon Loud's volume of poetry. Several of Poe's letters from the summer and fall of 1849 give the details of an arrangement that clearly pleased him.



In an August letter to Maria Clemm, Poe wrote: “Mr. Loud, the husband of Mrs. St. Leon Loud, the poetess of Philadelphia, called on me the other day and offered me \$100 to edit his wife’s poems. Of course, I accepted the offer. The whole labor will not occupy me 3 days. I am to have them ready by Christmas.”<sup>34</sup> Writing from Richmond on September 18, the week before Poe traveled to Baltimore, he sent Mrs. Loud a letter explaining a delay and his plan:

Not being quite sure whether a letter addressed simply to ‘Mr John Loud’ would reach your husband — that is to say, not remembering whether he had a middle name or not — I have taken the liberty of writing directly to yourself, in regard to a proposition which he made me while here; having reference to your Poems. It was my purpose and hope to have been in Philadelphia by the 7<sup>th</sup> of this month; but circumstances beyond my control have detained me; and I write now to say that I find it impossible to leave Richmond before Tuesday next—the 25<sup>th</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> I hope to have the pleasure of calling on you at your residence in Philadelphia.<sup>35</sup>

On the same day, Poe wrote once again to Maria Clemm: “On Tuesday I start for Phila to attend to Mrs Loud’s Poems—& *possibly* on Thursday I may start for N. York... Write immediately in reply & direct to Phila. For fear I should not get the letter, sign no name & address it to E. S. T. Grey Esqre.”<sup>36</sup> (I will examine the peculiar “E. S. T. Grey” instructions in the next section.)

Did Poe go to (or try and fail to go to) Philadelphia? We know from Poe’s letters that he was set on going to Philadelphia—“of course,” as he remarked to Maria Clemm, he could not pass up the offer of one hundred dollars. (Poe’s income for the entire previous year was only \$166.50, according to one estimate).<sup>37</sup> A visit to Philadelphia would certainly help the reconstruction of Poe’s intentions during his final weeks, chipping away at the approximate five-day gap between Poe’s arrival in Baltimore and his discovery at Ryan’s.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, a closer look at Mrs. Loud gives us what may be a significant addition to the reception history of Poe’s death.

While biographers include the Loud project in most histories of Poe's final weeks, they have paid less attention to the book itself. *Wayside Flowers* was published by Ticknor, Reed and Fields in 1851, by which time Poe's death had attracted considerable interest. In his preface, Park Benjamin does not mention that the book was to have been edited by Poe. However, the book's connection with Poe and with Poe's premature death was publicly promoted before its publication: the *International Miscellany* of 1850 noted that "the late Mr. Poe was accustomed to praise her works very highly, and was to have edited this edition of them."<sup>39</sup> Some readers may therefore have had Poe in mind when examining the book. If Loud herself were responsible for planting the item in the *Miscellany*, she may have wanted readers to associate her volume with Poe. Waiting in Philadelphia for his arrival to compile her poems and then hearing news of his death, Loud likely would have paid especially close attention to the obituaries and other reports of Poe's death. In fact, she perhaps even associated her book with the event—particularly as interest in Poe climbed.

Included among the occasional and seasonal poems, many of which revolve around elements of Loud's personal life, is this one which was placed toward the end of the volume. Those familiar with the narrative of Poe's death will find it immediately interesting:

#### THE STRANGER'S DOOM.

They gathered round his dying bed,—  
 His failing eye was glazed and dim;  
 But 'mong the many gazers, there  
 Were none who wept or cared for him.

Oh! 'tis a sad, a fearful thing,  
 To die with none but strangers near;  
 To see within the darkened room  
 No face, no form, to memory dear!

To hear no loved, familiar voice—  
 Earth's sweetest music to the last;  
 No whispered prayer, no stifled sob,  
 Not e'en an echo from the past!

To feel, when deeper still the shades  
 Of death have gathered o'er the brain,  
 No clasping hand, no farewell kiss,  
 Pressed on the brow, again—again!

Yet thus he died—afar from all  
 Who might have mourned his early doom!  
 Strange hands his drooping eyelids closed,  
 And bore him to his nameless tomb.

They laid him where tall forest trees  
 Cast their dark shadows o'er his bed,  
 And hurriedly, in silence, heaped  
 The wild-grass turf above his head.

None prayed, none wept, when all was o'er,  
 Nor lingered near the sacred spot;  
 But turned them to the world again,  
 And soon his very name forgot.

The language is romanticized, unoriginal, and rote. However, several details point to the possibility that this poem is about Poe's death and funeral. The first three stanzas describe the "stranger's" deathbed where the dying patient (whom pronouns identify as male) has nobody near who cares about him or weeps over him—"No loved, familiar voice." In the case of Poe's death, doctors turned away the one family member who came to Poe's hospital room, Neilson Poe, to avoid overstimulating Edgar.

The second line of the fourth stanza isolates a linkage between the man's death and his brain: "when deeper still the shades/Of death have *gathered o'er the brain*" (my emphasis). This image could have been informed by the public details of Poe's death. The Baltimore *Patriot* and the Baltimore *Clipper* had reported at the time of Poe's death that the cause was "congestion of the brain."<sup>40</sup> The fifth stanza reveals that the deceased was too young to die (Poe was only 40): "Who might have mourned his early doom!" It is worth noting that Loud's local newspaper, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, like other papers misreported Poe's age as even younger, 38, amplifying the sense Loud might have had of the "early death."<sup>41</sup>

In the same stanza, we find the stranger buried in “his nameless tomb.” This detail about Poe’s internment resurfaces time and again during the decades after his burial, as Snodgrass himself reminds us in his own poem. The funeral was a quick and quiet one. The Reverend W. T. D. Clemm, a distant relative of Poe’s, prepared a funeral oration but did not read it because of the small turnout.<sup>42</sup> The sexton of the Westminster burial yard, George Spence, remembered later that “the services were very brief, there was nobody to preach to.”<sup>43</sup> This swift and abrupt funeral is nicely captured by the sixth and seventh stanzas as the mourners “hurriedly, in silence, heaped/The wild-grass turf above his head.” In 1849, the Westminster Presbyterian cemetery had no church on the unkept grounds. The mourners then hurry away in the final stanza. The notion that Poe’s reputation as a writer was being obscured in the wake of his death caps off the poem: “And soon his very name forgot.”<sup>44</sup>

The circumstance that the poem has attracted little critical attention as a possible dramatization of Poe’s death—indeed, as perhaps the first poem written on Poe’s funeral—is not too surprising. Loud’s volume proved to be a botched publication. Of the 550 books that were printed, 360 unsold copies were returned to the Louds. There were some heated exchanges between the publisher and Loud’s husband over the way the publication was handled.<sup>45</sup> Today, according to electronic library database Oasis, only fourteen original copies of the book are held by American libraries.

In addition to what the elegy absorbs from the historical record, Loud adds something interesting. Her title, “The Stranger’s Doom,” suggests that Poe remains a “stranger” to her—in other words, that they had never met before his death. Making the particular subject of the poem representative rather than named—a “stranger,” a “friend,” a “brother” or “sister”—was common practice. Presumably, though, if Poe had come to Philadelphia and met Loud to work on her poems, she may be less inclined to choose “stranger” for the title of these verses. Ultimately, scholars and other interested observers will have to decide for themselves whether or not “A Stranger’s Doom” is an early poetic tribute to Poe after his death.

## VI. POE IN PHILADELPHIA?: “E. S. T. GREY”

*In this section, I examine one of Poe’s last known letters, in which he instructs his aunt Maria Clemm to write to him using the name E. S. T. Grey. I present a*

*hypothesis based upon historical postal practices and trace a letter Clemm wrote in reply, which allows me to judge the probability of Poe traveling to Philadelphia during his last week.*

Here is more of Poe's September 18, 1849, letter to Maria Clemm concerning his intention to visit Philadelphia in order to edit Maurgerite St. Leon Loud's poems: "On Tuesday I start for Phila to attend to Mrs Loud's Poems — & possibly on Thursday I may start for N. York [...] Write immediately in reply & direct to Phila. For fear I should not get the letter, sign no name & address it to E. S. T. Grey Esqre."<sup>46</sup> Poe wrote that same day to Loud that he planned to arrive in Philadelphia on September 26. The 26th is one of the possible days Poe may have left Richmond for Baltimore, probably intending to continue on to Philadelphia a few days later than originally planned.

The peculiarities of the letter's instructions leap out. Why is Poe afraid he will not receive the letter? Why would he want Clemm not to sign the letter? And, strangest of all, why ask that the letter be addressed "E. S. T. Grey Esqre."? These questions have never been satisfactorily answered in Poe biography, in part because the name chosen by Poe serves to distract. This was not the first time Poe used an alias and not the first time he chose a variation of this particular name. The particular letters in this alias prove to be more of a red herring than a clue.

The solution requires an overview of the postal service in the United States in the 1830s and 1840s in the regions where Poe lived.<sup>47</sup> We can derive this efficiently from Poe's own experiences. At the time, mail was not delivered by the post office to private homes; instead, an individual would come to the post office and collect his or her mail by name. Thus, letters would not be addressed to street numbers as we do today, but rather to a person's name and the city or town of his or her post office. This arrangement could become complicated at times because of personal preferences and personal histories.

When Poe lived in Fordham, New York, he elected to pick up his mail in New York City rather than in the rural post office nearest to Fordham (which did not have its own post office). If mail was mistakenly addressed to the rural locale, Poe might not receive it. In this letter from April 30, 1849, the spring before his death, Poe describes to colleague E. N. H. Patterson why he had only just received an important letter that Patterson sent many months before:

No doubt you will be surpris[ed] to learn that your letter dated Dec. 18. has only this moment reached me. I live at the village of Fordham; about 14 miles from New-York on the Harlam Rail-Road—but as there is no Post-Office at the place, I date always from New York and get all my letters from the city Post-Office. When, by accident or misapprehension, letters are especially directed to me at Fordham, the clerks—some of them who do not know my arrangements—forward them to West-Farms, the nearest Post-Office town, and one which I rarely visit. Thus it happened with *your* letter [...] I have thought it proper to make you this explanation, lest you may have been all this time fancying me discourteous in not replying to your very flattering proposition.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to this example of preferring one post office over another, personal histories also played a role. The itinerant addressee who moved between different states depended on arrangements made with prior post offices. A post office would keep a list of former residents and their new places of residence, and, upon receiving a letter for one of those former residents, it would forward the letter to the addressee's new post office. Again, Poe himself describes this. After living in Richmond in the mid 1830s, Poe and his small family moved to New York in 1837. Excusing himself for another tardy reply, Poe writes to a committee of editors on February 28, 1837, from New York: "Your letter of Jan<sup>y</sup> 30 had but just reached me — having been forwarded from Richmond to this city."<sup>49</sup>

In this context, Poe's mysterious instructions to Clemm are less enigmatic and actually practical. Poe was visiting Richmond for most of the summer 1849. Between the year 1831 and his death in 1849, Poe had lived in Baltimore (1831-1835), Richmond (1835-1837), New York (1837-1838), Philadelphia (1838-1844), and again in New York (1844-1849). In 1849, while in his latest (and last) place of residence, Poe's past post offices, at least the more recent ones, would have been forwarding mail received addressed to the name Edgar A. Poe or Edgar Allan Poe to New York.<sup>50</sup> Thus the reason for Poe's concern becomes apparent. If Maria Clemm sent a letter to Philadelphia to Poe in 1849, it would have been forwarded by the Philadelphia post office to New York—in other words, it would go right back where it came from. This is why Poe, "for

fear I should not get the letter,” instructed Maria Clemm to use a different name when writing a letter to him in Philadelphia the receipt of which was timed with his upcoming arrival. If Poe presented himself at the Philadelphia post office as Edgar A. Poe, he would get no letter; if under previous arrangement with the sender he were to use a false name, say, E. S. T. Grey, a person not on the ledgers of the Philadelphia post office, that letter would be handed over.

It hardly mattered what name Poe gave, as long as it was distinctive enough that nobody *else* would inadvertently present himself by that name. We have insight into Poe’s thinking in his choice of a name for such a purpose in the letter that he writes on the same day he gives his instructions to Maria Clemm. Poe explains to Mrs. Loud why he writes to her instead of her husband: “Not being quite sure whether a letter addressed simply to ‘Mr John Loud’ would reach your husband—that is to say, not remembering whether he had a middle name or not—I have taken the liberty of writing directly to yourself.” Middle names or initials are quite important, at least in Poe’s opinion, in ensuring that the right person would receive a letter at the post office. “John Loud” may not be enough, but “John A. Loud,” for instance, improves the chances greatly (and with Marguerite *St. Leon* Loud, they are presumably that much better!). Poe chooses for Clemm to send his letter to a *nom de plume* that has not one but two middle initials! Of course, letters to Maria Clemm, who had lived with Poe in the various cities since his marriage to Virginia in 1836, would also be forwarded from Philadelphia to New York; this is likely the reason Poe asked her not to sign the letter, for in the folding of the letter the signature could be confused for the addressee and the letter, again, could be forwarded right back to New York.<sup>51</sup>

The name E. S. T. Grey, in somewhat different formats, had been used by Poe before. He used the alias “Edward S. T. Grey” to unsuccessfully disguise his identity in an attempt to get information from love interest Sarah Helen Whitman in September 1848. He also used it in 1845, as simply “E. S. T. G.” in a request for financial support for the *Broadway Journal* when he was attempting to save that magazine. Some have suggested the letters and initials stood for Poe’s favorite poets (the “S. T.” being Samuel Taylor).<sup>52</sup> Whatever the source, the name itself seems mostly irrelevant to his very practical reason for the use of the alias in the last weeks of his life.

A fascinating and previously unnoticed addendum to this episode is that the letter Poe asked Clemm to write made it to Philadelphia. Each post office

advertised in a major newspaper on a regular basis with a list of the letters that had not been picked up. The Philadelphia post office ran these lists in the *Public Ledger*, with separate listings for letters to men and women. Under the “Gentlemen’s” “List of Letters Remaining in the Philadelphia Post Office” is the following entry in the October 3, 1849 issue (the same day, coincidentally, that Poe is discovered at Ryan’s in Baltimore): Grey, E. S. F.<sup>53</sup> The list indicates that these letters had not been picked up by September 29. “Grey, E. S. F.” also appears in the remaining letters listed in the October 4 paper.<sup>54</sup> This is obviously Maria Clemm’s letter to Poe, the timing coinciding with the time she would have received his letter and sent one back according to his instructions. The “F” is presumably a misreading somewhere along the way of the “T,” either by Clemm of Poe’s handwriting, the post office of Clemm’s handwriting, or the newspaper compiler or printer of the postal agent’s handwriting. Poe had been adamant in his September 18 letter that Muddy write, and soon—urging in his instructions to “write immediately” and then reminding her again in the postscript “don’t forget to write immediately to Phila. so that your letter will be there *when I arrive*” (emphasis added). This may be the final letter written to Poe during his lifetime.

Although Clemm’s letter does not survive—it would have been destroyed once it became a nixie (that is, a “dead letter”)—the discovery of its existence waiting among the letters in Philadelphia adds another pixel to Poe’s death narrative and its timeline. We can feel fairly confident Poe did not arrive in Philadelphia, at least not through September 29 and possibly a few days after that, as he would have been quite certain to pick up the letter he so anxiously awaited.<sup>55</sup> That Clemm’s last letter to Poe was addressed to a fictional name, which itself was further corrupted, is an ironic coda to a life of creative fluctuations and frustrated reinventions.

### Notes

1. Thanks to Richard Fusco, Peter Norberg, Jeffrey Savoye and James Hutchisson for patient support and help preparing this essay for publication, and to additional readers Scott Peeples, Christoph Irmsher and John Stauffer.
2. For an overview, see Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson, *The Poe Log* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987), 819-846. Hereafter cited as “*Poe Log*.”



3. For a discussion of the differing accounts of when Poe left Richmond, see Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1941), 635-637.
4. George Edward Woodberry, *Edgar Allan Poe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), 342.
5. Woodberry 1885, 342.
6. Duke University archives, James Howard Whitty Collection, MS 63-141, Box 18.
7. *Baltimore Sun*, September 27, 1849, p. 2, col. 3.
8. "Rebuilding, &c.," *Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1849, p. 1, col. 5. For a general discussion of volunteer firefighting in Baltimore, see Amy S. Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm: the volunteer fire department in the nineteenth century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1998).
9. Of course, one does not need a specific purpose to justify a five day stay. With so many plans and so much to do at this time, and with his usual tight financial situation, however, it seems unlikely Poe had nothing specific in mind to accomplish.
10. See the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore's checklist of letters, 1838-1841 at <http://www.eapoe.org/works/letters/chklst03.htm> 15 November 2006 .
11. See Edgar Allan Poe, *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by John Ward Ostrom (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1948), vol. 1, 151-152.
12. For a discussion of Poe's earnings from the 1849 lectures in Richmond, see John Ward Ostrom, "Edgar A. Poe: His Income as Literary Entrepreneur," *Poe Studies* 15.1 (1982), 6.
13. *Poe Log*, 844.
14. Joseph Snodgrass, "The Facts of Poe's Death and Burial," *Beadle's Monthly* (March 1867), 283.

15. University of Virginia, Ingram Collection MSS 38-135, Box 2 item 64.
16. William Hand Browne to John Ingram, February 22, 1909, UVA Ingram Collection MSS 38-135, Box 8 item 421. In the same letter, Browne says of the original Walker note, "Where it is now, I don't know; but you may take your oath the copies I sent you are correct to a comma."
17. Joseph Snodgrass, *Life Illustrated* (New York), May 15, 1856, p. 24, reprinted from *Spiritual Telegraph*, January 26, 1856, 155.
18. Snodgrass 1867, 283.
19. Edward Spencer, *New York Herald*, March 27, 1881, p. 8.
20. In the 1880s, Snodgrass's widow packed up his papers and letters in wrapper and string and gave them to a newspaper editor; the Walker note was found folded up inside in a way that suggests it had been stored inside other papers. William Hand Browne to John Ingram, February 22, 1909, UVA Ingram Collection MSS 38-135, Box 8 item 421.
21. In fact, by the twentieth century, the expression "the worse for wear" was recognized as referring to being "tipsy," which raises the question of whether this use is also identifiable earlier. Eric Partridge, *Dictionary of Slang* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 1352.
22. *Sun*, October 2, 1849, p. 1, col. 5.
23. "Maryland Election Returns," Baltimore *Sun*, October 4, 1849, p. 2 col. 2.
24. Reprinted in an unidentified newspaper clipping at Enoch Pratt Free Library, Special Collections, Amelia Poe papers, Box 2, scrapbook p. 56.
25. Snodgrass 1856, 24. Reprinted in *Poe Log*, 845.
26. Snodgrass 1867, 283-284.
27. Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* (New York: Harper Perennial: 1992), 434.

28. Baltimore *American & Commercial Advertiser*, September 25, 1849.p. 3, col. 2.

29. Baltimore *American & Commercial Advertiser*, p. 3, col. 2.

30. Baltimore *American & Commercial Advertiser*, p. 3, col. 2.

31. One could also read Snodgrass's mention of Mr. H. as referring to George Herring rather than Henry Herring, if George rather than Henry was advising him and if Snodgrass was not clear on who was really the "relative" (or ex-relative) of Poe's.

32. Baltimore *Sunday Herald*, June 7, 1903.

33. Charles Scarlett, "Tale of Ratiocination: The Death and Burial of Edgar Allan Poe," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 73 (1978), 363.

34. *Letters* 2: 458-459.

35. *Letters* 2: 727-728 (1966).

36. *Letters* 2: 461.

37. John Ward Ostrom, "Edgar A. Poe: His Income as Literary Entrepreneur," *Poe Studies* 15.1 (1982), 6.

38. For discussion of a claim by Thomas Lane that Poe visited Philadelphia in these last days, see Quinn 1941, p. 637. In a May 9, 1896 letter to William McCrillis Griswold held in the Autograph Files of Houghton Library at Harvard University, Poe acquaintance John Sartain claims that Poe's last visit to him in Philadelphia was in October 1849. However, this is contradicted elsewhere and Sartain's belief expressed in the same letter that the visit was in "the latter part" of October, when Poe would have been dead several weeks, suggests a mistake on Sartain's part in relation to the time of Poe's death.

39. *International Weekly Miscellany*, Aug 26, 1850, p. 265. The book itself seems by all indications to have been published in 1851. Griswold, Poe's literary

executor, was the *Miscellany*'s editor, which may explain his attention to the Loud-Poe connection before her volume was published.

40. There is also Dr. Moran's report, though it seems unlikely Loud would have heard of it, that Poe called out in the hospital that "the best thing my best friend could do would be to blow out my *brains* with a pistol" (emphasis added). Poe, *Letters and Documents* in the Enoch Pratt Free Library (New York, Scholars' facsimiles & reprints, 1941), p. 33. We might also think of the general phrenology-related fascination with the size and shape of Poe's head and brain.

41. Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, October 9, 1849, p. 2, col. 1.

42. Jan 21 1885 article, unidentified newspaper, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Special Collections, Amelia Poe papers, Box 2, scrapbook 70.

43. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Special Collections, Amelia Poe papers, Box 2, scrapbook p. 61.

44. Jeffrey Savoye was kind enough to point me to other contemporary poems on sad deaths and funerals, including one by Dr. N. C. Brooks similarly titled "The Stranger's Funeral" that was published in 1842. This counsels against reading Loud's poem as being about Poe. I would argue that the formulaic status of this genre of poem in the nineteenth century does not negate the significance of its details any more than it would our modern newspaper obituaries (and wedding announcements), which mechanically recycle conventions of phrasing and language. The anonymous subject of burial is one of the conventions, but this does not mean the genre poet did not take inspiration from a specific death or burial. Snodgrass's poem discussed earlier in this essay uses many of the same conventions twenty-four years later, and also in that case never mentions Poe's name (though identifying him through titles of Poe's poems).

