The annual meeting of the Poe Studies Association, held at the 1991 convention of the Modern Language Association in San Francisco (27-30 December), comprised two sessions on the topic “Texts and Intertexs.” The first session, held at 5:15 on 27 December, was chaired by Liliane Weissberg (Univ. of Pennsylvania). Speakers were Ortwin de Graef (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), “Dead Herrings: You Must Have Mistaken the Author”; James Hicks (Univ. of Pennsylvania), “The Us of Usher: Intertext and Context in Poe’s Foundational Tale”; Meredith L. McGill (Johns Hopkins Univ.), “To Plagiarize the Plagiarist: Repetition and Authority in the Poe-Longfellow War”; and Thomas Cohen (Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), “Runic Rhymes: Poe, Pragmatism, and Postmodernism.”

The second session, chaired by J. Gerald Kennedy (Louisiana State Univ.), was held at noon on 29 December. Speakers were Patricia Merivale (Univ. of British Columbia), “The Man of the Crowd’ and the Metaphysical Detective Story”; James Winchell (Stanford Univ.), “Mutatio in pejus: Poe’s MS. Found in France Fin de Siecle”; Rae Beth Gordon (Univ. of Connecticut, Storrs), “Poe: Optics, Hystera, and Interior Decoration”; and Michael Levine (Yale Univ.), “Poe, Freud, and Tell-Tale Temporality.” Attendance at both sessions was high, 53 squeezing into a small room for the first meeting, 61 enduring intense circumscription of space at the second.

The topic for the 1992 PSA program, held at the MLA convention in New York City, will be “New Facts in the Case of M. Poe: Biographical Revelations, Textual Implications.” J. Gerald Kennedy (Louisiana State Univ.) is responsible for organizing the panels.

The Treasurer’s Report tallied a membership of 204. Income for 1991 (through 15 December) was $1494.49, expenses $1255.43, leaving a cash-on-hand balance of $2173.28. Interest from the PSA investment account was $127.22, bringing the fund to a net value of $2288.92. Total assets carried forward into 1992 were $4462.24.

The members of the PSA Executive Committee remind the membership to mail ballots for election of Secretary-Treasurer.

1992 ALA Meeting
(San Diego, 28-31 May)

The Poe Studies Association will sponsor a session at the 1992 meeting of the American Literature Association (Bahia Resort Hotel). The session, chaired by Dana D. Nelson (Louisiana State Univ.), will feature the following papers:

- Benjamin D. Reiss, “Poe, Pym, and Paranoia: Racial Apocalypse and the Question of Form”
- Jonathan Elmer, “Reading Poe Backwards”
- Terence Whalen, “The Code for Gold”

Organizations

On 4 October 1992, Dennis W. Eddings (Western Oregon State College) will deliver the 70th Commemorative Lecture of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore. His topic will be “Poe’s Tell-Tale Clocks.”

A Poe Studies session, chaired by Carol Hovanec (Ramapo College), was held at the annual convention of the Northeast Modern Language Association (Buffalo, NY., 3 April 1992). Speakers included: Stephen Hahn (William Paterson College), “Poe and Probability”; Norma Goldstein (Mississippi State Univ.), “Problems of Narration and the Youthful Narrator in Poe’s The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym”; Paola Gemme (Pennsylvania State Univ.), “The Return of the Flesh: Woman as Resisting Character in Poe’s Tales of Female Resurrection.”

Secretary of the session was Davide Stimilli (Yale Univ.). The 1993 NEMLA convention will be held in Philadelphia, 27-29 March.

In 1880 John H. Ingram, a self-made British scholar and London post-office clerk, produced the first full-bodied biography of Edgar A. Poe. It was courageous, pioneering work by a Poe enthusiast, but it is written in too adulatory a tone for modern taste. Since that time and just prior to the appearance of Professor Silverman’s book, some dozen or so biographies have been published, some merely repetitive of those that came before and only three or four of the whole proving relatively satisfactory—at least for their own times.

Of these more-or-less satisfactory versions, George Woodberry’s The Life of Edgar Allan Poe (2 vols, 1909) strives to be impartial but fails to be stirring. More romantic but not completely reliable factually is novelist Hervey Allen’s Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (rev. ed., 2 vols. in 1, 1934); it does, however, show sympathetic understanding of its subject. More scholarly and a major contribution by its exposure of Griswold’s forgeries is Arthur Hobson Quinn’s Edgar Allan Poe, a Critical Study (1941; repr., 1969). Quinn’s book has been considered virtually definitive up to the present. It is, however, weak in its critical appraisals of Poe’s art and fails to disclose any sharp insights. Although the great Poe scholar T. O. Mabbott condemned William Bittner’s Poe, a Biography as simply journalism, it is dramatically constructed and eminently sensible regarding Poe’s qualities as man and artist. Bittner deliberately refrained from furnishing his book with a scholarly apparatus.

Despite these disappointing results in the Poe biographical enterprise, Poe has continued to fascinate the public mind, although mostly in terms of a mythological figure that never existed—a weird genius plagued by alcoholism and drug addiction whose poems were mostly rhythmical and whose stories said “Boo!” In the light of such a history, therefore, how does Professor Silverman’s new and ponderous tome fare? If, as J. Albert Robbins wrote nearly twenty-five years ago, “the enigma of his personality and the puzzle of his art” have always been the factors which have kept Poe in the public mind, does he still continue “to mock and make fools of us from beyond the grave”? We shall see.

It must be said that writing a full-length biography is not easy; it is a long and difficult project. Hence Thomas Carlyle remarked, “A well-written Life is almost as rare as a well-spent one.” Although a biography is simply the history of a person’s life and traverses a chronological route from birth to death, it (as well as autobiography) is essentially a fictional construct; it is a selection of historical incidents arranged in terms of some central theme that constitutes its “plot”; and this plot must be contained in some sort of “form” or “shape.” These aspects of biography are not given to the biographer by his subject; they are...
the results of the biographer’s decisions according to his interpretation. In Silverman’s case his “plot” is based on his psychoanalytic interpretation that Poe’s life was driven by his hatred of his “father” (as symbolized by his “foster father” John Allan) and by his mother fixation and search for a lost mother, Poe having inherited also some material from his mother’s unconscious. This “plot” is contained in a combination of biographical forms—narrative, topics, literary essay—guided by geography and chronology. According to Silverman, the continuing popular appeal of Poe’s work stems from his use of what Freud termed “The Uncanny,” or the power to evoke and confirm the beliefs of our primitive ancestors, from which we have not been able to free ourselves completely.

Silverman’s beginning and ending were apparently derived from Quinn’s. Both biographers begin Poe’s history by depicting his stage-actress mother, Mrs. Eliza Arnold Poe. Quinn depicts her as a little girl of nine appearing on the stage of the old Boston theatre singing the popular song of “The Market Lass.” Silverman presents her at the age of twenty-four, abandoned by her husband, David Poe, Jr., penniless, lingering in a bed in a room at a tavern not far from the Richmond Theatre, dying of some infectious fever, surrounded by her three small children, ages one to nearly five, Edgar being nearly three. Both Quinn and Silverman end their biographies with the death of Poe’s mother-in-law, Mrs. Maria Clemm (“Muddy”), who died at the Church Home in Baltimore, where Edgar had died twenty-two years before. Quinn’s book, however, adds a chapter that is a general assessment of Poe’s life and character. To speak of Silverman only, his dramatic beginning in no way matches his ending, which in no way makes his subject live in the mind of his reader.