45. *The Cost Books of Ticknor & Fields and their predecessors*, edited by Warren S. Tyron & William Charvat (New York, Bibliographical Society of America, 1949), p. 191. Exchanges between the publisher and Mr. Loud at Letters Books of Ticknor & Fields, Domestic, vol. III, p. 182-3, 207, 409, in Houghton Library, Harvard University.

46. *Letters 2*: 461.

47. For an overview, see Edward Tremayne, *Tremayne's table of post offices in the United States* (New York: W. F. Burgess, 1850).

48. *Letters 2*: 439. Poe could also have written this as a creative justification for not replying sooner, but the explanation of the postal system remains a good one.

49. Ostrom's printing of this letter omits this line. Manuscript photocopy of letter held in the Mabbott collection, University of Iowa.

50. Unless instructed otherwise, as the Richmond post office might have been during Poe's extended stay there in the summer of 1849.

51. Poe plays with the folding of letters in "The Purloined Letter," which also reflects Poe's anxiety about letter writing and receiving. See Matthew Pearl, Introduction, *Murders in the Rue Morgue: The Dupin Tales* (New York: Modern Library, 2006).

52. Richard P. Benton, "Friends and Enemies: Women in the Life of Edgar Allan Poe," *Myths and Reality*, Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, 1987, p. 17. See also, Burton R. Pollin, "Poe as Edward S. T. Grey," *Ball State University Forum*, 14, Summer 1973.

53. Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, October 3, 1849, p. 4, col. 4.

54. Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, October 3, 1849, p. 4, col. 4. Letters were listed in two advertisements according to the rules of the post office, before being discarded.

55. The entry for remaining letters in the *Ledger* may in fact extend to October 2. The phrasing in the paper regarding the dates at which the letters were still recorded is ambiguous. Poe urges Muddy to write so adamantly that one scholar, Birgit Bramsback, attributed that desire to pick up the letter as a reason Poe wanted to go to Philadelphia. Birgit Bramsback, "The Final Illness and Death of Edgar Allan Poe: An Attempt at Reassessment," *Studia Neophilologica* 42 (1970), 45.

## Poe's Sublimity: The Role of Burkean Aesthetics

*Dennis Pahl*

To the extent that Edgar Allan Poe, in such works as “The Philosophy of Composition” and “The Poetic Principle,” argues for an aesthetics revolving around “totality, or unity, of effect,” “Beauty,” and the “elevation [...] of the soul,” one might think of Poe’s aesthetic theory as anticipating New Criticism’s formalism, or as suggestive of an idealist poetics connected to the notion of the literary work’s organic unity.<sup>1</sup> No less a critic than T. S. Eliot and a host of more recent commentators, including Eric Carlson, G. R. Thompson, and Kent Ljungquist, have pointed to Poe’s indebtedness to the tradition of romantic idealism that would underpin such a poetics.<sup>2</sup> As Joan Dayan and Evan Carton have more persuasively argued, however, any sort of idealism or transcendental aesthetics cannot be more antithetical to Poe’s own conception of aesthetics and his related views of human subjectivity.<sup>3</sup> As these critics contend, Poe is much less the mystical romantic influenced by different kinds of European and American idealism than one who is often intent on questioning, if not parodying, such abstract theories and their metaphysical pretensions. Suggestive in this regard are the many satirical works taking aim at various strains of romantic thought, works such as “Never Bet the Devil Your Head,” “Mellonta Tauta,” “The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.” and, most notably, the long philosophical treatise *Eureka*, where Poe ridicules notions of Kantian idealism and “Frogpondian” transcendentalism as nothing other than pure “cant.” In *Eureka*, Poe makes his position clear from the start, as he has his ironic narrator considering the possibility of reconciling, or of locating unity within, all of the otherwise unruly aspects of nature—imagining, as the narrator does, the absurd spectacle of someone “whirling” about on his heel atop Mount Aetna so as to “comprehend the panorama in the sublimity of its *oneness*.”<sup>4</sup> As Dayan has contended, such writings, as well as others less overtly satirical, demonstrate Poe’s mocking attitude toward transcendental aesthetics and philosophical idealism, and so help bolster the argument for Poe’s greater affinity with the materialist views of John Locke, as opposed to those theories more properly associated with “the romantic sublime.”

While critics may make the case for an anti-idealist Poe influenced by Locke’s empirical philosophy, however, one ought not to dismiss the influence of theories of the sublime as such, especially when some are so closely linked to Locke and thus are far removed from any form of romantic idealism. In

particular, one might heed the special connection between Poe's own brand of materialist aesthetics and many of the formulations presented in Edmund Burke's eighteenth-century treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Though influential on Kant's transcendental theory of the sublime as delineated in the *Critique of Judgement* (which becomes, in the hands of both European idealist writers and American transcendentalists, the "romantic sublime" to which Dayan refers), Burke's more empirical theories address an aesthetic that, unlike Kant's idealist formalism, systematizes both the psychological as well as the physiological implications of the sublime.

In Burke, we encounter a sublime aesthetics of terror and pain—and also a notion of the beautiful—that prove remarkably relevant to Poe, especially to his understanding of the impact of emotions and sensory impressions on human subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> Poe depicts the sublime experience not, as Kant would, in terms of an individual subject who, with his senses temporarily overwhelmed, ultimately arrives at a sense of wholeness through the triumph of the supersensible (Reason).<sup>6</sup> Instead, Poe represents the sublime in terms of a subject in a permanent state of crisis. In contrast to the Kantian-inspired philosophy of Coleridge and Emerson, who offer a version of the sublime wherein the stability of the self is reassured through one's blissful relationship with nature, Poe's works dramatize a situation similar to what Thomas Weiskel, in describing Burke's theory, calls the "negative sublime."<sup>7</sup> If the "positive sublime" is associated with a self-present, totalizing subject (illustrated, for example, by Emerson's well-known passage from *Nature* concerning the "transparent eyeball"), Poe, in contrast, reveals in his own visually oriented images how the sublime object—configured as nature, art, or woman—serves to overwhelm the "I" (eye) and how the self thus falls into a realm of estrangement, where the subject becomes de-centered and ambiguously positioned with regard to its identity.<sup>8</sup> Unlike what Weiskel sees as the "drastic egotism" within certain mystical forms of the positive sublime, in Poe's staging and Gothic refashioning of Burkean aesthetics, the otherness of the sublime object proves impossible to assimilate.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the perceiving subject, forever alienated, is left without chance of moving to a state of Reason or of preserving a unified identity.

While the Burkean sublime is most evident in Poe's poetry and fiction, even such important aesthetic statements as "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle"—despite their hints of poetic idealism—indicate Poe's

embrace of Burke's materialist aesthetics as well as his ironic stance toward "the so called poetry of the so called transcendentalists" (*Complete Works* 14: 208).<sup>10</sup> It is in "The Poetic Principle" where Poe seems at his most idealistic and where, upon first reading it, one is tempted to think of his poetics in purely metaphysical terms. Here he proclaims Beauty to be poetry's chief province and the poet's objective to be the production of impressions that are "the most ethereal [,] the most elevating and the most pure" (*Complete Works* 14: 289). Poe's discussion of the poet's acquiring inspiration directly from the realm of nature may lead readers to draw similar transcendental conclusions, inasmuch as the poet's soul is said to be nourished by "the bright orbs that shine in Heaven," the "waving of the grain-fields," the "repose of sequestered lakes," the "songs of birds," and the "scent of the violet." These natural images culminate in the example of the "beauty of woman," suggested "in the grace of her step—in the lustre of her eye—in the melody of her voice—in her soft laughter—in her sigh—in the harmony of the rustling of her robes [...] in her burning enthusiasms [...] in the divine majesty—of her love" (*Complete Works* 14: 290-291). The beauty of woman is the poet's ultimate inspiration for creating the sort of "Supernal Beauty" Poe also desires to achieve in the poem's own structure and through its sense of "Unity." For Poe, the beauty of woman becomes, in effect, analogous to the formal beauty of the poem, which as a self-enclosed structure is a "poem written solely for the poem's sake" and not for any social-moral reason that might demonstrate "the heresy of *The Didactic*" (*Complete Works* 14: 271). Poe's emphasis on a poem's formal unity, its purity and supernal Beauty, and its identification with the world of nature may indeed make one wonder whether "The Poetic Principle" endorses an aesthetics of idealism.

Nevertheless, far from turning poetry into an expression of pure inspiration or a formal vehicle for discovering spiritual oneness with nature, Poe, like Burke, favors a materialist view of poetry as he tries to delineate the "effects" of poetic language and what Burke calls "the natural and mechanical causes of our passions."<sup>11</sup> In accord with his empirical approach to aesthetics, Poe claims: "It is to be hoped that common sense [...] will prefer deciding upon a work of art [...] by the impression it makes, by the effect it produces" (*Complete Works* 14: 268). Like Burke, Poe views the "the beautiful" not in Platonic terms but rather in terms of an aesthetics that is anchored in physical causes, sensations, emotions. For Burke, beauty is a "social quality" tied to love, which inspires those feelings of tenderness and affection that one might have



for a woman.<sup>12</sup> For Poe, “Beauty” is linked to similar emotions and specifically to the sensuousness of a feminized nature and of woman. In Poe and Burke, such beauty excites a certain passion that can often be, as Burke says, a “species of melancholy,” an emotion that turns on the pleasure of one’s memories of a lost love.<sup>13</sup> Poe agrees that “sadness is inseparably connected to all the higher manifestations of true Beauty,” and, insofar as he praises the sort of “pleasurable sadness” he finds in the poems he most admires, he joins Burke in depicting pain and pleasure as inevitably entangled.

While “the beautiful” in Burke is mainly given sentimental value, however, Poe introduces more intense passions into his idea of it—pointing out, for example, how the “intense melancholy” evoked in a poem “we find thrilling us to the soul” (*Complete Works* 14: 279). Poe’s notion of “the beautiful” in poetic endeavor is likewise connected to passionate feeling, as he alludes to the poet’s “desire,” “wild effort,” “ecstatic prescience” and sense of awe—the “shivering delight” he feels upon attaining his “sublime end” (*Complete Works* 14: 273-275). To be sure, Poe’s is an aesthetics of pleasure and intensity, of thrilling, bodily sensation, even as he speaks of the soul and its elevation to a higher state; for it is in “the Beautiful” that we experience “the most intense” feeling as well as the “pleasurable elevation, or excitement, *of the soul*” (*Complete Works* 14: 275).<sup>14</sup>

Because of its intensity and excitement and passion, the aesthetic pleasure Poe associates with “the beautiful” cannot thus help but correspond with the Burkean sublime. Indicative of this fact is Poe’s statement in “The Poetic Principle”: “I make Beauty, therefore—using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem” (*Complete Works* 14: 275). Poe’s manner of embedding “the sublime” in the sentence, between two dashes and between the repeated word “Beauty” may well suggest the irruptive power of the sublime lodged inside, or within the framework, of the beautiful. Not content simply to conflate the beautiful and the sublime, and so to make them perfectly inseparable, Poe becomes more concerned with combining the two categories in a special way, so that “the sublime” exists in something like a state of repression and potential force within “the beautiful.” In *Marginalia*, Poe observes that the “*pure Imagination* chooses...only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined: the compound [...] partaking, in character, of beauty, or sublimity, in the ratio of the respective beauty or sublimity of the things combined [...]”<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, whatever elements are combined, even if they

are the beautiful and the sublime, they never become identical. Poe would likely agree with Burke, who comments on the effect of uniting these two concepts within the same “compound”: “does this prove, that they are the same, does it prove that they are any way allied [...] Black and white may soften, may blend, but they are not therefore the same.”<sup>16</sup> Hardly interchangeable concepts, the beautiful and sublime are only creatively combined in Poe’s work. Each value is interwoven with the other in a complicated way, thus producing a more powerful aesthetic and emotional effect.

Far from unique, Poe’s method of “combining” concepts is indebted to Burke’s own theory, which ends up undermining the stability of its aesthetic categories without subsuming one category into the other. Burke describes the beautiful—with its qualities of softness, delicacy, smoothness, smallness, flowing lines, harmony within boundaries, clear and weak sounds, and colors “clean and fair”—in terms of the traditionally feminine; meanwhile, he treats the sublime—associated with power, terror, vastness, obscurity, infinity, darkness, gloom, and deviating lines—in masculine terms, as an overpowering force to which we must subject ourselves.<sup>17</sup> As Barbara Freeman shows, however, Burke’s example of beauty *par excellence*—woman—strangely emerges as partially sublime. According to Burke, the beautiful is best defined in terms of the female body, especially the part of it where woman “is perhaps most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness[;] the variety of the surface[;] the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried.”<sup>18</sup> As Freeman points out, Burke’s description of the “feminine body, supposedly the symbol of the beautiful, instead produces the effects of the sublime.” With their unclear boundaries, a woman’s physical features only “instill unsteadiness,” disorientation, vertigo—“a typically sublime feeling connected with the falling away of ground or center [...] what we feel when the abyss opens up before us.”<sup>19</sup> This aspect of the sublime in Burke’s treatise also contains a sexual element, inasmuch as the “deceitful maze” of the woman’s body provides a lure to the male gaze. Such an element of enticement may well point to the libidinous, sublime terrors that Beauty tries to conceal.<sup>20</sup> Poe’s idea of woman as emblematic of the beautiful has similarly sublime implications, especially for his poetry, which invokes female beauty as a symbol for its aesthetic goals.

As in “The Poetic Principle,” “The Philosophy of Composition” also draws attention to the category of “the beautiful.” While aligning his aesthetic theory with the exact details of “The Raven,” Poe constructs an empirical analysis of aesthetic effects comparable to that of Burke. He defines “Beauty” in terms of love and melancholy, and, also like Burke, he explicitly feminizes the beautiful, arguing that the most melancholy and hence the most poetical of topics is that of “the death [...] of a beautiful woman” (*Complete Works* 14: 201). Melancholy (“the most legitimate of all the poetical tones”) and mourning over the loss of the beloved are central to the poem’s “unity of impression” (*Complete Works* 14: 196-198); and they are states of mind also central to Burke’s concept of the beautiful. In Poe’s poem about the lost Lenore, however, images conveying “fantastic terrors” predominate and so reflect more the Burkean sublime than the beautiful. Frightful thoughts of the black bird of “ill-omen” appearing out of the tempestuous night, of the “Plutonian shore,” and of a “home of Horror haunted” all move the poem’s speaker from sadness to unrelenting anxiety.<sup>21</sup> The intense excitations on the part of Poe’s scholar-narrator serve only to exceed the boundaries of the beautiful, as his obsession with the deceased Lenore grows ever more powerful. Here melancholy turns to madness in a way that is reminiscent of Burke’s own problematic association of the beautiful with melancholy. In his *Enquiry*, Burke indeed discusses the sometimes “violent effects” of the lover’s melancholy—with madness being just one of love’s “extraordinary effects”: “When men have suffered their imaginations to be long affected with any idea [such as that of love], it so wholly engrosses them as to shut out by degrees almost every other, and to break down every partition of the mind which would confine it.”<sup>22</sup> Madness and obsession are, of course, common psychological conditions in Poe’s characters; and both mental states belong more to the anxiety-inducing realm of the sublime than to the smooth, harmonious, gentle realm of the beautiful.<sup>23</sup>

As we often see in Poe, the “intense excitements” that result in extreme states of mind eventually give rise to the special sensation of “delight” Burke attaches to sublime experience.<sup>24</sup> For Poe and Burke, this delight is almost always of a masochistic kind, where pleasure or a thrilling sensation coincides with an intensely painful or terrifying situation. In the case of the speaker of “The Raven,” his state of languid melancholy becomes—with each “wildly” propounded query to the bird—increasingly intense emotional pain. In detailing the effects of terror, Burke refers to this experience as “unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves.”<sup>25</sup> As Poe indicates, the speaker

intentionally fashions his queries and statements so as to raise the level of his anxiety and to effect a kind of “phrenzied [*sic*] pleasure” upon each pronouncement of the most sorrowful, hence the “most delicious,” word “Nevermore.”<sup>26</sup> His willful suffering, which Poe describes as a “species of despair which delights in self-torture,” suggests the perverse self-destructive behavior witnessed in many other Poe characters, such as the murderous narrator of “The Black Cat” and the daring voyager Arthur Gordon Pym.<sup>27</sup> Such delight in self-torture becomes, in effect, equivalent to a libidinous pleasure, one that, for Poe’s scholar, reaches an emotional “climax” when it culminates in the raven’s phallic beak penetrating the scholar’s heart (*Collected Works* 1: 202). In the end, instead of rising triumphantly above the deliciously painful, anxious remembrance of his lost Lenore, the scholar (that is, his soul) only falls under the raven’s shadow, to be hidden forevermore in the “darkness” and “obscurity” that Burke designates as qualities tied to the sublime.<sup>28</sup> His experience being typical of the negative sublime, Poe’s narrator remains in his alienated state, unable to assimilate the sublime object through the aid of Reason or the supersensible.<sup>29</sup>

While sublime encounters in Poe are depicted in typically thrilling scenes of nature (such as cataracts, cliffs, maelstroms, and ravines), terror often and rather strangely finds a home within the domestic, or feminine, sphere: the realm of the beautiful suddenly invaded, for instance, by the sublime figure of the woman returning, with a powerful force, from the dead. Such an irruption of the repressed within the beautiful reminds us of the way Poe describes in “The Philosophy of Composition” his aesthetic requirements for the settings of his works. He contends that “a close *circumscription of space*” such as a domestic setting—as opposed to the wide open space of nature—is crucial for producing intense sensation. With “the force of a frame to a picture,” Poe’s enclosed settings present themselves as tightly bound interior spaces, symbolic sites of the mind that are “rendered sacred [...] by memories of her who frequented it” (*Complete Works* 14: 204). As sites of memory, or as mental landscapes, these spaces contain one essential poetic element—“Beauty” — and two subordinate poetic elements—“Truth,” which pertains to the “intellect,” and “Passion,” which refers to emotions and which Poe sentimentally connects to the idea of “*homeliness*” (*Complete Works* 14: 198).

If such an aesthetic space defines itself in domestic terms, however, it remains far from domesticated. It also possesses a certain “*richness*,” which Poe calls

“a forcible term.” Richness should not be confused with an aesthetic conception of “*the ideal*,” especially as espoused by the “so called transcendentalists.” Instead, the term signals a deeper “suggestiveness,” an “under-current...of meaning” (208). While critics including Thompson and Ljungquist see richness linked to the ineffable or mystical in Poe, the term may be better understood from the Burkean perspective as pointing to those inherent material qualities within poetic writing that produce violent and disruptive emotional effects and that render Beauty a category more complicated than one might assume.<sup>30</sup> Similar to the picturesque setting that is forcibly framed, Beauty, in Poe, contains the very irruptive forces, the “intense excitements” of the sublime that threaten to dismantle the frame and, consequently, to undermine any notion of poetic boundary or unity.<sup>31</sup> Like the enclosed, “insulated” realm of the scholar’s “richly furnished” chamber or of the finely molded Usher mansion, the feminine, seemingly domesticated site of poetry itself possesses such “under-currents” of passion that, even from their repressed state, would return with all the masculine power and violence of the sublime (*Complete Works* 14: 204).

Like the disruptive undercurrents of the poem, the repressed material within the unconscious of a Poe protagonist is projected outward, manifesting itself in the terrifying sublime object. The encounter with such an object, then, means confronting an intimate, mostly hidden part of oneself (as the raven’s metaphorical status suggests). It is an encounter with a mirror image that, once familiar, is now rendered strange. In such a sublime moment, Poe’s aesthetics move beyond the Burkean model to one anticipating Freud’s more modern psychoanalytic theorization of terror as “the uncanny,” a view of terror that, as David B. Morris argues, characterizes the Gothic sublime.<sup>32</sup>

Examples of such sublime moments abound in Poe’s poetry and fiction, particularly in those works with domestic settings, where the familial quickly turns unfamiliar. One need only think of the situation of the Usher family and of the mansion that presents itself, mirror-like, before the narrator, rearing its symbolic head and suggesting the forcible return of the repressed. Likewise, in “Ligeia,” Poe emblemizes his notion of “the beautiful” in the title character, who, also symbolic of the repressed passions within the narrator’s unconscious, comes back from the dead and replaces the more conventional Rowena. While at times related to transcendental images of nature and Emerson’s “circle of analogies,” Lady Ligeia as an incarnation of Beauty operates, as Carton contends, to satirize various types of romantic idealism.<sup>33</sup> Her “strangeness”

of expression, especially as manifested in her “large eyes,” defines her peculiar beauty and makes her indicative of the darker, disturbing, and ultimately disorienting aspects of the Burkean sublime. The narrator’s most intimate companion, his “partner” in life who is really a part of himself, she yet remains in many ways unfamiliar—seen in his “visions” as a hauntingly bizarre figure whose associations with power and terror and “irregularity” correspond neatly with Burke’s conception of the sublime. Poe’s rhetoric drives home the point, as his narrator describes Ligeia’s unconquerable “will,” her “gigantic” store of knowledge and “infinite” power of mind, her blazing “wild eyes” and “her wild desire for life,” her general “*intensity*” together with her propensity for being “violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion,” and—in the final scene—the terrifying, “hideous drama of [her] revivification” (*Collected Works* 2: 312-317, 328).

If Ligeia, like other female characters in Poe, calls attention to the strangeness or the otherness in the narrator’s unconscious, she also points to the sublime encounter with poetic language, or with what might be called the terror of the text. Like Lenore in “The Raven,” Ligeia is first only a name, a sound, one that functions like poetry and so affects the narrator with the “thrilling [...] eloquence of her low musical language” (*Collected Works* 2: 310). Her very being becomes, indeed, a “vague sound” issuing from beyond the grave and resonating in the narrator’s mind as an overpowering memory given sensuous form (*Collected Works* 2: 328). According to Burke, “words have as considerable a share in exciting ideas of beauty and of the sublime” as have natural objects, paintings, and architecture.<sup>34</sup> In the same way Burke believes that carefully combined language “gives new life and force” to objects and that the “power of combining” can lift these objects to the level of the sublime, Poe similarly argues for a poetics based on the special combinatory effects of language, images, and ideas.<sup>35</sup> In Poe, the sublime encounter—whether it be with a woman, an architectural site, or a natural scene—becomes an aesthetic encounter with what Poe sees as the material “power of words.” In this respect, Ligeia is akin to a poem that possesses the material power, intensity, and obscurity of sublime language. Her uncanny combination of features—of feminine beauty and masculine strength of mind, of familiarity and strangeness, of naturalness and unnaturalness—only contributes to her poetic sublimity.