Silverman’s motive for choosing Poe is not exactly clear. Only a fool would question Poe’s genius, but has Poe made Silverman believe in genius, in greatness? Can we not point, as James Huneker once said, to Poe “as the progenitor of a half-dozen continental literatures”? Is it clear that Silverman has some love for his subject? Did not Renan advise the biographer, “On ne doit pas écrire que de ce qu’on aime”? These are pertinent questions because it really is not clear whether the biographer’s aim has been to bring his subject to life and to make him and his times immemorial, or whether he is driven by a passion to furnish an abundance of factual information accompanied by a psychoanalytic interpretation of his subject’s personality and art. But a biography is neither an encyclopedia nor a psychoanalyst’s couch. Too much information can pall and the application of psychoanalysis to a biographical subject and to the subject’s art has met with little success. Marie Bonaparte in her Edgar Poe, étude psychoanalytique (2 tomes, 1933) is infamous for her farfetched interpretations. David Rein’s Edgar A. Poe: The Inner Pattern (1960) indulges in conjectures based on dubious premises: “Dreams are reflections of our inmost, often subconscious feelings,” which is true; and “literary creations such as Poe’s are essentially like dreams,” which is false. Silverman adopts the view that Poe’s narrators are masks for Poe himself, as in his interpretation of “Ligeia.” Both Napier Wilt (1927) and James W. Gargano (1963) warned critics against blithely identifying Mr. Poe’s narrators with their creator.

Sometimes Silverman fails to mention important information about a Poe story; at other times he makes statements about matters that are contrary to the best evidence; again he is sometimes blind to a work’s actual aims. He sees “The Oblong Box” as a result of Poe’s obsession with enclosed spaces; he also views it as an imaginary journey repeating an actual trip by train and steamship when Poe and Virginia came to New York from Philadelphia; and he thinks the story “starkly enacts Poe’s feelings about Virginia.”” At the same time, he fails to mention that the story owes much of its content to a contemporary historical incident—namely, the John Colt murder of Samuel Adams in New York on Sept. 17, 1841. (John Colt was the brother of Samuel Colt, the inventor and manufacturer of the Colt revolver.) Silverman’s assertion that Poe’s deathbed cry of “Reynolds!” referred to an uncle by that name is contrary to what the evidence most likely suggests and refers to Congressman Jeremiah N. Reynolds (1799-1858). This Reynolds was of special interest to Poe because the congressman had written on John Synnes’ theory of “holes in the Poles” as well as on surveying and exploring expeditions in the Pacific Ocean and the South Seas. Silverman acknowledges the black humor in “King Pest” but not its political satire, a matter on which William Whipple commented brilliantly (1956). He is also blind to the political satire in “The Devil in the Belfry.” On the other hand, his characterizing of “Metzengerstein” as an “oedipal duel” is probably a valuable point. But Silverman’s view that “The Masque of the Red Death” was Poe’s response to Virginia’s hemorrhaging and the “white plague” of tuberculosis is a dubious proposal, and Joseph Roppolo’s interpretation (1963) is to be preferred. Indeed, some Silverman views are not only questionable but simply amazing, such as “Pym is a book largely about hunger” or “Dupin is in effect a Parisian Roderick Usher.” Silverman fails to mention that “Thou Art the Man” is a parody of Poe’s own tales of ratiocination.

Literary biographers who have clothed their biographies in elegant Freudian costumes have seldom met with success. Literary critics who have indulged themselves in psychoanalytic interpretations are practicing amateur psychology. This harsh criticism does not mean that many readers may not find Professor Silverman’s biography rewarding. But as Poe himself affirmed, “It is only the philosophical lynx eye that, through the indignity-mist of Man’s life, can still discern the dignity of Man.” Perhaps it is high time that psychoanalytic critics start using the principle of Occam’s razor.

Richard P. Benton, Emeritus
Trinity College, Hartford, CT
Kenneth Dauber. The Idea of Authorship In America: Democratic Poetics From Franklin to Melville.


Dauber’s book is the first of a number of recent multi-author studies of American authorship to include a treatment of Poe (both Michael T. Gilmore’s American Romanticism and the Marketplace and R. Jackson Wilson’s Figures of Speech: American Writers and the Literary Marketplace from Benjamin Franklin to Emily Dickinson cover similar territory with little mention of Poe). While this fact alone should make it welcome, Poe scholars are likely to be disappointed by Dauber’s rhetorical analysis of the history of American author-reader relations.