Likewise, in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the mansion becomes a work of art, or a verbal artifice, whose assorted parts are arranged to create a certain

“sentience,” or what Burke calls a “new life and force.” It is the “method of collocation” of its stones, the “order of their arrangement” that, like well-manipulated rhetoric, produces a powerful sensory effect (*Collected Works 2*: 408). When the narrator experiences “insufferable gloom” at the sight of the dilapidated mansion, the “combinations of very simple natural objects” affect him with a “power” that defies analysis (*Collected Works 2*: 397-398). Although he claims the “picture” of the house is too dreary to be sublime, what he eventually finds as he moves deeper into the labyrinth of the Usher dwelling is an increasingly disturbing world, one that strangely blends the literary and the real. Inasmuch as two of the literary works he encounters in the house—the poem “The Haunted Palace” and the romantic narrative “The Mad Trist”—contain images and describe events that uncannily mirror the images and events of the story proper, they help induce a sublime sense of disorientation.

The narrator’s reading of the romance results in a “mad tryst” of interlaced narratives. The interpolated romance’s rhetoric of violence and destruction presages the final events of the main narrative. The mansion’s “cracking and ripping” and “grating” sounds in “The Mad Trist” coincide with Lady Madeline’s violent return from her premature entombment. The passages describing stormy weather, walls being torn asunder, and shrieking death-cries anticipate the terrifying, sublime scene of both the house’s and the Usher family’s total destruction amid a quasi-divine “whirlwind” and a “sound like the voice of a thousand waters” (*Collected Works 2*: 414-417). For all their “dreariness,” the combinations of objects and images conspire to create the sublime effect—one that shatters the narrator’s nerves and consequently undoes the integrity of his rational self. With the last remnants of the Usher house sinking from sight, one might easily believe that the narrator finally begins to feel safe, whole, and secure, having passed through terror and anxiety to achieve a higher, more detached state of Reason. However, his fragmented language, emphasized by the multiple dashes and disjointed syntax in the tale’s last sentence, only betrays his continued sense of psychological fragmentation, as he stands—his self doubled, split, re-presented—before the mirror image of the “deep and dank tarn” (*Collected Works 2*: 397, 417).

Even Poe’s works more usually associated with nature’s terror underscore the sublime effects of poetic artifice and material language. In *Pym*, the ending has been interpreted as a journey not only into the milky, maternal—yet fatal—embrace of nature but also into a world of words, where the “author” himself

is forced to confront his own estrangement, possibly even his death, in the artificial space of writing (i.e., *corpse* turning into *corpus*).<sup>36</sup> Similarly, “A Descent into the Maelström” ties the power of language with the powerful forces of sublime nature. Here we find a narrator staring down from his perilously high position on a mountain cliff into the frightening watery abyss below, a symbolic textual world with its “inky hue” and with its winds “sending forth [...] an appalling voice,” the whole atmosphere giving the “wild bewildering sense of *the novel*” (*Collected Works 2*: 580-81). Although the narrator is well versed in the “ordinary accounts” of the maelstrom, it is only the old Norwegian fisherman’s vivid recounting of his harrowing experience inside the walls of the whirlpool that entrances the younger narrator. As he listens to the old man’s story of his sublime experience, the narrator hears of how the fisherman was forced, amid the “horrible danger,” to watch his brothers plunge to their death into the maelstrom’s “chaos of foam.” In what Burke would describe as “delightful horror,” the fisherman thought of “how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner [...] in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God’s power” (*Collected Works 2*: 588).<sup>37</sup> For the old man, as well as for the younger narrator who listens to the tale, the sublime moment involves a simultaneous “wish to be inundated or engulfed by pleasurable stimuli and a fear of being incorporated, overwhelmed, annihilated.”<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, similar to how the fisherman fearfully and excitedly approached the “gigantic and innumerable vortices” of the womb-like whirlpool with a “*wish* to explore its depth,” his listener is likewise drawn into a terrifying and mesmerizing maelstrom of sublime rhetoric (*Collected Works 2*: 580, 589). His experience of the natural event comes to him second-hand, mediated through the power of language. As he peers over the cliff, his is an encounter not as much with the “heaving, boiling, hissing” waters “just under [his] eye” as with the fisherman’s story and its “dizzying” effects (*Collected Works 2*: 578-580, 591). For the young man, who listens both to the “half shriek, half roar” of the sea as well as to the “wild bewildering” tale of terror, this linguistic event results in his becoming—like the fragments of “buoyant matter” drawn into the maelstrom—“*completely absorbed*” (*Collected Works 2*: 580, 592). In a sense, his is a sublime, thrilling, and disorienting encounter with his own death. Insofar as Poe does not return to the original framing narrative at the end, we assume that the listener becomes lost in, absorbed by, metaphorically annihilated within the old man’s narrative.<sup>39</sup>



As Poe's scenes of the sublime consist of linguistically and poetically constructed worlds that threaten to engulf the subject, his works thus demonstrate a dynamic that echoes Burke's last statement in his *Enquiry*, that words properly arranged are capable of affecting us "as strongly as the things they represent, and sometimes much more strongly."<sup>40</sup> Like Burke, Poe well understands how words possess power and how the mechanics of combining can be instrumental in creating such strong emotional effects as to overwhelm the senses and compromise the unity of self. In his narratives of terror and pain, Poe infuses an undercurrent of material "richness"—combining and complicating the beautiful and the sublime, the feminine and the masculine, the familiar and the strange, as well as the natural and the rhetorical. In so doing, he fully embraces Burkean aesthetics while celebrating the power of sublime language.

### Notes

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1. Edgar Allan Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. 14*, ed. James A. Harrison (New York: AMS Press, 1965), 196, 197. All future references to Poe's essays "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle" pertain to the Harrison edition and will hereafter be cited parenthetically as *Complete Works* in the text.

2. For discussions of Poe's association with the European tradition of romantic idealism, with the aesthetic theories of Kant, Coleridge and Schlegel, as well as with later schools of symbolism, see T. S. Eliot, "From Poe to Valery," *Hudson Review* 2 (Autumn 1949), 327-342; G.R. Thompson, *Circumscribed Eden of Dreams: Dreamvision and Nightmare in Poe's Early Poetry* (Baltimore: Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1984); Kent Ljungquist, "The Poet as Critic," *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Kevin J. Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 9, 11; and Rachel Polonsky, "Poe's Aesthetic Theory," *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Kevin Hayes (Cambridge:

Cambridge UP, 2002), 46. See also Eric W. Carlson, "The Frames of Reference for Poe's Symbolic Language," *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: G.K.Hall, 1987), 207-217. Carlson sees Poe's writing as embracing a theory of "the Vague" and also as one related to Emerson's transcendentalist philosophy.

3. See Joan Dayan, *Fables of Mind: An Inquiry into Poe's Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987). She argues that Poe "deconstructs the romantic sublime" and, while adopting a Lockean perspective, questions various mystical notions related to the sublime (15, 24, 27, 109). In *The Rhetoric of American Romance: Dialectic and Identity in Emerson, Dickinson, Poe, and Hawthorne* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1985), 98-105, Evan Carton demonstrates Poe's parodying of the romantic sublime in "Ligeia" and argues that the violence of Poe's comic tales is "largely self-directed" and is "meant to puncture Poe's own metaphysical ideals and pretensions" (17). Although calling attention to the terror of integration and detachment in Poe's texts, Carton never attempts to relate these interests directly to Burke's aesthetics of the sublime. In "'Eyes that Behold': Poe's 'Domain of Arnheim' and the Science of Vision," *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 7.1 (Spring 2006), 4-30, Laura Saltz approaches Poe's landscape fiction from a materialist perspective, but, at the same time, views his "science" as "compatible with Poe's notions of poetic transcendence" (22).

4. Poe, Edgar Allan. *Eureka, The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. 16*, ed. James A. Harrison (New York: AMS Press, 1964), 186.

5. In discussing the sublime experience in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. J. T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 1958), Burke associates fear and terror with extreme pain and its violent effects on the body: "Fear or terror, which is an apprehension of pain or death, exhibits exactly the same effects [as those which derive from bodily pain], approaching in violence to those just mentioned in proportion to the nearness of the cause, and the weakness of the subject" (131). Burke later comments that a "mode of terror, or of pain, is always the cause of the sublime," contending that both terror and pain produce "a tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves" (132, 136). Burke's numerous references to violence suggest that, for him, the sublime is inextricably attached to violence in terms of the threatening danger to, or the forceful emotional effect on, the subject.

6. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952), attempts to outline the philosophical implications of Burke's sensational understanding of the sublime, locating the sublime primarily within a Subject whose imaginative faculties ultimately give finality, within the sphere of "the supersensible" to the otherwise excessive, powerful, and emotionally overwhelming features of the sublime object (104, 107-111). Unlike Burke, Kant desires to lift aesthetic judgments "out of the sphere of empirical psychology, in which otherwise they would remain buried amid feelings of gratification and pain" and place them instead within the sphere of "transcendental philosophy" (117).

7. In *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1986), Thomas Weiskel contends that the positive sublime, in contrast to the negative, "would subsume all otherness, all possibility of negation" (49). See also Bryan J. Wolf, "A Grammar of the Sublime, or Intertextuality Triumphant in Church, Turner, and Cole," *New Literary History* 16.2 (1985), 321-341. Wolf discusses the egotistical sublime and its relation to nineteenth-century painting. Wolf refers to such a notion of the sublime as a "quest for presence" and, in this context, invokes Emerson's image of "the transparent eyeball" (340).

8. In Poe, the issue of identity becomes complicated with respect not only to the self's ontological status but also to the subject's gender identity; traditional feminine and masculine roles in Poe's fictional characters often become reversed.

9. Weiskel, 52

10. See Dayan, 11-12.

11. See Burke, 139. When Poe speaks in "Philosophy" of the poem's "totality, or unity, of effect," it is less, I would argue, an anticipation of New Criticism's formalism and that school's interest in organic unity and structural purity than a way of recalling Burke's interest in the quality of unity as suggestive of concentrated power and therefore as essential for the intensity of emotional effect. Regarding the issue of unity, see Burke, 138-139.

12. Burke, 42-43.

13. Burke, 123.

14. While Poe makes use of Kantian rhetoric throughout his theoretical statements on aesthetics and on poetry in particular, we nevertheless notice his emphasis on empirical interests and the impact of bodily sensation rather than on transcendental aesthetics. In Kant, for example, the “soul” signifies the “animating principle in the mind,” one that activates the imagination both to “provoke more thought than admits of expression” and, while coming up against the “indefinable,” to give way finally to the idea of the supersensible (175, 178-179). While invoking in “The Philosophy” the idea of the “soul” and the “indefinite,” Poe nevertheless places his emphasis always on the “intense” excitement that poetry causes. If the “soul” in Kant points to the supersensible, in Poe it is connected more to physical sensation, to an ecstatic moment, a thrilling experience that, as suggestive of libidinous energy, never possesses the “moral foundation” that Kant ties to reason and the supersensible. Moreover, if “tone” in Kantian aesthetics is but an “effect of mechanical association” on a lower scale than poetry, in Poe it is all important to his sense of poetics, which arises out of the science and industry of combining the material, sensuous elements of rhetoric—a science and industry that have no place in Kant’s view of poetic genius (179). In the context of his discussion of work and the sublime, Burke associates labor and pain, both of which help to rouse one out of a state of torpor by stimulating bodily sensations; see 134-36.

15. See Poe, *Marginalia, Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. 2*, ed. Burton R. Pollin, (New York: Gordian Press, 1985), 369. For a discussion anticipating Poe’s notion of the combinatory effects of language, see Burke, 174.

16. Burke, 124-125.

17. Burke, 113-124. For discussions of gender within Burke’s categories, see Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 85-90; and Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 48.

18. Burke 115.

19. Barbara Claire Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995), 50.

20. Burke does write about lust, but he does not link it to the delight that accompanies the sublime. See Guiseppe Sertoli, <[http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins\\_guide\\_to\\_literary\\_theory](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory)> (Johns Hopkins UP, 1997), whose essay on Burke shows that some of his language, such as that revolving around the “rapturous and violent,” is sexually suggestive, although desire and death, eros and thanatos, are not explicitly connected as they are in Freud’s writings. Although Weiskel contends that Burke is “an insistent dualist” who divides the passions into “the erotic and the self-preservative” (92), I would argue that the “delightful horror” Burke discusses in relation to the self-preservative instincts of the sublime have a connection with the libidinous thrill in encountering fears associated with the potential annihilation of the self.

21. Poe, Edgar Allan. *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. 1, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1969), 364-369. All future references to “The Raven” pertain to the Mabbott edition and will be cited parenthetically as *Collected Works* in the text.

22. Burke, 40-41.

23. In *Enquiry*, Burke describes the sublime in terms of danger, raised emotions, and violent passions—ideas that are similarly associated with the occasional “violent effects produced by love” (40-41, 134).

24. See “The Philosophy of Composition,” 196. Burke speaks of the pain and terror that are “capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of all passions. Its object is the sublime. Its highest degree I call *astonishment*; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence, and respect, which by the very etymology of the words [show] how they stand distinguished from positive pleasure” (136).

25. Burke, 134.

26. Repetition of words or sounds may contribute to the overall structural unity of Poe’s poem, but more to the point, it operates according to Burke’s principles of the sublime. For Burke, the idea of infinity causes terror, and he relates this idea to the constant repetition of a remark or thought in the minds of madmen. In their “phrensy (*sic*), every repetition reinforces [the remark or thought] with

new strength” (74). The seemingly “never-ending” repeating of a word like “Nevermore” suggests the terror of the infinite that the narrator of “The Raven” experiences.

27. See Poe’s “Imp of the Perverse” and “The Black Cat,” where violence and self-destructive behavior become aesthetically thrilling to the character and where story-telling itself, which acts as a confession to the crime, becomes equally perverse and pleasurable for the way it guarantees his destruction. See also Weiskel, who writes that the sublime is “intimately [...] related to anxiety” and that in the sublime moment, “[t]here is simultaneously a wish to be inundated or engulfed by pleasurable stimuli and a fear of being incorporated, overwhelmed, annihilated” (83, 104).

28. Burke, 144, 60.

29. Weiskel argues that “the negative sublime—leads to alienation in all its forms. The beautiful, on the contrary, leads to reconciliation” (46).

30. Though Poe’s notion of “suggestiveness” has often been associated with idealism and mysticism (see, for example, Ljungquist, 12, who refers to Thompson), from a Burkean perspective, it connotes obscurity, a quality that operates materially on the senses and emotions to help produce sublime effects. As I will point out later, Burke pays much attention to the suggestive power of language, connecting this power to the sublime: “The images raised by poetry are always of [the] obscure kind, [and] dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions than those that are more clear and determinate” (62). See also 173-177. Finally, as regards the idea of the “under-current, however indefinite, of meaning,” beneath the surface meaning in Poe’s work we also find the material “richness” of sound, tone—the sonorousness becoming important for producing material, emotional effects. Note that it is not “meaning” here that is indefinite, only the “under-current.”

31. In Poe, *Beauty* contains various elements that, when combined, are meant to produce the intensity and force of the verbal artifice. One such element is the sublime, which is included in *Beauty*. One might also consider that “the picturesque” as a category stands somewhere between the beautiful and the sublime. The force of synthesizing two categories into one (the picturesque) plays a role in Poe’s use of the term. See David Punter, “The Picturesque and

the Sublime: Two Worldscapes,” *The Politics of the Picturesque*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 222-224. Regarding the numerous references to “force” in “The Philosophy of Composition” and the way the essay uses the word to imply violence to the frame and thus to the otherwise unified structure of Poe’s works, see Dennis Pahl, “De-composing Poe’s ‘Philosophy,’” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38:1 (1996), 1-25. See also Kant, 104-119, for a discussion of the idea of “might” (or force) as a kind of violence that resists something else that possesses force. For Kant, the imagination is a violent, competing force within the scene of the sublime. In “Philosophy,” Poe connects the idea of the forcible frame to mental space, playing with the term and relating it to the necessity of bringing both the lover’s and the reader’s “mind into a proper frame” (*Complete Works* 14: 207). The effect Poe desires for the reader is similar to that which he desires for the lover in the poem, and thus the emotional effects on the lover—the excited state of his mind and the self-induced feeling of torture—become important aspects of Poe’s psychologically and physiologically oriented aesthetic goals.

32. See Morris, “Gothic Sublimity,” *New Literary History* 16.2 (1985), 300-320. See also Ferguson, who argues that Burke anchors the sublime in its unfamiliarity, citing Burke’s view that “ignorance of things” causes our admiration (47). Poe’s Gothic ploy of creating the familiar as strange and unknown is the paradox at the heart of his perception of the sublime, which conflates the familiar and domestic feminine ground of the beautiful with the strange, awe-inspiring, masculine ground of the sublime. Ferguson points to the way the beautiful in Burke, despite what Burke may intend, contains qualities of danger and power usually associated with the sublime, in particular the power and danger of deceptiveness, which “leads us toward death without our awareness” (52).

33. See Poe, “Ligeia,” *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. 2, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1978), 314. All future references to the stories “Ligeia,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “Descent into the Maelstrom,” and “Murders in the Rue Morgue” pertain to the Mabbott edition and will be cited parenthetically as *Collected Works* in the text. For insight into how Poe satirizes the romantic sublime, see Carton, 98-104.

34. Burke, 163.

35. Burke, 174-175.

36. Pym's journey into the whiteness at the end of the novel signals the uncanny occurrence of an author narrating his own demise. He "appears" in the "Note" following the narrative proper, as if his self has journeyed into the white page, only to escape and reappear back into the print at the end. In the Note, we are directed to interpret the strange designs in the text, the drawn figures of the Tsalal chasms that seem to spell out the name of "Poe," the author who is inscribed in the body of the text and whose inscription makes authorship itself problematic. See Dennis Pahl, *Architects of the Abyss: The Indeterminate Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1989), 41-56.

37. Burke, 136.

38. Weiskel, 104.

39. Another, less obvious example of Poe's use of sublime language occurs in the detective tale "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," where Dupin is drawn into a feminine space of gothic horror (the scene of the crime where two aristocratic ladies are murdered) and must decipher the monstrous, inhuman language "devoid of all...syllabication," a "voice foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations" (*Collected Works* 2: 558). As it is more the readers/spectators who experience terror, Dupin's calm and artful detection has associations with the Kantian act of the imagination, which makes possible the triumph of the supersensible over the terrifying, sublime scene. Dupin rises triumphantly and imaginatively above the scene of terror, using his keen intelligence to solve the otherwise indecipherable mystery. Far from being only suggestive of disembodied Reason, however, Dupin is drawn into the linguistic abyss of a large body of evidence, and so he is forced to become the *other* in order to succeed. He must combine intellectual faculties with primitive instinct, mind with body, and reason with poetic sensibility. Thus he distinguishes himself from the ordinary Prefect of Police, who is "all head and no body" (*Collected Works* 2: 564). See, in this regard, Shawn Rosenheim, "Detective Fiction, Psychoanalysis, and the Analytic Sublime," in *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, eds. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman



(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), 153-176. Also, in “Murders,” Poe culls from Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (quoted in Freeman, 53-54), wherein Burke describes, in ways resonating with Poe’s tale, a “monstrous” and “ferocious,” almost animal-like mob of men and women—a “medley of all conditions, tongues, and nations”—that attack the home and enter into bedroom of Marie Antoinette, who is later beheaded. As Poe’s tale can be interpreted in terms of the fears of an antebellum elite in the face of an increasingly frustrated, rebellious, and violent racial and economic underclass, one can see the implications in the tale for a “sublime politics” in Poe.

40. Burke, 177.

## The Crowd Within: Poe's Impossible Aloneness

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock

“The man who is unable to people his solitude is equally unable to be alone in a bustling crowd.”

—Baudelaire, “Crowds” in  
*Le Spleen de Paris*

“[S]omething strange to me, although it is at the heart of me...”

—Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*

In Poe’s “The Island of the Fay,” the narrator queries, “What flippant Frenchman was it who said [. . .] ‘*la solitude est une belle chose; mais il faut quelqu’un pour vous dire que la solitude est une belle chose?*’” [‘...solitude is a fine thing, but there must be someone to tell you that solitude is a fine thing.’]<sup>1</sup> The paradox here is, of course, that the experience of solitude can only be appreciated as solitude by comparison with its opposite. To recognize oneself as alone is consciously to foreground the absence of others. One is thus never alone when one feels oneself to be most alone—the experience of loneliness invokes the trace of the absent other. Indeed, in that same moment of loneliness, when one feels oneself turning inward and becoming conscious of oneself in one’s aloneness, this inwardness in fact turns outward, touches on an internal void that is constituted from without. The inward turn opens one to the outside, to absence, to otherness.

A peculiarly modern aspect of Poe’s fiction is the way in which, through its persistent thematization of the impossibility of being alone, it anticipates contemporary discussions of the constitution of subjectivity. Again and again in his writing, Poe demonstrates the manner in which one’s sense of self—what seems to be most intimate and one’s own—is the product of social and historical context. One can never take ownership of oneself because, in a radical sense, one’s self does not belong to oneself. This paradox is the fundamental premise of Poe’s “The Imp of the Perverse,” in which self-destructive impulses overrule reason and literally take possession of the subject. But this “otherness of the self” or “crowd within” is also at the heart of a number of other Poe texts, including his two poems “Alone” (1829) and “To M—” (1828) (originally entitled “Alone” prior to being published in *Al Aaraaf*,

*Tamerlane and Minor Poems* in 1829), as well as Poe's more familiar tale "The Man of the Crowd" (1840).