Dauber’s title constitutes a fair warning concerning his approach: for Dauber, authorship is neither a set of social and cultural practices, nor, strictly speaking, a set of textual practices, but an “idea.” While in Dauber’s account, the idea of authorship is held collectively and is transformed within history by individual authors’ management of author-reader relations, it remains absolutely difficult to pin down either to specific socio-cultural changes, or to any particular consciousness. Dauber’s chief interest is in the complex textual negotiations between author and reader made necessary by the American rejection of British political and cultural authority. And yet his meticulous analysis of authorial posturing in selected works by Franklin, Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, remains untethered to the social and political transformations that hover in the background of his critique, lending it a broader significance. Typical of Dauber’s quick and ungrounded shifts between registers is his initial identification of “a certain faith in writing, a certain faith in each other” as a “democratic faith” and “peculiarly American” (xiii). Such claims enable Dauber to maintain an aura of cultural and historical specificity without actually detailing the connections between writing and reading, democracy, and Americanness, or addressing the larger question of the relation of political authority to the literary.

Poe’s authorial strategies serve as a crisis or turning point within the critical narrative of the book as a whole. If Franklin’s Autobiography is America’s “primary epic” (10), a text which represents an ideal coalescence of writer and reader, Poe’s texts mark their insuperable divide (Hawthorne and Melville are left the task of recuperation). Dauber is on solid ground as he describes the way in which Poe anticipates his readers’ resistance and assimilates these doubts into his writing. And yet he errs here by making of readerly resistance a master trope that not only accounts for Poe’s authorial strategies but also covers the history of Poe’s reception. In aligning Poe’s work with a “crisis” (134) of inevitable rejection, Dauber generalizes the Modernist struggle with Poe and projects it trans-historically, thereby suppressing the immediate and continuous popularity of much of Poe’s writing.

On the whole, Dauber’s argument is conducted at a level of abstraction that tends to obscure its grounds. The locus of his critique often seems vague and free-floating (insights apply neither to Poe himself nor to particular texts, rather, certain forms of relation are said to occur “in Poe”); his persistent categorical thinking threatens to shake loose its referents and confuse the reader. This is unfortunate, because Dauber’s difficult, self-reflexive prose captures well Poe’s investment in the performative aspect of his writing. Dauber has an acute sense of the way in which much of Poe’s work routinely takes the circuit of its own production and reception as its subject, displacing theme and content; Dauber’s own style seems designed to perform a similar displacement. When disengaged from its historical claims, Dauber’s analysis of the rhetorical grounds of Poe’s authority is frequently incisive.

Meredith L. McGill
Johns Hopkins University

Current or Forthcoming Research and Publications

The issue of Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism for June 1993 will be a special number devoted to “Poe and Gender.” Address submissions and inquiries to the guest editor, Michael J. S. Williams, Department of English, University of Wisconsin/Stevens Point, WI 54481. Deadline for submissions is 1 September 1992.

Charles E. May’s Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of the Short Fiction (Twayne, $20.95) includes a representative sample of critical responses to the short stories.

Three recent books contain chapters or sections on The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym: The Word in Black and White: Reading Race in American Literature, 1638-1867 (Cambridge Univ. Press, $35.95) by Dana Nelson; Joan Dayan’s “Romance and Race” in The Columbia History of the American Novel (Columbia Univ. Press, $59.95), edited by Emory Elliott; and The Deconstruction of Literature: Criticism after Auschwitz (Brown Univ. Press, $18.95) by David Hirsch.
Poe: Marginal or Canonical?

The results of a survey on readings and teaching goals in upper-division literature courses, a study conducted by the Modern Language Association in 1989-1990, provide insight into the priority given specific authors in a cross-section of English departments. In response to open-ended questions, faculty were asked to list important works and authors they consistently teach. Of “Authors and Types of Works Judged Important for 19th-Century American Literature Courses,” only 8.3% listed Edgar Allan Poe. A few points of comparison: 56.3% listed Nathaniel Hawthorne; 68% listed Benjamin Franklin, the same percentage for Frederick Douglass. According to the MLA, the survey results may not yield an exhaustive list of authors consistently taught. For additional commentary, see the MLA Newsletter (Winter 1991).