In "Alone," a poem which Poe wrote in the autograph album of a Baltimore woman named Lucy Holmes and which was never published in his lifetime, it is precisely at that moment when the speaker feels most alienated and alone that otherness emerges.<sup>2</sup> The first-person narrative voice asserts that the speaker is, and has always been, alienated from society in general. The poem begins, "From childhood's hour I have not been / As others were." Through a pattern of negation, Poe introduces the idea that the narrator has always seen and felt the world differently. The word "not" appears five times in the first six lines and foregrounds the speaker's difference from "others." Since childhood, he has not been as others were; he has not seen what they see; his passion and sorrow derive from a different source; he does not derive joy from the same things; and, most importantly, what he has loved, he "lov'd alone." As with the narrator's question in "The Island of the Fay," the speaker's sense of aloneness here presupposes awareness of others and of the narrator's difference and distance from those others. His initial sense of singularity is crowded with the absences of others.

Nevertheless, the speaker's contention that all he loved, he "lov'd alone" in line six highlights a certain instability within the poem. In the first place, it is unclear in the line whether to love something or someone "alone" means to be the singular lover of the object or a solitary lover of the object—that is, whether the aloneness is existential or geographic. But beyond this, in contrast to the present perfect formations "have not been," "have not seen," and, "have not taken," the past tense formation "lov'd alone" in conjunction with "could not bring" and "could not awaken" foregrounds a temporal vacillation within the first half of the poem in which Poe contrasts a present state of affairs with a previous state of affairs. While the speaker still is not like others and still neither sees nor sorrows over the same things as others, his passion, joy, and love now no longer are marked by the absolute difference they previously possessed.

This shift is made explicit in the movement from lines 8 to 9, which contrasts the speaker's childhood with his present state and effectively divides the poem into two halves. The dramatic italicized "*Then*" that begins line 9 calls attention to the emergence during the speaker's youth of the "mystery" or "demon" that

continues to “bind” him and alters his sense of absolute isolation. Out of his difference, out of his aloneness and solitary love emerged the mystery that still binds him such that either the speaker no longer loves at all or no longer loves alone.

It is tempting to read the poem as an expression of Poe’s theory of the alienated genius. The speaker’s constitutional difference from others is a product of his exceptional nature and the source of this “mystery” that emerges from the depths of his being. “From ev’ry depth of good and ill” is a sublime center of power, variously compared to a torrent, fountain, cliff, sun, and storm. What the speaker ultimately sees, rather than sharing the vision of others, is his own personal demon, a powerful force that torments and possesses him.

And yet, the poem suggests that the emergence of this other from within turns the speaker outward. What would seem to alienate him most, the powerful mystery from within, ironically relieves his sense of solitude: All that he loved, he loved alone—then the mystery arose and the speaker’s absolute difference from others gave way. What this points to is that “the other within,” what would seem most intimate and personal and reflective of one’s difference from others, that which one both loves and hates, is, in fact, not purely one’s own. The Other intrudes precisely at the moment one finds oneself most alone.

This inability to be alone becomes the explicit theme of Poe’s poem, “To M—” first published in 1829 (appendix B). As with “Alone,” Poe also structures this poem around a pattern of negation. Indeed, each of the five stanzas emphasizes precisely what does not concern the speaker. In the first stanza, the speaker professes to care little that his “earthly lot / Hath little of Earth in it” and that “years of love have been forgot in the fever of a minute.” In stanza 2, he “heed[s] not” that “the desolate” are happier than he is. In stanza 3, he again “heed[s] not” that his “founts of bliss” gush not with joy but with tears and that “the tremor of one kiss / Hath palsied many years.” In the fourth stanza, the speaker claims that twenty years’ worth of serenity or fidelity now “[lies] dead on [his] heart-strings / With the weight of an age of snows.” And in the fifth stanza, the speaker again claims not to notice or care that the grass on his grave is “growing or grown.”

In addition to these negations, the poem, like “Alone,” is also structured around a temporal vacillation—in this case, the contrasting temporalities of two

competing forms of affect: the “slow” time of love and the “quick” time of passion. The poem begins and ends by foregrounding the slow time of the speaker’s mortal condition—his “earthly lot” and his grave. What is revealed in between is that twenty years of fidelity have been interrupted by a single moment of passion. Stanza 1 reports that “years of love” have been forgotten in the “fever of a minute.” In stanza 2, the speaker refers to his relationship with a “sweet [. . .] lady” as that of only a “passer-by.” In the third stanza, the speaker reveals that the “thrill of a single kiss / Hath palsied many years.” And in stanza 4, the weight of twenty springs oppresses his heart like an “age of snows.”

In the last two lines, Poe offsets the pattern of negation with a positive affirmation that nevertheless presents an unsatisfactory resolution to the dilemma of competing temporalities. Following the careful negation of concerns that typically would weigh heavily upon one’s mind, the speaker concludes the poem by identifying the unexpected true source of his despair—his inability to be alone: “But that, while I am dead yet alive / I cannot be, lady, alone.” What the speaker claims not to care about in the first four stanzas is that a single moment of passion has undermined twenty years of faithfulness. What preoccupies him instead is that either he now cannot tolerate being alone or he is “haunted” in such a way that he is incapable of being alone.

This latter reading of the text in which the speaker cannot be alone because he is “haunted” by the present absence of another, the sweet lady, is suggested when the speaker identifies himself as “dead yet alive.” Ironically, the “fever of a minute” and the “thrill of a kiss” have had the result of affectively “deadening” the speaker, who now considers himself as trapped in a liminal zone between life and death. Or rather, the attempt to negotiate the competing temporalities of the instant and the lifetime have thrust the speaker outside of time—into what might be figured as the “time of the Other.” The speaker cannot be alone because his loneliness bears with it the unbearable trace of the absent other. In a final negation, past and future evaporate as the ghostlike speaker is haunted by an interminable present defined by the absence of the other.

Both “Alone” and “To M—” illustrate the impossibility of being alone. In “Alone,” the force that emerges from the depths of the speaker’s alienation shatters his sense of solitude as it takes on demonic form and possesses him.

His absolute difference paradoxically gives way in the face of the intimate mystery from within. Similarly, in “To M—,” the speaker’s solitude is interrupted by the haunting trace of the absent other. With interesting resonances to “The Man of the Crowd,” the speaker who describes himself as a “passer-by” can no longer be “alone with his thoughts.” Instead, like the speaker in “Alone,” he is bound or possessed by his desire for another.

This impossibility of being alone receives more developed treatment in Poe’s famous tale “The Man of the Crowd” (1840). I believe that this strange tale of the narrator’s preoccupation with a mysterious “passer-by” combines the insights of “Alone” and “To M—,” especially those concerning the Other within. The tale then surpasses the themes of these poems through exploring the conjunction of crowds and language in ways that suggest how otherness resides at the heart of subjectivity. In examining “The Man of the Crowd,” I will first regard the man of the crowd as a “symptom,” that is, as an hallucination or projection of the narrator himself. This premise simultaneously embodies the narrator’s desire for an intelligible world that works according to the laws of logic and his concomitant underlying fear that the world is not amenable to reason. I will then explore the ways in which, through the spectral figure of the man, Poe links crowds to language. The result is a figurative repetition of the story’s literal circular pattern: The “crowd” installed at the heart of the subject, the Other within, generates a desire for completeness and fulfillment that can never be realized. The narrator in “The Man of the Crowd” attempts to achieve fulfillment by pursuing the symptom of his own lack.

The thematic centrality of the inability to be alone is signaled at the start. The epigraph to the tale, attributed to Jean de la Bruyère—“*Ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul*” [“the great misfortune of being unable to be alone”]—prefaces a story in which the protagonist, the enigmatic “man of the crowd,” seeks to overcome his alienation from others by desperately attempting to merge with the crowd. The impossibility of being alone in this tale initially seems to work from a direction that differs from what Poe employs in “To M—.” In the poem, the speaker desires to be alone but cannot do so because the absent Other haunts his thoughts. In contrast, in the tale the enigmatic man the narrator pursues presumably desires crowds because he finds solitude unbearable. Rather than desiring to be alone, the man seeks crowds to lose the sense of himself as isolated through merging with others.

Nevertheless, once the narrator of the story is factored in, interesting parallels between “The Man of the Crowd” and the poems “Alone” and “To M—” become evident. For example, echoing the language of “To M—,” the initial relationship of the protagonist to the narrator is merely that of a “passer-by” who attracts the narrator’s attention. As the narrator hurries after him, he mentions the “lurking of an old fever in [his] system.”<sup>3</sup> More importantly, the common interpretation of the man as a psychic projection or “symptom” of the narrator recalls “Alone” in that the man of the crowd represents the outward emergence of an inner secret that binds the narrator.<sup>4</sup> If the man and his desire for crowds are externalized projections of the narrator’s psyche, then the pursuit becomes an attempt to fathom his own relationship to the Other—to the crowd within. The paradoxical notion in “The Man of the Crowd” is that the crowd simultaneously constructs and subsumes individual identity—that identity is both lost and found within the uncanny “throng” that is itself alive, even as it seems to deaden its constituent members.

Part of Poe’s brilliance in “The Man of the Crowd” is his fundamental recognition that there is something uncanny, inscrutable, and frustratingly resistant about crowds themselves. While it reduces its elements to cogs in a social machine, the crowd itself is oddly alive and threatening. Initially, the narrator can only appreciate the overall “tides” of the “throng.” Observing the “tumultuous sea of human heads,” he looks at the “passengers in masses” and thinks of them “in their aggregate relations” (389). Subsequently, he engages in a precise process of discrimination in which his attention to detail demystifies the crowd by breaking it down into its constituent parts. The narrator presumes that external characteristics mirror internal identity and that identity itself is fixed and uniform—that is, people conform to “types.”<sup>5</sup> This world is an orderly place in which class divisions are not only stable and unambiguous, but also adhere to a temporal order such that the street is occupied at different times by different types.<sup>6</sup>

The process in which the narrator is engaged at the start of Poe’s tale is one of differentiation; he takes a mass phenomenon—the flow of the crowd—and renders it intelligible by dissecting it into manageable and orderly components. However, this reductive process can only go so far for the narrator before the order and comfort it provides become compromised. The narrator’s baseline is not the individual but the type. As he sees it, the crowd is composed of different types: clerks, pickpockets, gamblers, prostitutes, and so on. These

types are assumed to look, act, and think in certain predictable ways. Difference within types is suppressed; like atoms in a molecule, individuals within the type are all presumed to possess the same characteristics.

What quickly becomes evident in “The Man of the Crowd,” however, is that what is unfamiliar, strange, and terrifying in modern life cannot be so easily contained and, as Jonathan Elmer observes, that the narrator’s “distanced view cannot be maintained.”<sup>7</sup> The man of the crowd is threatening to the narrator precisely because he does not readily accede to a type. He is a “singular being” who attracts the narrator’s attention precisely because of his singularity—he stands out from the crowd. The man appears to possess a variety of contradictory characteristics. The narrator explains that in glimpsing the man, “there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense—of supreme despair” (392). This overwhelming variety of qualities excites the narrator and propels him out the door of the coffeehouse: “I felt singularly aroused, startled, fascinated. ‘How wild a history,’ I said to myself, ‘is written within that bosom!’ Then came a craving desire to keep the man in view—to know more of him. Hurriedly putting on an overcoat, and seizing my hat and cane, I made my way into the street” (392-3). The unreadability of the history “written within the bosom” of the man—a history his pursuer cannot decipher based on external characteristics—startles the narrator out of his contemplation of the crowd and pushes him out into the street. The “unreasonableness” of the object of scrutiny has an effect on the narrator that unseats the narrator’s reason and physically moves him.

The old man’s inscrutability threatens his follower’s faith in his ability to make sense of the world through the application of reason and introduces in the narrator a “craving desire” to “know more of him,” that is, to uncover clues about the old man that will help the narrator to “type cast” him, to fix him in a particular category. The narrator’s rage for order compels him to leave his comfortable window seat in the coffeehouse in order to pursue the man through London’s streets. Reason and movement are opposed here. Because the narrator cannot make sense of the strange man, he is provoked to follow him. The old man’s “illegibility” confounds the narrator’s interpretive process and pushes him to the edge of a vast reconceptualization of the universe—an anti-



Enlightenment reformulation in which not everything yields up its truth in the face of the application of reason.

“The Man of the Crowd” is structured around a double regressive movement initiated by the inscrutability of the phantasmagoric man of the crowd. The reader follows the narrator who simultaneously follows and confronts an inscrutable third person. Thus, the reader is positioned by the text to repeat the narrator’s questions: Who is this man and why does he do what he does? These questions underlie not only the narrator’s interest in the man but also the reader’s involvement with the text. The reader too experiences a “craving desire” in the face of the unknown. Indeed, both the narrator and the reader end up moving in circles: (1) the narrator literally circles back to his starting point at the coffee house; (2) the reader “follows” the narrator as he circles; and (3) the text itself “circles” back around to the notion of the unreadable text that both begins and ends the narrative. Such movement may be referred to as “hermeneutic circling.” On all levels, it is compelled by the desire to fix the object of scrutiny and to resolve ambiguity into determinate meaning. The narrator’s actions and the movement of the narrative are thus fueled by the desire to “place” the man of the crowd, to know more of him. Similarly, the unknown at the core of the text that keeps the reader engaged is also the enigmatic nature of the man of the crowd.

Nevertheless, the reader’s doubling with the narrator is not exact. As the narrator leaves the coffeehouse to pursue the bizarre man, certain questions may arise in the mind of the reader that the narrator never entertains. Is the narrator’s interpretation of his experience unimpeachable? Is there, in fact, a man at all—or is he rather a projection of the narrator’s mind? Finally, can the reader trust the narrator’s interpretation? Certain details of the narrative question the reliability of the narrator’s assessment of his experience with his antagonist and lead the reader to suspect that the man does not exist within the context of the world of the narrative except as an hallucination within the mind of the narrator symptomatic of the narrator’s own repression.

As the narrator ventures outside of the confines of the coffeehouse, Poe reminds the reader that the narrator is a convalescent. Upon setting off on his journey, the narrator remarks, “For my own part I did not much regard the rain—the lurking of an old fever in my system rendering the moisture somewhat too dangerously pleasant” (393). The effect of this statement is significant—not

only does it remind the reader that the narrator is recovering from an illness, it also suggests that he is still sick. The remark indicates both that a fever is “lurking” beneath the narrator’s external façade and that this fever emerges in the form of a dangerous enjoyment. Both these elements—the presence of illness and the enjoyment of danger (which recalls Poe’s discussion of perversity in “The Imp of the Perverse”) qualify the objectivity and enhanced powers of perception the narrator claims to possess.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which the reader can trust the narrator’s prior evaluations of the passers-by on the street is now open to question, as are the rest of his pronouncements, including his assessment of the man of the crowd himself.

This potential unreliability of the narrator has been noted in critical readings of the tale, which emphasize not the narrator’s failure to comprehend the man of the crowd but rather his own avoidance of introspection. The character that the narrator cannot or will not read, according to these interpretations, is, in fact, himself. According to Brand, Auerbach, Mazurek, Quinn, and, to a certain extent, Byer, the narrator’s conclusion at the end of the tale that the old man evades understanding is in fact incorrect. Rather, the evasion is practiced on the part of the narrator who avoids either confronting the similarities between himself and the man of this crowd or recognizing that man as part of himself. What these critics suggest is that the narrator is not consciously aware of the connections between himself and the man, the phantasmagoric nature of the man, and his real motivations for engaging in pursuit of this figure.

Various clues in the text suggest that the man is intimately connected with and even a projection of the narrator. The most obvious link between the narrator and the old man is that of the mirrored relation of “following”: the man of the crowd chases after crowds while the narrator chases after the man. In addition, the narrator peering outward through a window at the start of the story maintains the doubling of the stalker and his prey because the man first appears after dark when, as Mazurek proposes, windows looking out from a lit room also function as mirrors.<sup>9</sup> This circumstance suggests that the narrator perceives the man through his own reflection in the glass.

Another element of the text that challenges the narrator’s account of the events is the absence of any external verification of the man’s presence. Both Grunes and Quinn marvel that, despite being “so persistently and amateurishly shadowed,” the man of the crowd fails to notice his pursuer.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps more to

the point however, in spite of the man's idiosyncratic visage and manic movements, no one else seems to notice *him*. In the bazaar where he "entered shop after shop, priced nothing, spoke no word, and looked at all objects with a wild and vacant stare" (394), and even as he runs after a party of three persons in a "narrow and gloomy lane little frequented" (395) where his frantic footsteps might be expected to elicit attention, the man seemingly remains invisible to all but the narrator. The absence of secondary confirmation encourages the reader to consider the man of the crowd not as an "actual" presence existing in the world of the narrator but as the ghostly projection of the narrator's psyche. If true, the man fails to notice and acknowledge his pursuer because he is not a real entity with normal responses. He becomes, instead, an hallucination, a symptom of the narrator's own repression of traumatic knowledge.

Throughout "The Man of the Crowd," the narrator turns his attention outward and literally becomes obsessed with the figure he sees through the reflective surface of the window. Auerbach, Brand, Mazurek, and Quinn all presume that the narrator's "craving desire" to learn more of this inscrutable figure represents the avoidance of introspection and the denial or repression of his own intrinsic lack—in Lacanian terms, the repression of his own fundamental lack or "castration."<sup>11</sup> In keeping with the Lacanian maxim that that which is repressed in the Symbolic returns in the Real, the appearance of the man of the crowd can be read as an hallucination, a symptom of the narrator's avoidance of his own doubt and division. As the "object-cause" of the narrator's desire—what Lacan calls the *objet petit á*—the man represents a phantasmagoric object that would restore the narrator's faith in a world with no gap between appearances and reality or signifier and signified. The narrator sets off in pursuit of this elusive object.

Treating the old man as a symptom of the narrator's psyche links "The Man of the Crowd" to Poe's meditations on solitude in "Alone" and "To M—." As in "Alone," the alienation of the narrator is interrupted by the emergence of a "demon" in his view, the "type and genius of deep crime" (396). As in "To M—," the speaker becomes fixated on a haunting presence that leads to meditation on the relationship of the self to others. "The Man of the Crowd" begins precisely by echoing the lamentation of the speaker in "To M—" over his inability to be alone. However, "The Man of the Crowd" develops this theme of "impossible aloneness" further through the conjunction of crowds with language. What "The Man of the Crowd" ultimately demonstrates is the

ways in which the subject is “subject to the signifier,” that is, the ways in which subjectivity is constituted from without. As Elmer contends, the man of the crowd’s solitude is “purely social”—the crowd installs a fundamental otherness at the core of the subject.<sup>12</sup> The uncanniness of the external crowd is mirrored by the strangeness of the “crowd within.”

Put in these terms, Poe’s crowd is another name for the Lacanian Other, the realm of the Symbolic, of communication and culture. The flow of the crowd is the flow of language, which moves from signifier to signifier. As the Other, it precedes the subject and fashions him or her, installing itself—the outsider, the other—at the core of the subject. As such, we are all “of the crowd.” Swept up in the crowd, which moves us from place to place, we fade away—we are rendered ghostly. And yet, being of the crowd, we chase after it, try to throw ourselves into it so as to efface our essential separation from it. Each attempt to join the crowd, to reach others through symbolic communication and, in turn, to be validated as whole and complete, only reveals a mutual insufficiency. Language and the crowd are both realms of the *unheimlich*, the unhomely. The more someone seeks a home in either, the more closely he must scrutinize both, and the more strange and resistant they become. What finally unites “Alone,” “To M—,” and “The Man of the Crowd” is precisely the sense that to be alone is impossible because we are all inevitably “of the crowd.” We cannot ever control the crowd or be the crowd. We can only ever be of them, haunted at the core by the unknowable other within that makes impossible being alone.

### Notes

This essay benefited from useful suggestions from and careful reading by Richard Fusco, Peter Norberg, and the three anonymous *Edgar Allan Poe Review* readers. My thanks go to all five who helped refine the argument presented here in useful ways.

1. *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry, Tales, and Selected Essays*, eds. Patrick F. Quinn and G. R. Thompson (New York: Library of America, 1996), 935.

2. For the sake of convenience, I have included both poems discussed in this essay, “Alone” and “To M—”, below as addendums. The text of “Alone” is taken from the Library of America edition of *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry, Tales, and Selected Essays* edited by Patrick F. Quinn and G. R. Thompson (New

York: Library of America, 1996), 60, and can also be found online at <<http://www.eapoe.org/works/poems/alonea.htm>>. The text of “To M—” is from *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1829) and is available on the Edgar Allan Poe Society Web site at <<http://www.eapoe.org/works/poems/tomb.htm>>.

3. Edgar Allan Poe, “The Man of the Crowd” in *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry, Tales, and Selected Essays*, eds. Patrick F. Quinn and G. R. Thompson (New York: Library of America, 1996), 393. All other references to this story will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text.

4. Much of the critical literature emphasizes the narrator’s connection to the old man and his own evasion of understanding or avoidance of introspection. Dana Brand, for example, writes that, “Although the narrator’s pursuit of the old man may illuminate some similarities between them, the narrator never becomes aware of these similarities. On the contrary, in order to repress any awareness of a resemblance, and in order to extricate himself from his obsession, the narrator imposes a reading upon the old man that stresses his absolute otherness.” See his *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 85. Jonathan Auerbach notes that the narrator mirrors the old man as the former “follows his fugitive double through the streets of London in order to flee from himself.” See his *The Romance of Failure: First-Person Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and James* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 33. Ray Mazurek proposes that the “revelation that the double fails to notice the narrator highlights the narrator’s failure to recognize himself.” See his “Art, Ambiguity, and the Artist in Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’,” *Poe Studies* 12.2 (1979), 27. Patrick Quinn speculates that the “meaning of the story seems to be that the narrator encountered and failed to recognize a prophetic image of his future self.” See *The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), 230. He then extrapolates the intriguing moral that “a man cannot see his own future” (231). Robert H. Byer similarly contends that “the old man seems to provide the narrator with an image of his own destiny” and continues that what the old man reveals is the way in which “each man of the crowd is an analogue for the others (and for the narrator).” See his “Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’” in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (New York: Cambridge University

Press, 1986), 236. Additional references to these works will be indicated parenthetically within the text.