Among people in history who generated the most requests for information from the Encyclopaedia Britannica’s Instant Research Service in 1991, Poe ranked fifth in a group of the most intensively researched individuals. The service provides information to purchasers of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. More users of the service sought information on Poe than several other famous historical personages in the top twenty, including Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln, and Pablo Picasso. For additional results, see the New York Times and the Richmond Times-Dispatch for 27 January 1992.

Howell J. Heaney

The editors note with sadness and regret the passing of Howell J. Heaney, retired head of the rare-book department of the Free Library of Philadelphia and a noted bibliographer of Americana and Dickensian studies. Mr. Heaney died late last year at the age of 73. Scholars who did research in the Poe collection at the Free Library remember his kindness, accessibility, and guidance. He worked in the rare-book department from 1955 until his retirement in 1983. According to Keith Doms, president and director emeritus of the Free Library, “Mr. Heaney enjoyed international respect for his rare-book expertise”—[Quoted with the permission of the Philadelphia Inquirer].

Poe Miscellany


A surrealist adaptation of “Hop-Frog,” “Fool’s Fire,” appeared on the PBS American Playhouse on 25 March 1992. The adaptation was by MacArthur Foundation recipient Julie Traynor, whose work was also featured in a combined exhibition and video documentary at the Vincent Astor Gallery of the New York Public Library. The 3 February 1992 issue of the New York Public Library News noted Traynor’s integration of traditional theatrical forms with technologically advanced techniques.

Norman George brought his monodrama “Poe Alone” to the Cambridge Center for Adult Education (Cambridge, MA) on 3, 4, and 5 April 1992.

In “House of Usher: Just One of a Kind?” the 19 December 1991 New York Times, commenting on a Canadian exhibition on the history of architecture, noted the nineteenth-century propensity to look upon a decaying house or building as a sick person, having cholera, tuberculosis, or “sewer-air fever.” Were there indeed “legitimate sources” of terror in the House of Usher, as I. M. Walker argued in 1966?
Honors and Potential Honors

for Poe

At a concert of the Bronx Arts Ensemble on 23 February 1992, a special proclamation honoring Poe’s impact on world literature was delivered to the Bronx County Historical Society, curators of the Fordham Poe Cottage, by the Russian Mission to the United Nations. Part of a continuing series on “Glasnost in the Bronx,” the musical program included the world premiere of a revised version of “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” by Milton Rosenstock.

A bill that proposed Poe as the “State Poet and Short Story Writer” of Virginia was killed in the General Assembly on 8 February 1992. The idea of Poe enthusiast Frank Speh, the legislation was sponsored by Rep. Richard Fisher. The proposal, however, stimulated a controversy over Poe’s allegedly dissolute lifestyle. Articles appeared in the 30 January Baltimore Sun, the 9 February Richmond Times-Dispatch, the 13 February Washington Post, and other newspapers. Interested parties may write to Mr. Speh, 8309 Colby St., Vienna, VA 22180.

“Valdemar” in Great Britain

Once More

The contemporaneous reception in Great Britain of “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” is well known to Poe scholars. Several responses to the tale were summarized by Evert Duyckinck in “An Author in Europe and America,” Home Journal 7 January 1847: 2. Poe’s tale was published in a scientific journal, reprinted as a pamphlet, and praised by Elizabeth Barrett. The Scotchman Arch Ramsay, moreover, wrote directly to the author to test the matter-of-factness of his account, and in Boston the British mesmerist Robert Hanham Collyer displayed his credulity about the story in a letter that Poe published in the Broadway Journal. Another British expert, Thomas South, also affirmed the scientific authenticity of the story. Supplementing known English commentary, the following unsigned announcement of “Mesmerism Extraordinary!” comes from the Liverpool Mail 17 January 1846: 6.—Ed.