5. Auerbach observes that the “narrator’s systematic binary differentiating thus turns his fellow humans into a set of exaggerated caricatures, the price he must pay to signify order, and see things whole” (29). The term “binary” does not seem appropriate here, as the narrator is in fact differentiating among and hierarchizing numerous elements.

6. Building on the commentary of Walter Benjamin, Dana Brand identifies the narrator as a type of “flaneur,” a familiar character in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature who claims to possess extraordinary powers of interpretation and to be able to deduce fundamental characteristics of other people, such as history, character, and profession, based on external appearances. As Brand characterizes him, the flaneur is “a spectatorial persona who enjoys diversity without grossness, randomness without danger, amusing bustle of mild interest rather than terrifying chaos of profound fascination” (33). According to Benjamin, as glossed by Brand, “such a fantastically gifted urban interpreter existed to assure a literate bourgeois audience that urban crowds were not as illegible as they appeared to be, that social life was not as incoherent as it appeared to be, and that the masses were not as politically threatening as they appeared to be” (6). The flaneur as a literary character thus arose at the end of the eighteenth century at least in part to redomesticate urban life, to quell the fear that modern life no longer made sense.

7. See Jonathan Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit: Affect, Mass Culture, and Edgar Allan Poe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 171.

8. Ray Mazurek also proposes that the narrator is unreliable in that he is unaware of the extent to which his illness colors his perceptions.

9. Mazurek, 26.

10. See Grunes’ “Fraternal Hopes Dashed: Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’ in *College Language Association Journal* 25.3 (1982 Mar.), 357, as well as Quinn, 230.

11. For Lacan, all human subjects are symbolically castrated. The phallus for Lacan is essentially a signifier rather than a real bodily organ and, according to Kaja Silverman, it comes to signify “all those values which are opposed to lack.” See Silverman’s *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 182-3. Since lack is the inescapable human condition, the phallus—correlated with fullness of being and complete identity—is precisely what no one can possess.

12. Elmer, 173.

### Appendix A

Edgar Allan Poe, “[Alone],” undated manuscript, 1829.

From childhood’s hour I have not been  
 As others were — I have not seen  
 As others saw — I could not bring  
 My passions from a common spring —  
 From the same source I have not taken  
 My sorrow — I could not awaken  
 My heart to joy at the same tone —  
 And all I lov’d — *I* lov’d alone —  
*Then* — in my childhood — in the dawn  
 Of a most stormy life — was drawn  
 From ev’ry depth of good and ill  
 The mystery which binds me still —  
 From the torrent, or the fountain —  
 From the red cliff of the mountain —  
 From the sun that ‘round me roll’d  
 In its autumn tint of gold —  
 From the lightning in the sky  
 As it pass’d me flying by —  
 From the thunder, and the storm —  
 And the cloud that took the form  
 (When the rest of Heaven was blue)  
 Of a demon in my view —

## Appendix B

Edgar Allan Poe, “To M ———”, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*, 1829.

### TO M——

1

O! I care not that my earthly lot  
 Hath — little of Earth in it —  
 That years of love have been forgot  
 In the fever of a minute —

2

I heed not that the desolate  
 Are happier, sweet, than I —  
 But that *you* meddle with *my* fate  
 Who am a passer-by.

3

It *is* not that my founts of bliss  
 Are gushing — strange! with tears —  
 Or that the thrill of a single kiss  
 Hath palsied many years —

4

‘Tis not that the flowers of twenty springs  
 Which have wither’d as they rose  
 Lie dead on my heart-strings  
 With the weight of an age of snows.

5

Nor that the grass — O! may it thrive!  
 On my grave is growing or grown —  
 But that, while I am dead yet alive  
 I cannot be, lady, alone.



## Who was M. Decuppis?

*Jeffrey A. Savoye*

In the second installment of “Fifty Suggestions” (*Graham’s Magazine*, June 1849), Poe asks: “What has become of the inferior planet which Decuppis, about nine years ago, declared he saw traversing the disc of the sun?” This query surely refers to an item published during Poe’s tenure at *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*, and often attributed—quite reasonably I think—if not to Poe’s pen at least to his scissors. In the second installment of the miscellany “A Chapter on Science and Art” (*Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*, 6 [April 1840], 193-194) we find the first item commenting:

CONJECTURAL DISCOVERY OF A NEW PLANET. —  
By means of glasses just invented by count Decuppis [*sic*], an observer is enabled to look at the sun without any inconvenience from its rays—the disc appears of a perfect whiteness, and all the firmamental objects have an equal distinctness. By the aid of his new glass, the count lately observed on the face of the sun a small black spot, entirely free from penumbra, and of perfectly spherical form, which had advanced upon the disc, describing an arc of about seven minutes. Repeated observations convinced him that it had, in the meantime, advanced towards the sun’s limb, as much as two minutes and thirty seconds. Presently it disappeared. All astronomers will agree in supposing the object a small planet, hitherto undiscovered, and passing over the sun’s disc at the period of survey. Its perfectly round figure, its blackness, the smallness of its diameter, its motion, and the absence of penumbra fully warrant the conjecture. The event is one of the highest importance in an astronomical, or indeed in any point of view. A twelfth world has been added to our system. It will no doubt receive the name of its discoverer, Decuppis.<sup>1</sup>

Until now, the source of this early note has not been found, and Decuppis himself, however prominent his findings may once have been, has remained essentially lost in the history of astronomy. Just about a year before Poe’s first reference, *The American Journal of Science and Arts*, edited by Benjamin

Silliman, also includes a minor mention of Decuppis. In the issue for October 1838, we find a brief item on “*Five or more rings around Saturn,*” noting:

M. Decuppis was invited to assist in the observations, and on the night of June 18 [1838], he distinctly saw the four rings. On attentive examination he imagined that he saw a new division in the interior ring. A higher power was applied, and it was then evident to all the observers that there were *five* rings. . . . M. Decuppis adds, that they saw with perfect distinctness and certainty, the *seven* satellites of Saturn, two of which have probably never been hitherto seen except by Herschel” (37:373).<sup>2</sup>

In September 1999, Alberto Cappi, of the Osservatorio Astronomico di Bologna, was kind enough to conduct, at my request, a search for any records of Decuppis. He found two references. One is the *Comptes rendus hebdomadaires des séances de l’Académie des Sciences* (Paris, 9 [1839], 809), first noted by Philippe E. Dally in a French translation of Poe’s “A Chapter of Suggestions” and “Fifty Suggestions.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Cappi translates this brief entry as: “M. Decuppis declares that on October 2, while continuing some observations of the sunspots, he has seen a black spot, perfectly round, and with sharp contours, which moved on the disk of the Sun so fast that it should cross the diameter within about six hours. Mr. Decuppis thinks that the appearances he has observed cannot be explained but admitting the existence of a new planet.” The other reference is from volume 2 of *Bibliographie Generale de l’astronomie jusqu’en*, par J. C. Houzeau et A. Lancaster (1880; reprinted London: Holland Press, 1964). This book also fails to reveal Decuppis’s full name, but it does provide his first initial as “P.” and lists five papers attributed to him: “The Dimension of Saturn” (1838); “An Intramercurial Planet” (1839); “Lunar Observations” (1853); and “Lunar Atmosphere (1855 and 1856).”<sup>4</sup>

More than four years later, after a few mutually discovered leads, Dr. Cappi unearthed a third reference. In the February 1877 *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* (a well-respected British journal, still in publication), Leverrier lists six observations of the supposed intermercurial planet of Vulcan: “Fritsche, Oct.10, 1802; Stark, Oct.9, 1819; De Cuppis, Oct. 30, 1839; Sidebotham, Nov. 12, 1849; Lescarbault, March 26, 1859; Lummis, March 20, 1862.” (The note of “Oct. 30” is an error, and should instead be “Oct. 2.”)

With an approximate date for the astronomical observation, I made a search of periodicals from the period, in hope of finding the source of Poe's note. The result was the discovery of a contemporary paragraph which contains all the details necessary to have produced the comment in *Burton's*. The *London Times* for October 24, 1839 (p. 4, col. 6) conveniently reprints the item:

*SPOTS ON THE SUN.*

The *Gazette du Midi* gives an account of a discovery by Count Decuppis, the Italian astronomer. He is said to have succeeded in manufacturing glasses which enable the observer to look at the sun without having his observations at all affected by its rays. By means of these glasses the sun appears of a pure whiteness, and the surrounding firmament is equally distinct. M. Decuppis is stated to have observed on the 2d instant an unusual number of spots on the sun's disc, and having made an addition to his apparatus, he perceived, at a quarter before 9 on that day, a small black spot entirely free from penumbra, and of perfectly spherical form, which had advanced upon the disc, describing an arc of about seven minutes. Reiterated observations convinced him that it had in the mean time advanced towards the sun's limb to the extent of two minutes and 30 seconds. At three minutes after 9, when M. Decuppis attempted to make a new observation, the spot had disappeared. The perfectly round figure of this spot, its blackness, the smallness of its diameter, its motion, and the absence of penumbra, appeared to the observer to be so many proofs that it was a small planet hitherto undiscovered which was passing over the sun's disc.—  
*Galignani's Messenger.*

The *London Times* also provides a brief note which dismisses the claims asserted by Decuppis. Since Poe appears to accept the account as genuine, this particular printing is probably not his direct source. This additional information, however, satisfies two important aspects of my bibliographical quest. First, the source for the notice was, directly or indirectly, *Galignani's Messenger*, an English-language newspaper printed in Paris. It was started by Giovanni Antonio

Galignani (1752-1821) and continued by his sons, Jean-Antoine (1796-1873) and Guillaume (1798-1882). In 1839 and 1840, the same newspaper printed several accounts of experiments to improve the production of daguerreotypes, which may also have warranted Poe's attention.<sup>5</sup> More importantly, we can at last declare the identity of M. Decuppis as Pompilio De Cuppis (1804-1861), an Italian mathematician and astronomer, born in Fano to a prominent family. Unfortunately for Count De Cuppis, his discovery was not what he thought it might be, and instead of enjoying lasting fame as the namesake of a planet, he has slipped into the dim mists of obscurity.<sup>6</sup>

### Notes

1. The comment giving the number of planets as eleven, excluding the discovery by Decuppis, reveals the long and complicated history of assigning the classification and names of planets. Dionysius Lardner published his *Popular Lectures on Science and Art* in 1846 (New York: Greeley & McElrath). Among the now familiar names of Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, he lists also Herschel, Vesta, Juno, Ceres, and Pallas. Herschel—named after its discoverer, Sir William Herschel (1738-1822)—was originally designated “Georgium Sidus” after King George III. It is now called Uranus, a name suggested by the German astronomer Johann Elert Bode as early as 1784 but not universally accepted until 1850. Vesta, Juno, Ceres, and Pallas are now classified as asteroids. Neptune was first discovered in 1846, presumably after the publication of Lardner's lectures. First observed in 1894, Pluto was not officially discovered and declared to be a planet until 1930. It has been recently downgraded to the status of a “dwarf planet” by the International Astronomical Union.

2. Although his name often appears as “M. Decuppis,” the same issue of *The American Journal of Science and Art* gives, in a single brief entry, “M. Daguerre,” “M. Arago,” and “M. Niepce.” We might be inclined to think it a remarkable coincidence that so many men have the first initial of “M.,” except that we know “M. Daguerre” was Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, “M. Arago” was Dominique François Jean Arago, and “M. Niepce” was Joseph Nicéphore Niepce. As should be apparent, the “M.” is not the initial of a first name but the French abbreviation for “Monsieur.”

3. In his edition of Poe's *Brevities* (p. 500), Pollin notes Luigi Berti's translation of "Marginalia" and "Fifty Suggestions" (Milan: Mondadori, 1949), crediting Berti with the discovery of the comment about Decuppis in *Comptes rendus . . . des Sciences* and pointing out an error in the month being "mistakenly copied . . . as December" in the quotation given from that 1839 source. Berti, however, appears to have merely borrowed the information from the French translation of Poe's "A Chapter of Suggestions" and "Fifty Suggestions" made a decade earlier, with extensive notes, by Ph. E. Dally (*Mesures*, no. 19, July 15, 1939, with the subtitle of "U. S. A.: Hommage à la Littérature Américaine"). Dally also gives December as the month rather than October, presumably the origin of Berti's error. Indeed, Berti reuses Dally's commentary quite liberally, all without acknowledgement. A photocopy of Dally's translation was kindly sent to me by Dominique Demelenne, of Belgium.

4. Other works by Decuppis include:

"Alcune osservazioni fatte sopra Saturno" (1838)

"Sulle influenze metereologiche della luna" (1839)

"Scienze fisiche e matematiche, cosmogonia..." (1839)

"Sulla connessione delle scienze fisiche della signora Sommerville" (1839)

"Intorno al modo di determinare per mezzo di un nuovo apparato la grandezza apparente delle stelle fisse"(without year)

"Intorno alla causa che nella occultazione delle stelle dietro la luna fa sembrare la stella sopra il suo disco" (1840)

"Considerazioni anatomico-fisiologiche delle piante" (1841)

"Guglielmo Herschell" (1850)

"Quinto frammento selenografico" (1850)

"Intorno alla cometa attuale visibile all'ovest nelle prime ore della sera" (1853)

"Della misura del tempo e della utilità di regolare gli orologi pubblici sul tempo solare medio" (1853)

"Intorno ad un nuovo orologio parallatico" (1853)

"Sul fenomeno delle tavole semoventi pubblicate da Giovanni Valeri" (1853)

"Ulteriore soluzione del problema di Kepler" (1854)

"Brevi parole sui globi areostatici. Lettera al conte Galvani" (1854)

"Due parole intorno alla cometa presentemente visibile" (1858)

"Intorno ad un atlante geognonico dell'Italia eseguito in rilievo" (1859)

5. Poe may have seen a copy of *Galighani's Messenger* first hand, although it seems more likely that he saw one of the many borrowings of European material reprinted free of copyright concerns in the ephemeral and insatiable American periodicals of the day.

6. In addition to Poe's mention of him, De Cuppis is occasionally also mentioned in discussions by devotees of UFOs. One website, (<http://www.xdream.freemove.co.uk/UFOBBase/Astronomers.htm>), for example, notes "de cuppis of Great Britain" as one of several "leading astronomers" who saw "a large number of small black discs which came from the east flew past" from the Zurich Observatory in April 1860. The associates are named as Herrick, Buys-Barlott, and a Swiss colleague named Dr. Wolf. Also mentioned by the same site is that De Cuppis was one of several astronomers to see "a strange luminous body" at a Geneva Observatory in 1837. (The source for this information is not specifically documented, but probably comes from *L'Année Scientifique*, 1860.)

**Eliza Richards. *Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe's Circle*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. xvii + 238 pp. \$75.00.**

In his field-defining study of 1941, F. O. Matthiessen notoriously excluded Edgar Allan Poe from the canon of five authors that he saw as responsible for what he designated the “American Renaissance.” Much work has been done lately to “reexamine” Matthiessen’s notion of a renaissance and its enduring influence on American literary studies.<sup>1</sup> Though Eliza Richards’s recent book, *Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe's Circle*, does not enter this fray overtly, it can be recognized as a fellow traveler with works that do. It is a thorough and compelling analysis of the complex networks and dynamics of antebellum literature—more specifically, of poetry—as it was produced and received. As such, it offers a significant alternative both to the Emersonian/Matthiessenian ideal of the male author as a solitary genius and to continuing critical efforts to establish Poe as just such an author. It does so through a close examination of the fluid dynamics of imitation, collaboration, and exchange among the members of what Richards terms “Poe’s Circle.” This group of female poetesses, including Frances Sargent Osgood, Sarah Helen Whitman, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith, has been all but forgotten by critics of Poe and of antebellum American literature alike. As Richards explains in her introduction, such a “study of a male genius figure who impersonates women poets, and women poets who personify mimesis, offers a way to understand the collusion of genius and mimicry in the nineteenth-century lyric and its legacies” (1).

As this articulation of Richards’s thesis reveals, understanding her study as an argument against the idea of romantic authorial individualism is to read it only in a certain slant of light. While she certainly seeks to challenge the work of “critics [who] have persistently credited Poe with the powers of innovation and the force of genius, even in recent studies that place him within the context of antebellum mass and print culture” (1), this is only part of her project. For that matter, so is Poe. As Richards observes, “‘Poe’ has come to stand as the sign of the poet to which the poetesses’ practices are ascribed, and this study inquires into the riddle of remembered and forgotten names” (2). Less the result of benign neglect than of repeated, willful critical suppression, the absence of Osgood, Whitman, and Oakes Smith from studies of Poe and from literary studies in general, Richards contends, “mimic[s] Poe’s own response to his

female peers” (5). As this claim and Richards’s extended comparative analyses of Poe’s and the poetesses’ poetry make clear, the mimic at once pays tribute to and obscures her or his source, making works produced in the process significant occasions for critically rethinking individuality and originality, and for earnestly understanding the processes and products of reciprocity and exchange.

Along with the forgotten names and poetic achievements of Osgood, Whitman, and Oakes Smith, Richards also aims more ambitiously to recover the significance of poetry in nineteenth-century American literature and culture. Doing so, she contends, serves as a necessary corrective to recent work on gender and sentiment in the period that has anchored its claims in the novel and narrative. Her focus on lyric in particular allows for a more thorough understanding of the many ties that bind gender and genre, public and private, reading and writing, and speech and print. In resituating lyric within the circumstances of its production and reception—in the fashionable literary salons, in popular periodicals, and in public performances of mesmerism and spiritualism—Richards attempts to understand poetry written by women not “as utterances that enable the scholarly recuperation of lost female subjectivity,” as feminist criticism typically has, but rather as work that “forges social networks and transmits cultural and formal understandings of value within and through time” (23, 25).

To readers who come to Richards’s book primarily interested in Poe, her first chapter, “‘The Poetess’ and Poe’s Performance of the Feminine,” will not disappoint in the attention it gives to Poe and his writings. It offers an attentive and substantial close reading of “The Sleeper” and no less careful, but briefer and more instrumental readings of “Israfel” and “The Raven,” as well as of selections from Poe’s criticism. These readings ground Richards’s rewardingly complex analyses of Poe’s strategic, savvy, and variously successful construction and performance of textual and public identities that range from the failed poet to the envious critic to the charming (and charmed) mesmerist.

In seeking to understand the dynamics behind these identities as they were established in the nineteenth century, and as they have endured up to the present, Richards develops the literary critical equivalent of a Venn diagram in setting up the chapter. She contends that Poe’s circle of poetesses and his subsequent circle of critics and biographers have shared an impulse to respond to his “poetic performance of failure” by “elevating Poe to immortal status within the



American literary tradition” (29). This status has been confirmed even in recent criticism on the very mortal status of women in Poe’s works; as Richards observes, “the female corpse continues to stand in for women’s corpus in Poe biography and criticism” (30). This is so because Poe strategically and repeatedly “performed a ‘feminine’ poetry that both absorbed and negated their own [the poetesses’] poetic practices” (30). Writing at a moment in which female poets were enjoying significant popular and critical acclaim, Poe needed to develop a poetics that at once borrowed on the style and themes of poetry written by women, appealed to the women writing and reading such poetry, and established his distinct identity as a poet. To do so, Poe “literalized the generic figure of the poetess by identifying women so completely with their poems that they could not claim credit for their output; instead he claimed them as raw materials for his own work,” and he ultimately “consolidated his appeal for women poets by performing his rendition of their poetic practices” (30).

That poetesses would, and did, respond sympathetically to such a poetics has been lost on later critics who have read themes of loss and detachment as “evidence of social isolation,” rather than “signs of cultural engagement” (31). Richards also seeks to correct another critical misunderstanding of Poe’s poetic identity that separates later readers of Poe from those in his circle. Against critical claims that Poe “failed to position himself in the American present,” Richards contends that he “produced and marketed the image of a wandering aristocrat lost in the new world, adapting the Byronic figure of the dark prince to the circumstances of an American literary marketplace and an international one that valued American images” (31). The remainder of the chapter is devoted to working through the intricacies of how Poe, with the cooperation of American poetesses, European poets, and twentieth century literary critics, cultivated these multiple, and seemingly contradictory, identities and poetics. The complexity of this argument is mitigated by lucid comparative close readings of a good deal of poetry and criticism. While Poe’s writings are certainly at the center of the Richards’s analysis in this chapter, this is only so to illustrate just how thoroughly enmeshed they are with writings by women that critical prejudices, fostered by Poe and his circle alike, have relegated to the periphery.

Unfortunately, this review risks replicating such critical neglect that Richards’s book does so much to correct by dedicating briefer attention to the three chapters in which Poe plays second fiddle to Frances Sargent Osgood, Sarah Helen

Whitman, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith. It is my hope, rather, that the brief summaries that follow reveal just enough of the richness of Richards's readings of this neglected body of work and its literary and cultural contexts to compel readers to seek out the book for themselves. Chapter Two focuses on Osgood's poetry but also devotes significant attention to works by Lydia Sigourney as part of the monograph's larger effort to understand the role that popular literary magazines played in the rise of an antebellum canon of female poets. Richards examines Osgood's cultivation of a public poetic persona that read at once as available and reserved; this is the playful, yet coy Osgood that transacted a "romance" with Poe in the *Broadway Journal* only to be subsumed by him in subsequent critical readings more interested in Poe's personae.

Richards's third chapter begins with a consideration of Sarah Helen Whitman's interest in, and critical and poetic practices of, spiritualism. It evolves into a substantial examination of Whitman's public romance with Poe in which the two "cultivated fantasies that lyric poetry enabled minds to meet and mingle" (108), Whitman's critical and mediumistic efforts to secure Poe's immortality after his death, and the effects of both on Poe and Whitman criticism and biographies.

Chapter Four positions Elizabeth Oakes Smith as the member of Poe's circle most alert to the limitations of the gendered poetic traditions in which she participated. In Oakes Smith's poetry, Richards discovers a consistent and concerted effort to "purge gender from all but its generic significance in order to argue that women and men can equally inhabit and ventriloquize bi-gendered poetic forms" (167-68). Comparing Oakes Smith's poetics with Emerson's "absorptive" ideal of the self-reliant poet, Richards characterizes the poetess's aesthetic as "abortive" in its efforts to wrestle with the relationship of gender, genius, and literary value.

Her coda reunites Oakes Smith and Poe to consider how the former's representations of the latter as "both the usurper and representative of the antebellum poetess" and, thus, "as the one who will be remembered in her stead" compares to the disappearance, and troubled return, of female poets in literary criticism on the antebellum period (191). Richards concludes that a critical tradition that has privileged "genius over mimicry" denies its own mimicry of an Emersonian—and, lest we not come full circle, Matthiessenian—ideal should be replaced with one that acknowledges its own

“mimic practices” (197). To do so would result not just in the rescue of the female poets of Poe’s circle from obscurity, but in a richer understanding of nineteenth-century poetry and print culture in general and, ultimately, in a critical practice worthy of its subjects. If we take Richards at her word—and she gives us many good reasons to do so—*Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe’s Circle* is a work that we should not only be reading but also be mimicking.

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### Notes

1. I allude here to one of many possible examples—the recent special issue of *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, entitled *Reexamining the American Renaissance* (*ESQ* 49.1-3, [2004]).

**Matthew Pearl. *The Poe Shadow: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 2006. 370 pp. \$24.95.**

In his best-selling debut novel, *The Dante Club* (2003), Matthew Pearl portrayed events surrounding the 1860s publication of an English translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Among the factual events, the novel included a fictional series of *Inferno*-inspired killings that the literary men manage to solve. In his follow-up thriller, *The Poe Shadow*, Pearl has no need to concoct his central mystery because he uses as his subject one of the greatest mysteries of nineteenth-century American literary history, the obscure circumstances surrounding the death of Poe. The novel follows a devotee of Poe's work as he attempts to discover the truth about Poe's death in order to redeem the writer's reputation from the slanderous reports in American newspapers of Poe's drunkenness and bad behavior. Even though Pearl's narrative introduces new evidence that he has uncovered in the course of his research and offers up its own account of the days leading up to Poe's death, it is less interested in solving the mystery than it is in exploring the enduring appeal—and even value—of the mystery itself.

The novel's central character, Quentin Clark, is a young Baltimore lawyer who has been a "fond reader" of Poe's work, who has occasionally corresponded with him, and who has even offered his legal assistance to Poe in his efforts to establish his own journal. Upon learning of the death of Poe (whose spartan funeral he unknowingly witnesses), Clark becomes determined to bring to light the facts about the poet's final days, and eventually he mounts his own full-scale investigation, pouring over newspaper clippings in the Baltimore *Athenaeum* and questioning numerous witnesses, including Poe's Baltimore relatives and acquaintances. His quest, which at times seems to approach mania, leads him to Paris to seek the assistance of the real-life model for Poe's famous character, the detective C. Auguste Dupin, whom he believes to be the only person capable of unraveling the mystery. In Paris, Clark discovers two men who could possibly have served as the inspiration for Dupin: (1) August Duponte, famous years earlier for helping the Parisian police solve challenging crimes, denies that he was Poe's inspiration and often appears near senility, though he does eventually display feats of ratiocination; and (2) Baron Claude Dupin, a publicity-seeking attorney, loudly proclaims that he is the model for Dupin and is surrounded by armed bodyguards, including his wife, Bonjour, a

beautiful young thief and assassin, who is one of the most interesting characters in the book. Filled with postmodern ambiguity, these sections of the novel are some of the most compelling, as readers find themselves in a disorienting house of mirrors, led to wonder, for example, which, if either, of the possible Dupins is real and whether either can get Clark closer to the truth he so desires. Similarly, the reader is led to question Clark's sanity and reliability as a narrator, as he often identifies himself with Poe, displays extreme paranoia, irrationally asserts his "duty" to solving the mystery, and risks all—his career, his relationships to his fiancée, family, and friends, his fortune, and even his sanity—in his efforts to redeem Poe's name.

Clark, the two Dupins, and Bonjour, all journey to Baltimore where the investigation and adventure continue. As Clark makes his way through the remainder of the book, he is threatened by a number of shadowy figures, hunted by French thugs, kidnapped, imprisoned as a possible murderer, poisoned, involved in intrigue related to the French throne, and forced to go on trial to prove that he is not mad, just to name a handful of the perils in which he finds himself. While most of these predicaments end up only being tangentially related to the mystery of Poe's death and might be considered distractions to the book's central narrative, the cumulative effect is the transformation of the narrator's once-staid life into a disordered nightmare because of his firm commitment to Poe. In this novel, the cost of the pursuit of truth is indeed high.

*The Poe Shadow* presents a number of accounts of Poe's death ranging from contemporary temperance narratives, which didactically portrayed Poe's demise as the inevitable outcome of a dissolute life, to the darker conspiracy tales, like the "cooping theory," which were spun into popularity in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Pearl's detectives make efforts to account for most of the major evidence in the case: Poe's ill-fitting clothing; his sword-concealing cane; the alias that he used to receive mail in Philadelphia; his known whereabouts in Baltimore, including his appearance at a polling place on the day of an election; and his repetition of the name "Reynolds" on his deathbed. The novel seems especially committed to debunking the more fantastic and violent explanations of Poe's last days, which posit the writer's involvement in various intrigues, such as robbery, kidnapping, familial revenge, and political fraud.

In a climactic scene, one of the two possible Dupins dissects the theory of the other through ratiocinative process, offering explanations for many of the pieces of the mystery that, in the voice of this detective, seem so convincingly obvious—recasting Poe as a normal man, who would probably make the same conventional choices as any of us would in particular circumstances. These explanations, which seem much more likely than the more elaborate story of sinister acts told by the other Dupin, usefully ratchet down the rhetoric of the more hyperbolic accounts. While much of this character’s reconstruction of the end of Poe’s life is persuasive, it does not satisfactorily account for all of the pertinent clues (like the meaning of the name “Reynolds,” which Pearl’s character asserts “will ever remain in the possession only of Poe himself”) and does not in the end actually explain how or why Poe died. I think it is clear that in *The Poe Shadow*, Pearl does not intend to offer the last word on the death of Poe in this novel. Instead, the mystery remains alive, and “solutions” to the mystery will continue to be posed. As one character explains, there will be “other investigators, scores, hundreds of them,” following the efforts of Clark and the two Dupins: “They will not be stopped as long as Poe is remembered.” Clark could squelch some of the more ridiculous assertions circulating about Poe’s death but chooses instead to let them remain as possibilities with the Baltimore citizenry.

Clark’s eventual tolerance for the outlandish explanations seems to be Pearl’s implicit suggestion that there is a benefit to Poe studies in the continuing fascination with Poe’s death, regardless of the far-fetched “solutions” that have been or will be proposed. (In recent years, for example, scholars have suggested that Poe was murdered by the angry brothers of Elmira Shelton, that he died after contracting rabies, and that he was killed by toxic gases.) This benefit, the novel illustrates, comes in preserving Poe’s memory in the public eye. When the Baron Dupin and Bonjour arrive in Baltimore and fan the flame of public interest in the mystery of Poe’s death by planting newspaper stories that raise all sorts of dark possibilities to explain his demise, Poe’s readership grows, new editions of his work appear in book-sellers, and sales increase. As in this sequence in the novel, Pearl suggests that the continued existence of the mystery can only attract readers to Poe’s writing, the words of his poetry, stories, and essays. And it is “through the words he published,” as Clark is advised by Poe’s cousin, Neilson Poe, that we should “seek to know” Poe. At first Clark does not understand Neilson’s point, but finally he does come to believe that

“Edgar Poe’s meaning” is not in the details of his life or in the circumstances of his death “but in the words, in their truths.”

Like the character of Clark, many teachers of Poe are often frustrated that students in our classes have previously had their heads filled with ludicrous stories about Poe’s life and character and feel compelled to repair this damage with lectures conveying the “truth” about him. Despite this frustration, we probably have to admit that these myths about Poe—however, offensive to scholars of his work—are in some way connected to the avid interest that our students bring to Poe’s work, an appetite that they do not demonstrate for much of the literature of Poe’s contemporaries. Pearl’s fascinating novel about a Poe admirer’s futile quest to replace the myths about Poe’s death with truth can remind all of us—as Poe scholars and teachers—of the great asset that we have in this mystery as a means of attracting new readers to Poe’s work.

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**Louis Bayard. *The Pale Blue Eye: A Novel*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. 432pp. \$24.95.**

*The Pale Blue Eye*, by Louis Bayard, is part historical novel, part American Gothic tale of ratiocination, and part CSI thriller. Bayard has done his homework, and someone else's to boot, for he molds his plot out of both the finest details of Poe biography and an extremely accurate history, culture, and geography of West Point in 1830. Bayard delivers his tale through a modified epistolary form, and the first-person voice that emerges from his Cadet Poe is quite familiar at times—quite like the earnest voice we get in the letters to John Allan from that era. Most remarkable about this book, however, is the way Bayard seems interested in conversing with the generic elements of the American literary-Gothic tradition.

The novel incorporates such a thick conglomerate of the biographical and literary Poe that I have no chance to represent it fully here. But take, for example, the general conceit: One Augustus Landor, a renowned New York City constable, has retired to a cottage at Buttermilk Falls, just a stone's throw from West Point. We are meant to discover both the source of "Landor's Cottage" and of Auguste Dupin's given name. From his melancholy hermitage, Landor quickly falls into what he calls the "West Point Affair." A cadet has died under mysterious, bloody circumstances, and Superintendent Thayer sends for Landor, thinking him to be the perfect outsider to solve the mystery. Soon, and somehow, Landor finds himself working with Cadet Poe to unravel a tightening knot of perplexity and atrocity.

Bayard confronts the problem of how to bring Poe to fictional life through several interesting devices. First, he alternates between the first person narrative of Gus Landor and the secret communiqués Poe sends to Landor. This way we hear Poe speak and also get to read his missives to Landor. Second, Bayard has Poe fall in love with a difficult, dark beauty named Lea. This leads to a Poe in turmoil, a Poe able to suffer rhetorically and sometimes comically before both his father figure Landor and his love Lea, who anticipates all the dying women who inhabit his subsequent work. Bayard's Poe is once brilliant and then naïve, once a confident cadet and then a fabulator of self—exactly the fragile Poe that Ken Silverman's biography records as then tangled up in painful correspondence with John Allan.



Bayard's limited engagement with historical West Pointers is also worth mention. His Superintendent Thayer, for example, comes off as a strange bird, a man so fixated on maintaining the insularity of his Academy and on closing ranks to expose villainy in the Corps that he seems stricken by events and only able to brood upon the past. He seems a frozen man, intent upon maintaining old-school martial mores, rather than the man of action, the forward-thinking father of the Academy that history records.

The book is very good because, as Poe did, Bayard understands the power of cryptic space. A true story: Workmen on the Hudson cliff directly below the West Point English department recently jackhammered their way into a crypt, which proved to be an empty and forgotten munitions cache. Still more recently, an excavator at Trophy Point exposed an ancient tunnel leading from these same cliffs to a point under the famous cadet parade grounds. Bayard takes us steadily down into such spaces, and is right to do so, for today's West Point, with its crenellated and gargoyled buildings, shares almost nothing with the one Poe inhabited in 1830. The denuded hills and simple, squared-off, pony-express structures offered few expanses of brooding woods and none of the labyrinthine passageways we know from William Wilson's Godwinian academy. Bayard does a wonderful job exploiting those Academy spaces we can consider Gothic: the lonely nighttime slopes from the plain down to the Hudson, the rocky way to the infamous Benny Havens' Public House, and, of course, the tumbled stones of Fort Putnam overlooking it all. Bayard also mines the cramped internal quarters in officer's homes, in barracks, and finally, in chill and true subterranean crypts.

It may seem strange to a general readership that America proper never fully arrives in a book that purports to be an historical novel, but such is the force of claustrophobia in *The Pale Blue Eye* that no world outside the Hudson Highlands seems possible. We do get a dramatic masque in a manse across from the academy; we do get rumor of post-razing threat from Washington; we do get the occasional trace of a vicious city down river; but in general, the characters, the place, and the reader remain exiled in a tense new "Valley Nis."

I am not sure that Bayard marginalizes America on purpose or simply closes the boundaries of setting to better work through a complex plot, but in any case, the effect works. The erasure of America is normative in Poe's own Germanizing tales, and when we look past Poe to his chief American influence,

Brockden Brown, we are reminded that transformation and compression of American space into horror is essential to our native Gothicism. Poe's house of Usher, Brown's Mettingen in *Wieland*, and Bayard's West Point are simply all mis-built to come crashing down. Families get too close in these spaces, and things fall apart. There is a breed of West Pointer who will not like the book for the implications carried by this Gothic tendency. Brown, after all, wrote a distinctly political warning into his claustrophobic *Wieland*. Looking out past the faded American Revolution, he saw horror in France and feared the outcome of our own quiet isolationism. He even sent a copy to Jefferson. What, if anything, then, could Bayard mean by writing in this vein? If books are embedded in their own time, how are we today to interpret a cadet corps infected by murderers, turned away from the world, turning out corpses, unable to maintain *esprit de corps*? But if we grant this writer his *donnée*, which I take to be an attempt to write after works like Caleb Carr's *The Alienist* while exploring the American Gothic, then the work is a resounding success.

Bayard has at least one structural problem of his own in this book, or, at the very least, he breaks with Poe in one important way. Bayard's characters keep secrets; they suffer from tragic, enduring remembrance without letting us in on it. In keeping a secret until the end, Bayard keeps us from fully experiencing how the claustrophobic imagination gets projected from character onto setting—another hallmark of the American Gothic. In fact, we read hundreds of pages with a sense not that some *thing*, but rather that some *guilt* is missing. Poe's tales work differently. In, say, "The Tell-Tale Heart," (a tale Bayard uses to impose puns upon us throughout the book), we witness the growing anxiety of the narrator and track the projection of perverse psyche onto (and under) the setting of the drama. For the sake of keeping secrets, Bayard would keep such reading pleasures from us. As a result, our considerable interest is maintained solely by the exposition of an excellent plot, and not by the organic, perverse, Gothic decay of his characters. But this is small matter in a powerful book that will undoubtedly do very well.

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***Annabel Lee & Other Tales of Mystery and Imagination.* Portland, OR: Lurker Films, 2005. DVD \$20.00.**

In his poem “Where Once Poe Walked,” H.P. Lovecraft writes that Edgar Allan Poe’s “song/Peals down through time with a mysterious spell.” That spell, perhaps in the form of “the moaning and the groaning of the bells,” inspired Lovecraft, an aficionado of the Gothic tradition who builds upon Poe’s foundation in his own work, and has continued to inspire countless others of various artistic backgrounds. In cinema, for instance, Roger Corman, who adapted a number of Poe’s works for the big screen, brought Lovecraft and Poe together in his 1963 film *The Haunted Palace*, a Vincent Price vehicle that takes its title from Poe and its subject matter primarily from Lovecraft’s novella *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

In a sense, Lovecraft and Poe come together again in *Annabel Lee & Other Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, the first volume of *The Edgar Allan Poe Collection* by Lurker Films. Founded by Andrew Migliore in 1995, Lurker’s *raison d’être*, according to the company’s web site (<[www.lurkerfilms.com](http://www.lurkerfilms.com)>), is to produce audio and video works “directly or indirectly inspired by Lovecraft’s work.” In producing *Annabel Lee & Other Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, the company has, strictly speaking, deviated slightly from this purpose, but a sufficient dungeon-full of Gothic chains binds Lovecraft and Poe, making the departure a minor one.

The main feature of this first volume is, of course, *Annabel Lee*, an intriguing stop-motion puppet-animation film produced by Tony Pellegrino and George Higham, and directed by George Higham. Without a doubt, the film contains enough *bizarrierie* to render another recent stop-motion picture, Tim Burton’s *Corpse Bride* (2005), ordinary by comparison. In a booklet that accompanies the DVD, Higham writes that the stop-motion medium “has an inherently creepy feel to it. It’s uncanny and disturbing to watch puppets move on their own” (n.p.). However, Higham, who fittingly refers to his style as “neon” Gothic, adds that this film also presents an “expressionist” vision, “a timeless nightmar-escape of horrid insanity” (n. p.). In other words, the protagonist creates the film’s “reality” from his mind, not unlike the protagonist of the German expressionist classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919). Moreover, in an interview included on the DVD, Higham cites Norwegian painter and expressionist Edvard Munch as one of his influences, and the dark shadows

and fiery orange, red, and yellow colors of the *mise en scène*—not to mention the mental state of the protagonist—unmistakably reveal the influence of Munch’s work, particularly *The Scream*.

*Annabel Lee* opens with a series of dissolves featuring an eclectic assortment of disconcerting images, including moving water, collapsing church steeples, a crab’s claws, and the moon—all of which combine to inculcate the viewer with the sense of a world wasting away. The sounds of squawking sea gulls and maritime bells overlay the grim background music. Next, a line of wharf rats runs across the screen, the last one a grotesque half-rat that foreshadows the state of the protagonist near the end of the film as he intrepidly defies Death and crawls toward his beloved’s tomb. For his protagonist, Higham chooses Poe himself in puppet form, arguing during the DVD interview that an “anonymous character” would not have brought viewers into the film. Admittedly, likening Poe to his narrators can be problematic. (See John A. Dern, review of *Nightmares from the Mind of Poe*, *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 6.2 [2005]: 50.) Nonetheless, Higham’s approach has some soundness, especially when one considers Poe’s emotional investment in “Annabel Lee”: “In Poe’s promise of never-ending remembrance of her girlish beauty, and his pleasure in joining her in early death, Annabel Lee represents all of the women he loved and lost” (Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* [New York: HarperCollins, 1991], 402). In a sense, the protagonist of *Annabel Lee* represents one of Poe’s personas, the one critic and playwright Paul Day Clemens (who coauthored the play *Edgar Allan Poe—Once upon a Midnight*, starring John Astin) identifies as “Poe-the-Lover” in the film’s accompanying booklet (n. p.).

Interestingly, the first words of the film, which are narrated by New York Press writer Jim Knipfel, come not from “Annabel Lee” but from “The Premature Burial”: “There are moments when, even to the sober eye of Reason, the world of our sad Humanity may assume the semblance of a Hell.” Although taken out of context (the narrator of “The Premature Burial” has actually overcome his dread of untimely inhumation when he offers this thought in the story’s last paragraph), this quote sets the movie’s tone, for the Poe puppet—a marionette at this point in the film—enters the scene falteringly, crushed by fate.

The film continues with Knipfel’s voice-over rendition of “Annabel Lee” complementing Higham’s puppet work. The Poe puppet wends his way to “The

Bridge of 100 Angels,” a previously lustrous golden overpass that has special significance for him and his lost love. However, the bridge has decomposed, its angels having turned into skeletons, its golden sheen hidden by some sort of patina. As he stands on the once-magnificent structure, with its obvious metaphorical significance as a bridge across time as well as space, the Poe character recalls better days with Annabel Lee, a beautiful puppet with long chestnut hair and alabaster skin that matches her dress. He recalls images of her both on the bridge and on a bright sandy beach, where he is building a sandcastle. In these halcyon days, the “angels” in heaven, who are more like hideous, black-winged Harpies, watch the happy couple. They and their leader, a horrific figure called Misery whose face is an eyeless maw, become jealous of the love they witness below. Drawing a hand across his throat, Misery gestures to Death, and a nicely cut montage including shots of Misery, Death’s scythe, and Annabel Lee spells the end for the latter. The Poe puppet shrieks, the sandcastle melts, and uncomplicated love is at an end. Subsequent shots of shattering glass, superimposed on shots of the Poe and Annabel Lee puppets and combined with sobs, lead to a cleverly allusive shot where the Poe puppet’s eyes have been rammed through by nails—an image symbolic of the Oedipian intensity of his agony.

In his sonnet “A Love Constant beyond Death,” Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo writes that the parts of his body “[s]hall turn to ash, but ash which knows desire, / Dust they shall be, but always dust in love.” Quevedo speaks of a transcendent love that not even Death can bring to an end. This is the love that Higham argues exists between the protagonist and Annabel Lee: “It’s a love stronger than death itself” (n. p.). As a result, the film recoils from the possibility of necrophilia in favor of something spiritual. Ultimately, in fact, the Poe puppet, battered by fate and nearly a skeleton himself, crawls to Annabel Lee’s tomb and opens it. Another shriek, that of Misery, whose design has been defeated by love, resounds. The final shot shows the Poe and Annabel Lee puppets reunited on the beach.

Visually, the film is a *tour de force*. Some problems arise, however, in conjunction with the voice-over. As Kenneth Silverman argues, the relationship between the narrator of “Annabel Lee” and his eponymous love interest suggests “a nonsexual, childlike attachment” (*Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*, 401). However, Knipfel’s deep, sometimes scratchy voice goes against the childlike tone of the poem. In the interview, Higham asserts that

Knipfel's voice struck him as one "that had character and could convey feeling." Indeed, Knipfel's voice is one of character and feeling, but it is neither the appropriate character nor the appropriate feeling. In other words, the childlike tone of the poem, in combination with its potentially churlish ending, creates a sense of irony missing from this recitation. Is this poem simply a powerful statement of "Poe's abiding faith in the transcendence of the soul"? (James M. Hutchisson, *Poe*, [Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2005], 210). As G.R. Thompson argues, "[i]t may be that in the poems Poe presented us with his most intense feelings of loss and illusoriness, but given the possibility of ironic 'self-transcendence,' it would be well for the serious reader to look carefully at anything that seems a little too extravagant, or too visionary, or too intense in the poems." (See his Introduction to *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe* [New York: Harper & Row, 1970], 18.)