Of the many extraordinary cases of ‘coma’ recorded since the birth of mesmerism, the last mail from America has brought intelligence of one of the most miraculous character. It is seriously averred that implicit faith is placed on the statement in the New World. One M. Valdemar being on the point of death and an admirable subject for mesmeric influence, was (voluntarily) thrown by a friend, who is eminent in the dangerous art, into a mesmeric trance, in articulo mortis, his physicians having declared he could not possibly survive another hour. Instead of dying, however, at the appointed time, he remained in mesmeric bondage for seven months, uttering, in the interim, the most fearful unearthly sentences in broken accents, and presenting an appearance the most terrific that imagination can picture. At length it was determined that M. Valdemar should be released from the terrible prison in which his benevolent friend had experimentally shackled him. With some little hocus pocus difficulty this was accomplished, and presto, the demi-dead man (we quote the dire climax from the original), “amid ejaculations...his whole frame at once—within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk—crumbled—absolutely rotted away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putrescence.”

José B. Monleón. A Specter is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic.


Early in his study, Monleón states his premise that the role of the fantastic was “defense of the status quo and the preservation of economic order. If anything, it served precisely to help modify hegemonic discourse in order to justify the survival of bourgeois society, a fact that also explains why the fantastic appeared only after the bourgeoisie had consolidated its power” (14). He traces the progressive deterioration of the line between reason and unreason from the perspective of the bourgeoisie from around 1760 to 1930. He then describes a basic change: from clear separation of reason and unreason, to ambiguity between the two, to penetration and displacement of reason by unreason.

Monleón sets the stage for the entry of the fantastic via the Gothic novel in his discussion of the Age of Reason. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, he explains how in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those in political control separated “unreason” from “reason.” The
"unreasonable"—criminals, madmen, beggars, the poor, anyone perceived as dangerous—were confined. In Paris and London, prisons, poorhouses, madhouses, and slum dwellings were marginalized, pushed outward, placing the "unreasonable" on the periphery of "reasonable" society. With the appearance of the Gothic novel, principally with Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, unreason came to occupy the social imagination. But Monléon says that events in Gothic novels were presented from a bourgeois perspective. Setting was the marginal space of vaults, tombs, dark castles. Monsters were the articulation of the marginality of unreason, for they suggested a threat of unreason in the populace, a foreshadowing of social change.

Thus the French Revolution symbolized fear of liberating the confined poor, insane, and criminal. "Repression of unreason" had become "unreasonable repression." The boundaries of reason were redefined. The "reasonable" found that they could react with violence of unreasonable proportion. The definitions of unreason became progressively less clear.

For Monléon the paradox of unreason within reason is at the base of fantastic literature. Thus, he repeatedly returns to the image of Goya's *Caprichos* (1799)—especially Capricho 43, from which he uses the caption "El sueño de la razón produce monstruos" as a leitmotif for the study. As industry developed, popular unrest grew. Monléon refers to Adam Smith's discussion of the division of labor, desirable for industrial progress but dangerous in its social implications. "The dream of reason could definitely produce monsters" (47). Frankenstein's monster is a case in point: he is both creation of and threat to reason.

In the first two thirds of the nineteenth century Monléon sees increasing ambiguity in the consideration of reason and unreason. Unreason increasingly appeared to have its location within reason and, indeed, to be its by-product. Monléon argues that whereas separation had prevailed in the eighteenth century, in this period "the process of internalization . . . shaped the characteristics of the fantastic" (75). Monléon places the "assault on reason" (the heading for Chapter 3) around 1848, the year of the worker uprising in Paris and of the Communist Manifesto. As the "assault on reason" affected bourgeois life, the bourgeoisie, no longer certain of the dichotomy reason/unreason, seriously questioned the nature of self.

Poe, for Monléon, is "probably the most significant representative of this period of the fantastic" (77). In Poe, monstrosity appears within the "normal" setting, unreason within reason. (Dostoevsky noted this of Poe, too. For him, the explanation was Poe's Americaness: "Even his most unbounded imagination," Dostoevsky wrote, "betrays the true American," for Poe's fantasy is combined with "amazing realism" ("Three Tales of Edgar Poe," *The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Eric Carlson, 61, 60]). In "The Fall of the House of Usher," the fissure within the family home widens as unreason overcomes its inhabitants. Monléon draws from limited examples in Poe—"Usher," "Masque," and "The Black Cat." In his discussion of "The Black Cat," he posits a useful distinction between Poe and earlier European Gothicists: Poe is ambiguous in his portrayals of monstrous unreason; the Gothicists are clear. One thinks also of those Poe tales in which mad characters assure us of their rationality.