In addition, despite Higham's assertion in the interview that he did not alter Poe's text at all, changes to the poem are perceptible. The most egregious of these involves the third stanza. In "Annabel Lee," Poe uses ballad meter, which employs alternating iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter lines. (Poe, however, dispenses with the usual ballad stanza, the quatrain, in favor of the hexastich.) In the fifth line of the third stanza, Poe writes, "So that her highborn kinsmen came." Knipfel omits the first two words of this line: "Her highborn kinsmen came," and thus changes a tetrameter line into a trimeter one.

Despite problems with the voice-over, *Annabel Lee* is something everyone interested in Poe should see. Still, anyone who would like more information on the film can visit Higham's web site, [www.poepuppet.com](http://www.poepuppet.com), which includes stills, a synopsis of the film, the original treatment, and an interview with Higham.

In addition to *Annabel Lee*, the DVD includes *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Raven*. The former adaptation stars European horror legend Paul Naschy, whom one web site, [www.naschy.com](http://www.naschy.com), dubs "the Spanish Lon Chaney." (Naschy, who began his career in film during 1960 as an extra in Nicolas Ray's *King of Kings*, has played such horror *personae* as Dracula and Mr. Hyde.) The dialogue of *El Corazón Delator*, which is produced and directed by Alfonso S. Suárez, is in Spanish, but the picture includes English subtitles. However, the change of language is perhaps the least drastic of the alterations made to the story.

The film, shot in black and white, opens with Naschy's character in a straight jacket standing in the corner of a cell at an asylum. A heart beats softly in the background. Before long, the character arrives at his childhood home, where his brother still lives. Apparently released from his confinement, the Naschy character shares some seeming *bonhomie* with his brother. As the two drink, the brother says, "Let's make a toast to your extraordinary recovery." Naschy's character responds, "And to you my brother...because thanks to you...I will never be the same." This response represents the finest moment of irony in the adaptation, which, like Poe's original, has the main character reveal his madness through the subtleties of language. (See John A. Dern, "Poe's Public Speakers: Rhetorical Strategies in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Cask of Amontillado,'" *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 2.2 [2001]: 53-60.)

After Naschy's character retires, the brother receives a telephone call telling him that the supposedly erstwhile lunatic has, in fact, escaped from the asylum. The madman, though, overhears the conversation and acts before help can arrive. In short, he has located the source of his condition in his brother's heartbeat, as opposed to a "vulture eye," and he believes the cure lies in his brother's *immolation*. However, the silence of the murder room slowly gives away to the crescendo of a beating heart, which climaxes in a freeze frame of Naschy's distressed countenance.

Although the film does not attempt a literal recreation of Poe's story (as does the Monterey Media production *The Tell-Tale Heart* [2000], directed by Scott Mansfield, for instance), it works as cinema owing mainly to Naschy's portrayal of the lunatic. As a short piece in the DVD booklet puts it, Naschy "delights in this performance of sinister glances, maniacal smirks, ironic elocutions and eyes twinkling with the barely concealed madness of an unstable mind" (n. p.). Indeed, the clever irony of the piece, both verbal and situational, should prove pleasing to Poe fans.

The last film on the DVD, *The Raven*, stars Louis Morabito as the lovelorn protagonist. Produced and directed by Peter Bradley, the film, shot mostly in black and white, opens with a disheveled Morabito sitting in an easy chair and drinking absinthe. Lenore, played by Jenny Guy, appears, rather appropriately, in an *oval* portrait hanging on the wall beyond Morabito. Moreover, the voice-over narration of the poem by Michael G. Sayers, who possesses a haunting baritone, fits the tone of the poem and the mood of the film perfectly. (Morabito

mouths those lines or parts of lines Poe places in quotation marks. The synchronization is not perfect, but the subtle difference in the timing actually adds to the surrealistic quality of the film.)

The film begins with a “tapping” sound arousing the protagonist from his stupor; he then proceeds to try to discover the source of the peculiar sound. After the Raven, a dagger-feathered puppet, enters the room, a rapid montage links the bird with Lenore. The Raven then perches on the bust of Pallas and looks down at Morabito. Indeed, the Raven maintains this “superior” position in relation to the protagonist for the remainder of the film, Bradley employing several high-angle shots (also called bird’s-eye shots!) over the fowl’s left shoulder. Next, the narrator begins his self-torturing interrogation of the “grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous” Raven vis-à-vis Lenore, experiencing what Silverman calls “a conflict between Remembrance and Forgetting” (*Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*, 240).

More important, Bradley includes several clever touches that enhance the film’s value as cinema. For instance, during the eleventh stanza (“Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken”), he crosscuts between brief color drawings of the Raven torturing the protagonist, and black and white shots of Morabito, as if the character unconsciously realizes the import of his encounter with the bird even as he rationalizes its response of “Nevermore”: “‘Doubtless,’ said I, ‘what it utters is its only stock and store....’” In addition, the figure of Lenore in the portrait changes its position and expression between shots. For example, in the sixteenth stanza (“‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil!—prophet still if bird or devil!’”), Lenore appears grief-stricken as the protagonist berates the bird. Last, the “shadow” referenced in the poem’s last octameter line—“And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor”—is not the Raven’s shadow in the film, but *Lenore’s*. The protagonist lies slumped at the edge of the shadow, and the room around him, like his psyche, is in a state of disorder.

In short, *The Raven*, which includes a virtually verbatim reading of the poem, works well. The adaptation shows respect for the language of the poem and the situation described even as it modifies that situation—as it does with the unsettled Lenore of the portrait—to suit Bradley’s vision.



All in all, *Annabel Lee & Other Tales of Mystery and Imagination* represents a worthwhile investment for Poe enthusiasts. As aforementioned, the DVD—which comes handsomely packaged—includes a booklet featuring the essays by Clemens and Higham, and the short (anonymous) piece on *The Tell-Tale Heart*. What is more, it contains an entertaining piece by Bradley on *The Raven*, a particularly enjoyable read because it points out various tidbits about the film, such as the fact that the book on Morabito's lap as *The Raven* opens is H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, a favorite of Bradley. The DVD itself includes not only the interview with Higham, but a short program of interviews with the filmmakers behind *The Raven* and an interview with Clemens. It also contains a short biography of Poe.

*John A. Dern*  
Gwynedd-Mercy College

## Poe in Cyberspace

“Is Faster the New Slower? Welcome to the Future!”

Pundita in Poe’s “Melonta Tauta” reports from the Atlantic balloon on the day after April 1, 2848: “Spoke to-day the magnetic cutter in charge of the middle section of floating telegraph wires . . . . civil war is raging in Africa, while the plague is doing its good work beautifully both in Yurope and Ayesher.” Poe’s imaginary floating Atlantic telegraph line of 1848 was followed in only ten years by the first actual attempt to build it in 1858, leading to the successful laying of the first submerged line in 1866. As to self-sustaining manned flight, that followed just 56 years later in 1904. The eventual point of Poe’s satire—that progress can be an illusion—is often borne out when our own technological progress is accompanied by offsetting technological hazards. For example, today’s rapidly improving networked computers are increasingly vulnerable to equally rapidly spreading computer viruses, our new global electronic plague. (For background, see my “The Purloined Letters” in the Fall 2005 issue of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*.)

How many infected computer files are there around the world today? When Microsoft offered its Malicious Software Removal Tool, 62 percent of the 5.7 million computer users who responded reported such a problem. In just one month, TrendMicro, a vendor of security software, reported finding about a million infected files distributed around the globe as follows: Europe 521,000; South America 204,000; Asia, 162,000; North America 103,000; Australia 85,000; and Africa 78,000. Viruses and their relatives as well as spyware and spam can put our personal Poe research on our computers at severe risk—and now they can even do it wirelessly. These new electronic threats may have familiar names—such as virus, spam, and spyware—or more bizarre appellations—such as stalker, rootkit, and phishing. What is certain is that in their endless mutations, these threats pose a dilemma for us as we handle research: should we invest time and expense to combat them vigilantly, or should we save time, money, and the inconvenience—and just take our chances?

A major war is heating up between escalating threats to our computers and the growing countermeasures that are becoming available. Viruses that once were harmless pranks can now destroy essential Poe research and personal data. Spyware that once was merely an advertising gimmick can now be used in identity theft by capturing passwords, social security numbers, and bank

information. A new cybermafia has come into being, seizing profitable new opportunities for electronic crime. Spyware has even been involved in sexual harassment cases, and some evidence suggests that spyware and spam are also being directed against children. Consumer Reports found 28 percent more spyware in homes where children under 18 had used the Internet in the previous six months, and in 8 percent of these households, a child had inadvertently seen pornographic material because of spam.

Want to go into the business of stealing keystrokes? Now you can just buy a do-it-yourself keylogging kit. In April 2005 there were 70 known such kits on this gray market, but within a year 180 kits were available. Think you can detect fake web pages? Tests conducted at Harvard and Berkeley found that more than 90% of users were fooled even though they were on the lookout for such deceptions.

### 1. *The vocabulary of this strange new world.*

A *virus* is a malicious program transmitted by something you put into your computer either physically on a disk drive or electronically from an internet connection. It is programmed to spread itself, often in disguise, and it can destroy or interfere with your data and operations.

Like paper junk mail, *spam* is unwanted email; it can waste your time, and enough of it can jam your electronic mailbox.

*Spyware* may keep track of the web sites you visit and may even capture your keystrokes; it can be used to report your activities to advertisers or, more dangerously, to obtain private fiscal information and even to stalk you. Since spyware is so varied and rapid-changing, experts suggest you use not one but two anti-spyware programs!

*Phishing*, a pun on fishing, seeks to trick you into giving up passwords, social security numbers, bank information, and private data by simulating an offer of help in combating the very sort of fraud it is committing. One survey found that the 2854 phishing sites reported in April 2005 had increased to 11,121 in April 2006, a fourfold increase—even though many are amateurish in spelling and grammar.

A *rootkit* takes over the basic operations of your computer without symptoms, like someone jacking up your car and running it from beneath without your knowledge.

Taken together, these potentially malicious programs are called *malware*.

Protection exists in the forms of *antivirus*, *antispyware*, and *antispam* software, sometimes combined into security *suites*.

*Vulnerable areas* of your computer are the operating system, broadband and dialup internet connections, browsers, web pages, software downloads, email attachments, and shared software.

*Backups*: Since computers are also subject to internal hardware and software breakdowns and user mistakes over time, the prudent will make a data backup after each session.

2. *What can go wrong?* A popup offers to make your Paypal experience safer. Email warns you that an unauthorized person has tried to use your bank account. The Windows program seems to be warning you of a processing error. Someone you know is sending you an improbably offensive email. You are asked to sign a petition to keep Congress from charging for email. An offer is made to obtain expensive software free. You have received an unexpected inheritance that must be collected in 90 days. A businessman in Tasmania is seeking a North American partner. A long-suffering family needs to use your mailing address to expedite its prospective immigration. Your teenager has a chance to meet someone through MySpace. Your email address has won the random drawing of the Icelandic lottery. Your computer is taking much, much longer to load and run. Although these situations may be innocent and legitimate, all are typical of nasty problems with malware.

3. *Update your operating system.* Since security measures are constantly being strengthened in operating systems, make sure you download and install the most recent version of Windows or whatever else you use. You can get the latest upgrades, typically Service Pack 2, from [www.microsoft.com/protect](http://www.microsoft.com/protect), whether you use Windows XP or an earlier version. You can set Windows XP to automatically use the Update feature. Operating systems are constantly being enhanced for security: it is expected that Windows Vista, the next version, will

add more security features. If you use a Mac computer, you are somewhat safer, suffering fewer virus and other malware programs, but you will also benefit from system updates.

4. *Update your Web browser and current software.* Check your provider for updates or minor enhancements of web browsers such as Internet Explorer 6. Some users prefer the Firefox browser as less frequently targeted for malware attacks. Your current version of other software, such as Microsoft Office, may have small improvements designed to patch security holes of your version.

5. *Make sure the firewall of home network is working effectively.* Don't stay with the default passwords that came with the system, and make sure the "remote administration" feature is disabled. Shut off your broadband connection between sessions.

6. *Raise the security level of your browser.* For Internet Explorer 6, make sure the security level is at least medium so that Web sites cannot download programs or run Windows active scripts without your knowledge. The next version, Internet Explorer 7, will contain better security features.

7. *Back up all active files immediately after each change.* While writing this article, I spent a day at the library doing research on another project, taking notes on a laptop computer that had been ailing for a while. When I tried to check my work a few days later, the laptop would not start up no matter what I did. Fortunately I had backed up my latest data on a tiny flash memory device I always carry, and had already transferred it to my main desktop machine. But I could not quiet those lingering doubts that I might have lost something. In the past I have used such backup devices as floppy disks (1.44 megabytes), tape drives (20 MB), Bernoulli drives (150 MB), Zip disks (100MB), CDs (700 MB), and DVDs (4 gigabytes). Now I use a USB flash drive; recently I purchased such a 2 GB flash drive for only \$40.

8. *Protect your passwords.* Make sure they are not obvious, not too short, and do include some numbers and symbols. Avoid natural or common words, and never disclose a password online.

9. *Throw out junk email before opening it.* Never open unexpected or suspicious attachments. If you do open strange email, don't reply, especially not to

“unsubscribe,” which serves as a confirmation. Never give out personal information.

10. *Best email programs.* Microsoft Outlook 2003 and Apple Mail have a reputation for providing the best spam, spyware, and virus protection, but be sure you activate and maintain them. To avoid spam, use several different email addresses. You can get separate email addresses for business, for personal use, etc., from Yahoo, Hotmail, and Gmail. Check with your internet provider to see if spam blockers are available.

11. *Be moderate: evaluate risk.* Evaluate how much risk you can tolerate. If any of these suggestions seem excessive, be more moderate in your defenses, depending on how much risk you are willing to tolerate.

12. *The fake site trick.* Be suspicious. Fake sites use spoofing—imitating the visual style of Microsoft and various banks by pretending to issue security bulletins. If you do reply to an honest message, type in the address yourself instead of clicking on it. Web pages can trick you by showing a safe web address you know on the screen while the code beneath actually takes you to a dangerous address unknown to you.

13. *Mailing list dangers.* If you maintain a mailing list with the email addresses of your contacts, malicious software can spread itself to the names on that list without your knowledge. Thus, malicious software might seem to be coming from a business associate, relative, or friend. Hackers can fake the return address on email: I was once made into the “sender” of obscene email to a female colleague, who fortunately discussed the matter with me before initiating a sexual harassment complaint.

14. *Word macros.* Beware Microsoft Word files that may contain dangerous attachments or macros (mini programs). File names can be misleading: what may seem a harmless .txt or .doc file may actually contain a dangerous .vbs Windows “script” or mini program.

15. *MySpace dangers.* Social sites such as MySpace.com can prove risky, sometimes containing spyware that can affect the family computer. There is also concern that efforts to stalk women or to send sexually explicit messages to children can be transmitted in this way.

16. *Thorough? Do the research to find the best security programs.* Use sources such as *Consumer Reports*, *PC Magazine*, and *PC World* to see ratings on the best security software for anti-virus, anti-spyware, and anti-spam purposes. *PC World* rated some top security software in recent issues: antivirus software (January 25, 2006), spyware (August 25, 2006), and security suites (May 25, 2006). An unusually comprehensive study of software testing appears in the September 2006 issue of *Consumer Reports*. Articles from all three magazines (among many other sources) are available by subscription, in libraries, and online. Some of the top programs in each category are actually *free*, requiring just downloading.

17. *Impatient? Install and maintain a security suite.* If you don't want to do the research on individual software measures, use a ready-made suite of security programs available from several well-known providers, all requiring purchase and then an annual subscription fee. The most convenient way to get started is to purchase the software as a CD package from a retail store—much faster than downloading. Often upgrade rebates are available in software combination packages published by well established sources such as Symantec Norton Internet Security and McAfee's SecurityCenter. AOL's Total Care package is available to subscribers, and a new entrant in the field, Microsoft Live OneCare, will allow you to subscribe to a comprehensive security service—with remedies for what many allege are shortcomings in its own widely available software.

18. *On a tight budget? Download trial or free software.* Most software programs are available in 30 day trial versions, and some recommended software packages are offered entirely without charge for noncommercial use. *Consumer Reports* lists Alwil Avast for anti-virus, Spybot for anti-spyware, and Trend Micro for anti-spam. But be prepared for long download times if you have a dial-up connection.

19. *A final caveat: beware of friendly fire.* All anti-malware measures inevitably put at risk or even remove some small percentage of innocent files. Spam-killers, spyware cleaners, and cleanup operations for “cookies” may delete programs you have asked for, even relied upon. In each case, some functional files and associated data may be lost if you do not monitor the removal process carefully. Strike the compromise that suits you.

To return to Poe—evidently he shared the misconception commonly held in the early days of steam transportation that human vision would not function properly at high speeds. Pundita predicted that traveling across Canada at 100 mph would still produce worthwhile views because the glass windows could still be opened. When the cars of the future reached 300 mph, however, they would be sealed up, yielding an “odd sensation” when the occasional glance outside detected the merger of all objects: “Every thing seemed unique—in one mass.” In truth, human vision has proved more adaptable than Poe predicted, and jet planes now regularly travel at twice the speed Poe anticipated. But air travel, as Poe might have predicted, does not continue to become faster and faster. The supersonic Concorde has been permanently grounded, and a short trip of an hour by air now actually can take three or four hours or more when ground travel congestion, airport security screening procedures, and flight traffic delays are taken into account. It would have amused Poe to know that while our computer processing chips run faster and faster each year, it is actually taking us longer and longer to complete work on the computer than it did a decade ago—in part because of the growing damage of viruses, spyware, and spam—and the increasingly labor-intensive countermeasures against such malware.

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(“Poe in Cyberspace” articles are available online at *eapoe.info* with links to cited electronic resources.)



**Abstracts for PSA Sessions**  
*at the 122<sup>nd</sup> MLA Annual Convention*  
*in Philadelphia, PA*  
*27-30 December 2006*

**Session 568: Music and Poe's 'Poesy'**

Friday, 29 December 2006

7:15 p.m.–8:30 p.m., Independence Ballroom Salon III, Philadelphia Marriott

*Presiding: Barbara Cantalupo, Penn State Lehigh Valley*

**(1) "Waltzing with the Red Death"**

*Richard Fusco, Saint Joseph's University*

Scholars such as Robert Reagan have long noted the influence Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales had upon Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death." They sometimes even speculate that Poe's rereading of *Twice-Told Tales* inspired (1) a new appreciation for the tale as an art form and (2) a more intense creativity applied toward its execution. I focus upon one aspect of that new aesthetic sensibility: the careful infusion of poetic devices into prose fiction to create a "unity of effect" that would engage readers more viscerally. A careful reading of the text reveals a stylistic and poetic scrupulousness that exceeds what Poe practiced in previous tales. In effect, the proliferation of simple language effects—such as alliteration and assonance, cadence and metrics, cacophony and euphony, and the like—render the tale a prose poem, anticipating the subtitle of *Eureka* by six years. Moreover, several works published after 1842 also qualify as attempts at prose poems.

This aesthetic rethinking owes its inspiration to Hawthorne's experiments with fictional style. Interestingly, one of the texts that Poe singles out in his famous 1842 review is "The Hollow of the Three Hills," a tale replete with poetic effects. F. L. Pattee's notion that the tale's prose can be rearranged into lines of iambic pentameter suggests to me that this early text is a prose re-rendering of one of the narrative poems Hawthorne composed while at Bowdoin. While it does not aspire to the level of blank verse, the text of "The Masque of the Red Death" indulges itself with poetic parallels to Hawthorne's prose style. Poe's aesthetic growth becomes apparent through comparisons with "The

Hollow of the Three Hills”—to measure the extent of influence—and with a pre-1842 Poe tale such as “King Pest”—to measure the extent of transformation.

Poe’s competitive nature would not allow him to settle for mere imitation, however. Just as Prospero tried to “out-Herod Herod,” Poe tried to “out-Hawthorne Hawthorne,” which he accomplished by introducing a complexity not present in Hawthorne’s sensibility. Several critics (such as Helen Ensley) have commented upon the musicality in Poe’s poetry. I believe that Poe injected musical qualities into the poetic aspects of “The Masque.” One significant metaphor in the tale is the waltzing of Prospero’s revelers. As a musical form, the waltz approximates the cadences in the tale’s prose as well as hints at the symbolic progression of its plot. As a dance form (the first in which partners held each other closely), it functions at several levels. As a thematic device, it parallels the psychological and physical relationship each reveler has with the red death, thus allegorizing how all humans are locked in death’s embrace. At the same time, the waltz suggests the way a text embraces its reader. In sum, Poe’s synthesis of poetic and musical designs increases the seductiveness of the prose, uniting the reader’s appreciation of the sublime with his despair regarding the human condition. Not only do these affinities among poetics, music, and dance contribute to Poe’s approach to language in *Eureka*, they also foreground his composition of subsequent poems such as “The Bells” and “Annabel Lee.”

## **(2) “Poe’s ‘Israfel’: A Song of Thomas Campion”**

*Ruth M. Harrison, Arkansas Tech University.*

Edgar Allan Poe’s short, dark lyrics about love and death find their true home in an anthology of Renaissance songwriters like *The Book of Gems* which Poe reviewed twice. The many similarities between suggestions that Poe makes in “The Philosophy of Composition” and characteristics actually found in the Renaissance short poem suggest that Poe studied the poems of Thomas Campion, Shakespeare, Dowland, Sidney, Jonson and others. The Renaissance song writers’ lessons about the refrain, and about metrics, length, and imagery were with him when he wrote his poetry. Studying “Israfel” opens a path to Poe’s Renaissance influences. Poe’s poem “Israfel” may be based on *Ad. Io. Dolandum*, Thomas Campion’s poetic tribute to lutenist John Dowland (1563-1626). The first stanza of Campion’s poem and the first lines of Poe’s have so many similarities that “Israfel” at first may seem to be a translation of Campion’s

Latin tribute. Lines and images in Poe's poem indicate that "Israfel," if not a paraphrase of Campion's poem, is modeled on the tribute to Dowland.

### (3) "Beauty and the Beats"

*Elizabeth Duquette, Gettysburg College*

Chief amongst Edgar Allan Poe's complaints about Henry W. Longfellow's poetry was his rival's too frequent insistence upon the "inculcation of a moral." By putting poetry in service of "the true," Poe held that Longfellow squandered his own gift and simultaneously degraded both truth and poetry. "The demands of truth are severe," Poe explained. "She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All that is indispensable in song is all with which she has nothing to do."

Yet Poe's confident assertion about the irreconcilable differences between truth and "song" or poetry belies a premise to which he returned throughout his career, namely the intimate connection between poetry and mathematical precision. This is the principle upon which he based his revisions to the established means of scanning "the exact relative value of every syllable employed in Verse" in "The Rationale of Verse." Extolling the "simplicity" of his system for measuring poetic meter, as well as the "time, labor, and ink saved," Poe provides a sample of the notations necessary to two poetic lines:

				3/2						
Many	are	the		thoughts	that		come	to		me
	6	6	6						2	
In	my		lonely		mus	ing,				
		2		2						

A numerical charting of relations of stress and value is preferable because it comes closer to conveying specific and accurate information. "Does the common accentuation," he asked, "express the truth, in particular, in general, or in any regard? Is it consistent with itself? Does it convey either to the ignorant or to the scholar a just conception of the rhythm of the lines?" Poe concluded that each of these questions requires a negative response because a series of graphic marks—crescents or bars—"express *precisely nothing whatever*." Building, and punning, on the intimate historical association between numbers and verse, an association Alexander Pope pointed to when he chided "As yet a Child, not yet a Fool to Fame, / I lisp'd in Numbers, for the

Numbers came,” Poe suggested that we translate the poetic line back into a numerical equation. The economy of such a system is evident in the time saved and in the accuracy about time imparted. Linking time, rhythm, mathematics and poetry, Poe concluded that “the pleasure received, or receivable” from poetry relies on “mathematical relations.”

Is the suggestion that numerical relations are an important element of what counts as beauty complicated by the parallel assertion that numbers provide access to something that should count as paradigmatically verifiable, factual and accurate? When the Greeks associated mathematics and poetry, they were doing so in a culture that did not believe that numbers were especially privileged vehicles for expressing or conveying the true. How does the cultural shift that elevated numbers to the fact of choice reshape this basic relationship? This shift is further complicated in the American context by the growing importance of moral economy, the equation of status and financial success, and the assumption that time is money.

In “The Business Man,” published in 1840 and reprinted in 1845 after significant revisions, Poe satirized the materialism of a society increasingly obsessed with success measured in terms of numbers, money and things, anticipating Walden in his discomfort with the normative association between mathematics, utility, value and appearance. Included in this under-studied tale is an invoice that I will argue must be read as indistinguishable from a poem. If Pope could babble numbers as a babe, why can’t Poe rhyme them as an adult, playing in all seriousness on the metaphorical association of numbers with poetry and the contemporary commercial debasement of literature? That Americans had already accepted the equation of time and money further clarifies this point; if poetry is predicated on time, and time and money are exchangeable, then an invoice is surely hard to distinguish from a poem. Following Stanley Cavell, who observes that in “Poe’s tales the thought is being worked out that, now anyway, philosophy exists only as a parody of philosophy, or rather as something indistinguishable from the perversion of philosophy,” I will argue that “The Business Man” forces us to think about the difference between the real thing and its cheap imitation, or, put differently, how we can prevent being swindled in a society wholly committed to the conflation of beauty, virtue, and exchange. The triumph of the market, the success of poets like Longfellow who waste their gifts on unworthy but profitable subjects meant for Poe that, sadly, the

poems we should expect were those with tedious morals that added up, inexorably, to a specific bottom line.

### **Session 692: Poe and Drama**

Saturday, 30 December 2006

12:00 noon–1:15 p.m., 307, Philadelphia Marriott

*Presiding: John Edward Martin, Louisiana Tech University*

#### **(1) “Poe-litian: Camp and Conscience in Poe’s Unfinished Play”**

*Agnieszka Soltysik, University of Geneva, Switzerland*

Considering how important the tropes of theater and dramaturgy are for Poe’s descriptions of the creative process, it is surprising that Poe wrote no plays besides the fragment, “Scenes from ‘Politian’” (1835). On the other hand, critics who have read this text may not have been surprised that Poe never attempted another drama. Certainly, no other text of Poe’s has been so universally ignored by criticism. Nevertheless, the unfinished play is not without interest.

From a dramaturgical point of view, it displays a rare gift for rapidly creating dramatic tension through suggestive dialogue and complex characterization: Castiglione’s feigned interest in his impending nuptials to the superficial and scolding Alessandra in the first scene, the cruel freedom with which the servant Jacinta treats her grieving mistress Lalage in the second, the suicidal Lalage’s willingness to accept Politian’s courtship, and finally, the curious ambivalence of the duel between Castiglione and Politian. In this latter scene in particular, the characters reveal a psychological complexity rarely seen in Poe’s fiction (e.g. Castiglione’s self-reproach and Politian’s “softening” toward him). The curious intensity of the scene is only heightened when the two men are linked by a love triangle in which both apparently still desire the same woman, one of the very few moments in Poe’s work where desire figures clearly at all.

The queer resonance of the play is heightened still further by the fact that the historical Politian was probably gay (a Renaissance poet and scholar who never married, wrote poems about boys and was companion and housemate to Lorenzo de’Medici). One of the more interesting characters created by Poe, Politian is both dramatically very active in the play (courting Lalage and dueling

Castigliano) and intensely mysterious. His reputation has him as a gay and decadent sensualist on the one hand, and a melancholy philosopher on the other. (One wonders to what extent Poe was not already aware of the extreme polarization that would become his own fate in the hands of popular and literary history.)

Another mystery is the “fearful riddle” that haunts Politian when he first appears in scene three, where he speaks of an “imp” that follows him everywhere and causes his melancholy. Any careful reader of Poe will recognize the word “imp” as a possible trope for “conscience,” since the famous “imp of the perverse” in the tale by that name is, among other things, the narrator’s conscience which causes him (perversely, in the eyes of the remorseless murderer-narrator) to impulsively confess his crime. The personified figure of Conscience appears again in the play in the following scene, where Lalage imagines she sees “the spectral figure” of Conscience (this time evoking “William Wilson,” which is prefaced by an epigram figuring Conscience as a “spectre”). Not only does this image haunt the margins of the play, Politian himself assumes the role of conscience in the final scene, where instead of killing Castiglione, he promises to publicly expose him (again recalling the confessional role played by exteriorized figures of conscience in the two tales mentioned earlier). According to my analysis, then, Politian functions both as a figure for conscience within the play and as a figure for Poe himself.

This kind of ambiguity or interpenetration between a real figure and the role he or she plays is characteristic of “camp,” the hyper-theatrical aesthetic sensibility first discussed by Susan Sontag in her seminal essay “Notes on Camp” (1964). According to more recent critics who have built on her essay, one of the things that defines camp celebrities is an ambiguity about the distinction between the private person, their public persona, and their public performances. Certainly Poe would have to be defined as one of the most camp literary celebrities of all time. What I will explore in this presentation is the connection between these issues in this most queer of Poe’s poetic performances.

## **(2) “*Politian’s Significance for Early American Drama*”**

*Amy C. Branam, Frostburg State University*

Although unfinished, Poe's *Politian* presents a complex nexus where the stage, the American literary marketplace, and the transatlantic Romantic Movement intersect. Using David Reynolds' method of reconstructive criticism outlined in *Beneath the American Renaissance* in which "the historical critic [reconstructs] as completely as possible the socioliterary milieu of literary works through the exploration of a broad array of forgotten social and imaginative texts" (561), my aim is to reframe Poe's play according to its historical moment. Through comparative analyses of other American and foreign dramatic works, I demonstrate the pervasive influence of the historical, social, and political forces of America, particularly the South, on Poe's drama. Contemporary reviews of Poe's and others' dramas, in addition to the reviews of actors and actresses, buttress the argument. Admittedly, the reviews themselves are not consistent in describing what makes a "good" drama; however, these controversies often allow the reconstructive critic to determine competing views between critical demand and popular taste.

In my study, I show that Poe engages the popular genres of his time in order to appeal to his audience. As these appeals shift, he changes his presentations (i.e., the three versions of his play); however, these revisions must be viewed as both tailoring to his audience and in alignment with his own goals as a serious writer. Through discussing elements of sentimental, melodramatic, Gothic, and Romantic drama in his play, we see that Poe's drama engages prevalent, contemporary social issues, particularly as they relate to the South: the individual versus community, vigilantism versus law, good versus evil, love and betrayal, vengeance and mercy. Moreover, the failure to finish and stage the play also reveals the difficulties of producing works for the stage in America during this period.

### **(3) "Poe and the Consolations of Ritual Violence."**

*Tony McGowan, United States Military Academy, West Point*

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the great writers of ritualized violence, and many twentieth-century adaptations of Poe's fiction and poetry succeed as drama (drama broadly considered: stage, opera, ballet, and radio) precisely because of the consolations offered by ritual violence. I explore why Poe returns to the stage at times and in places when the representation of ritual violence can accomplish cultural work.

I first consider a 1953 French/American musical production of the “The Raven” by Byron Schiffman, who also made “Annabel Lee” into a “*prelude et ballet aria*” influenced by Stephane Mallarmé. I then consider two dramatic radio adaptations of Poe’s fiction made in 1971-72, in which Peter Lorie and Ira Cook do the voices for versions of “The Black Cat” and “The Cask of Amontillado.” What fascinates me here is that the dramas were made expressly to send out over the airwaves to troops in Vietnam via American Forces Radio. What does it mean that these violent tales were selected to entertain troops invested in the late stages of the Vietnam War?

I end with consideration of Lance Tait’s recent collection, *The Fall of the House of Usher and other Plays*. Tait’s stark one acts are influenced by ritual Japanese Noh Theater, and in his “suggestions for the actor,” he stresses the importance of “detachment” from character and naturalist emotion. Tait’s reading of Poe through Noh Theater makes sense because both reify character in order to contain and even domesticate ritual violence. In each of my examples I show that performing Poe helps disparate audiences, players, and adaptors make sense of the cultures of violence that surround them.



## PSA Matters

**From Scott Peeples, President:** Poe scholars from around the world gathered with members of the Emerson and Hawthorne societies in Oxford, England, in July for what proved to be a stimulating and highly successful conference on Transatlanticism and American Literature. The conference space and lodging at St. Catherine's College and the Rothermere American Institute were ideal for a conference of our size (156 participants), and I'm pretty sure all who attended had a chance to explore the town during their stay. The weather cooperated throughout the weekend, giving us a perfect setting for our opening reception at the Rothermere and closing reception at St. Catherine's, not to mention the pleasant if sometimes hurried trips to and from those locations between sessions. The plenary addresses by Paul Giles and Susan Manning set the tone for a conference that sought to make new connections—across the Atlantic and among these three writers whose frames of reference and influence were truly international even as they played key roles in defining “American” literature. Other events that brought the participants together—the receptions, including one hosted by Blackwell's bookstore and an outstanding banquet in the dining hall of St. Catherine's—really gave members of the three societies a chance to meet, catch up, and share tourist tales. The PSA was well-represented with 47 members at this meeting of author societies. A number of our members were instrumental in the planning of the conference and its success: Richard Fusco, Barbara Cantalupo, Carole Schaffer-Koros, Paul Jones, Richard Kopley, Stephan Loewentheil, and Susan Tane particularly. Our counterparts in the Hawthorne and Emerson societies were delightful to work with, none moreso than Rosemary Fisk, who as conference director attended to a thousand details, put out a couple dozen fires, and made everyone else's job easier.

And now I'm happy to report that plans are underway for our next gathering, the bicentennial conference to be held in Philadelphia. It's not too early to start thinking about panels and papers you'd like to propose: this will be our first all-Poe conference since 2002, and it will highlight a year of commemorations. Steve Rachman and Barbara Cantalupo are in the process of scouting locations and making preliminary arrangements.

Meanwhile, Poe-related events continue to dot the cultural landscape. The PSA helped sponsor a new theatrical production entitled “The Imp of Edgar Allan Poe” at the Daryl Roth Theatre in Union Square, Manhattan, in mid-

October. And as I write, I'm looking forward to what I believe is the first real Poe event to be held at Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island, SC, where one Edgar A. Perry was stationed from November 1827 to December 1828: "Poe: Back from the Grave," billed as a "thrilling interactive tour of the mind, madness, and genius of the famous author" on October 7, a date the planners tell me they settled on *before* realizing it was the anniversary of Poe's death, eerily enough. Please send news of other "Poe sightings" to the PSA listserv.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate Adam Frank, the recipient of the James A. Gargano Award for the outstanding essay on Edgar Allan Poe published in 2005. Professor Frank's essay, "Valdemar's Tongue, Poe's Telegraphy" (*ELH*, Vol. 72) was chosen by the PSA board from an excellent field of Poe articles published last year.

**From Barbara Cantalupo, vice-president:** Abstracts for the two PSA panels for the 2006 MLA convention in Philadelphia, PA, can be found elsewhere in this issue. I also wish to announce the topics for the 2007 MLA convention:

Session I: **Poe and "Translation"**: Papers would consider "translation"—"transference of a form of energy from one point to another," "transference," "removal from earth to heaven," and "turning from one language/medium to another" (*OED*)—and Poe's work.

Session II: **Poe and Ideology**: Papers would consider any permutations, associations, and/or applications of ideology in, about, and around Poe's work.

Send abstracts to Barbara Cantalupo at <bac7@psu.edu> by 1 March 2007. Please note: those chosen to participate must be MLA members by 31 March 2007.

**From Marcy Dinius and Stephen Rachman, Members-at-large:** Submissions are invited for the following two PSA panels for ALA 2007 convention in Boston:

Session I: **"Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box": Poe and Twentieth-Century Poetry**: Poe and his poetic theories have continued to be a point of engagement for twentieth-century poets, as witnessed by the recent publication of the

posthumous Elizabeth Bishop poem from which the title of this panel is taken. This panel is calling for papers that engage with any aspect of Poe's relation to poets and poetry of the last century.

**Session II: Poe and Periodical Culture:** This panel is calling for papers having to do with any aspect of Poe's work with newspapers and magazines, esp. papers engaging with recent scholarship that has addressed such areas as authorship, literary nationalism, the culture of reprints, copyright, mass production, marginalia, etc.

Send 250-word abstracts to Stephen Rachman <rachman@msu.edu> or Marcy J. Dinius <dinius@english.udel.edu> by 1 January 2007.

**From Paul Jones, Secretary/Treasurer:** As of September 25, 2006, there are 207 members in the association. The balance on the association's checking account is \$10517.65. Additionally, the association has \$3843.02 in our Money Market account and \$5393.37 in CDs. Therefore, the current cumulative value of the association's treasury is \$19754.04

**Kenneth W. Cameron**  
**Teacher, Scholar, Mentor, Friend**

My knowledge of the late Professor Cameron encompasses the formidable side of the man—that which usually came across in written correspondence, with the flourishing “Kenneth W. Cameron” signature concluding a lesson in how to express one’s thinking accurately in writing—and the less known side, that of Ken Cameron, jovial dining companion, courtly gentleman to the opposite sex, and generous with time and tangibles. Although his major scholarly pursuits included British Renaissance playwrights, the American Transcendentalists, and historiography of the Episcopal Church, he was in his editorial and publisher’s capacities more than a little hospitable to writers such as Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, as well as many others of somewhat lesser stature, who flourished during the early and middle years of the nineteenth century.

Hailing from West Virginia and early on intending to go to college in preparation for a career in business, Ken came under the wing of John William Draper, then a formidable presence in the Department of English at West Virginia University. A thoroughgoing scholar, Draper inculcated his young student with high scholarly standards, and Ken followed the precepts of this mentor throughout his long scholarly career. And “long,” by today’s standards Ken’s career was, with his first academic publications, textual studies of Shakespeare plays, appearing in the 1920s and his final publications extending into the 1990s. For most of his long life (97 years), Ken was notably sound in body and mind, never idle, whether his industry was preparing those large volumes of information about his favorite authors or in conscripting neighborhood boys to gather shopping carts from a nearby grocery store, which he returned, and for which he was given a case of boxes of cookies to distribute among his cleanup crew.

For many, an acquaintance with Ken took the form of correspondence through letters or telephone calls—and often during summer months, Ken’s vacation times from business, he simply did not answer his phone.

As a longtime friend once remarked to me: “Professor Cameron is very much a scholar, very much a bachelor, very much a recluse, and, like his own favorite, Thoreau, just as eccentric,” adding that, as regarded academic writing, “Professor Cameron has a passion for concision that at times verges onto extremes.” Such comments, offered thirty-five years ago, did go far in characterizing Kenneth W. Cameron, the formidable academic, whose letters concerning would-be publications in one or another of his journals or Transcendental Books often seemed loaded for bear.

On the other hand, Ken Cameron the man was usually an altogether different sort of person. He repeatedly passed along to me information concerning New England writers (and others, when occasion warranted), that has been beneficial many times over. To students who seemed more than fleetingly interested in classes, he could also be a great inspiration. He certainly was a cordial friend to Poe studies as well, and I recall one occasion when the man and the scholar were very much in evidence. At a NEMLA meeting in Hartford, several of the participants had published articles on Poe in the *ATQ*. Ken’s great friend, Dick Benton, invited a group of us to come to his home for drinks, then repair to the Corner House, nearby Farmington, for dinner.

When we arrived at the Benton home, Dick was absent, having gone into Hartford to meet Ken and bring him to the dinner. When the two men arrived, Ken, as the first to enter, said, “Richard, you didn’t tell me there was going to be company,” to which Benton replied, “Of course I didn’t, else you wouldn’t have come along.” That many of those assembled that night had published studies of Poe in the *ATQ* pleased Ken immensely. Having shared evening meals with him previously, I was surprised that he didn’t seem to grow restless about an early return to his home. Indeed, he consumed what seemed like gallons of coffee, entertained the group with much scholarly talk and delightful, non-academic humor, so the occasion was indeed memorable.

Although Ken turned out his scholarship in his own individualized fashion, that body of work has gone far toward assisting many an

academic's professional causes. As such, the memory of Kenneth W. Cameron (1908-2006) should long remain vivid and revered. As a token of appreciation for his assistance to causes of Poe, including in particular three symposia on Poe edited by Richard Benton, he was made an Honorary Member of the PSA many years since, and it is fitting that he should be memorialized in our journal's pages.

*Benjamin F. Fisher*  
*University of Mississippi*

## Notes on Contributors

**John A. Dern** is a 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*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, *Pennsylvania English*, and *The Radio Journal*.

**Marcy J. Dinius** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Delaware and a member of the Executive Board of the Poe Studies Association.

**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.

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

**Paul C. Jones** is Assistant Professor of English at Ohio University and the secretary/treasurer of the Poe Studies Association. Among other works, he is the author of *Unwelcome Voices: Subversive Fiction in the Antebellum South* (U of Tennessee P, 2005).

**Tony McGowan** is Associate Professor of English at the United States Military Academy at West Point. His tribute to the late Major William F. Hecker appeared in the spring 2006 issue of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*.

**Dennis Pahl** is Professor of English at Long Island University and a member of the editorial board for this journal. Among his many works on Poe, he is the author of *Architects of the Abyss: The Indeterminate Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville* (U of Missouri P, 1989).

**Matthew Pearl** is the bestselling author of *The Dante Club: A Novel* (Random House, 2003) and *The Poe Shadow: A Novel* (Random House, 2006).

**Jeffrey A. Savoye** is the secretary/treasurer of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore and a member of the editorial board for this journal. Author of articles on Poe's life and works, and an honorary member of the Poe Studies Association, he is currently preparing [with Burton Pollin] a new edition of Poe's letters.

**Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock** is assistant professor of English at Central Michigan University. Among his publications, he is the coeditor of the forthcoming collection *Approaches to Teaching Poe's Poetry and Prose* (Modern Language Association).

The Edgar Allan Poe Studies Association

congratulates

Dr. Adam Frank  
Assistant Professor of English  
University of British Columbia

winner of  
the 2005 James A. Gargano Award

for

“Valdemar’s Tongue, Poe’s Telegraphy”  
*ELH* 72 (2005), 635-62.



Looking for Edgar Allan Poe quotes? Here are some inspirational and riveting lines from a couple of his best works and poetry. We love when Poe says that it is by no means an irrational fancy that, in a future existence, we shall look upon what we think our present existence, as a dream. This thoughtful collection of Edgar Allan Poe quotes will help you see things from an interesting perspective. In the realm of mystery and horror, perhaps no greater writer comes to mind more than the name Edgar Allan Poe. Early on, Poe proved to the world that he had the gift of the pen. A few of his notable works such as "The Raven", "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", and "Annabel Lee", all continue to inspire readers even to this day. "Edgar Allan Poe." Introduction to Poe, from the college textbook publisher the Heath Anthology of American Literature . "Edgar Allan Poe." An introduction to Edgar Allan Poe from educational publisher Gale/Cengage . "From Out That Shadow: The Life and Legacy of Edgar Allan Poe." "A Poe Death Dossier: Discoveries and Queries in the Death of Edgar Allan Poe: Part I." The Edgar Allan Poe Review 7, 2 (Fall 2006) pp 4-29 [free at jstor, click "Preview" or "Read Online"]. Pearl, Matthew. "A Poe Death Dossier: Discoveries and Queries in the Death of Edgar Allan Poe: Part II." The Edgar Allan Poe Review 8, 1 (Spring 2007) pp 8-31 [free at jstor, click "Preview" or "Read Online"]. Literary Criticism, "The Raven". Baguley, David.