Monléon maintains that in the nineteenth century monsters portrayed within a bourgeois setting resembled the people considered "unreasonable" and embodied the monstrous qualities projected on the poorer elements of society. With the violence of the workers' revolts in France in the mid- and late nineteenth century, unreason ruled as the bourgeoisie took unreasonable steps to crush unreasonable revolts. Thus, unreason became the defense of the status quo. The opening phrase of the Communist Manifesto, "a specter is haunting Europe," discloses the extent to which imagery of the fantastic shaped and was shaped by concrete problems. Marx and Engels endowed unreason with a definite political name; they also "assigned to those specters which populated the imagination a concrete space and time" (60).

In his first four chapters, Monléon draws on the ideas of the major theorists of the fantastic—Todorov, Siebers, Jackson, Vax, and others—to formulate his own statement on the evolving contribution of the fantastic within the historical development of industrially-advanced countries. In the fifth chapter, he applies the paradigm used for European literature and for Poe to the literature of Spain. He gives Spain special consideration because of its relatively late industrial development and because Spanish literature is of special scholarly interest to him.

Monléon sums up his intention in his epilogue, Chapter 6: "As social production, the fantastic articulated apprehensions that were deeply attached to the specific characteristics of capitalist society. The perception of monstrosity had significant correlations with the way in which dominant culture defined and redefined its political and economic supremacy, and depended upon concrete forms of class struggle. On the one hand, the fantastic 'reflected' very real threats; on the other hand, it created a space in which those threats could be transformed into 'supernaturalism' and monstrosity, thus helping to re-shape the philosophical premises that sustained the fantastic and effectively reorient the course of social evolution" (139).

Monléon's interesting sociohistorical study may be applied fruitfully to other figures and works. Although such hypotheses cannot be "proven," his is innovative and thought-provoking. Students of the subject should be grateful for Monléon's useful bibliography.

*Susan F. Levine*
*Stuart Levine*
*University of Kansas*
Paul, professor emeritus of ecclesiastical history and Christian thought at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, relates detective fiction to ethical attitudes of society. Less concerned with theology than changes in morality and ethical values, Paul offers a rich survey of detective fiction from the "Classical Period" through "Realism." He argues that detective fiction began primarily as "affirmation of basic morality" that is based upon theologies of Western Christendom. He cites changes in ethical concepts reflected in detective fiction from Sherlock Holmes, who defended the values of the Victorian Age, to the realism of Raymond Chandler and the surrealism of Robert Barnard and others. To Paul, recent detective fiction reveals the cynicism of a permissive society that questions the existence of God and Truth, the inherent value of human life and Justice, and ethical standards of social behavior, especially sexual. In the works of Agatha Christie and others, however, Paul finds evidence of a return to those traditional religious views found in the writings of S. S. Van Dine, G. K. Chesterton, and others of the "Classical Period."

Defining detective fiction as primarily narrative of detection, Paul credits Poe with composing the first authentic examples of the genre. He cites William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* as the significant example of early detective fiction that illustrates the "ambiguity of human cultures."

Godwin's novel is a "radical example in detective fiction" comparable to the American anti-western film in which "a clear-cut approach to good and evil is no longer possible" (147). To Paul, Godwin's novel prefigures the "hard-boiled nonconformist school" of detective fiction, including the American *Black Mask* writers of the twentieth century and those who followed Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

Paul's study offers a very informative introduction to the varieties of detective fiction—British, American, and Continental. His style is lucid, although the reader is confronted by many quoted passages that are obviously chosen to substantiate the author's generalizations. Paul's use of the terms "Humanism" and "Existentialism" is confusing in that each, according to the author, poses a basic loss of Christian faith within Western culture. He thereby denies any Christian elements in emerging forms of these intellectual concepts. Though Paul contributes to advancing recent studies of detective fiction, he is not the first to find its fundamental origin in the emerging ethical philosophies of the distant past.

*J. Lasley Dameron*  
Emeritus, Memphis State University

---

Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
100 Institute Road  
Worcester, MA 01609-2280