The Ostrom Collection

John Ward Ostrom, known for his definitive edition of Edgar Allan Poe letters, has presented his entire collection of Poe materials to Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio. Professor Ostrom taught English and American literature there from 1945 until his retirement in 1971. For many years he served as its Chair of the Department of English.

The collection spans more than fifty years' work and concentrates chiefly on information relating to The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe (1948) and its four supplements. The collection includes more than eighty facsimiles of Poe letters; Ostrom's voluminous correspondence — more than two hundred letters — with curators, collectors, and other scholars worldwide; numerous articles and volumes related to Poe, including presentation-copies and rare editions; Ostrom's teaching materials from the senior-level Poe seminar; speeches; and other memorabilia collected both in the United States and overseas.

Of particular significance in the collection is the foundation for The Letters, a series of hundreds of three-by-five index cards in three separate files, one for The Letters and one each for the revised check lists in 1974 and 1981. Although the assigned numbers for the letters differ from file to file, they are cross-referenced for easy use. Ostrom devotes at least one card for each of Poe's letters, which he places in chronological order. Each card contains several details: the letter's date, author, addressee, location of the original, and Ostrom's source. If he uses a facsimile, he also notes its location and the date he studied it. If he discovers the letter discussed in a secondary work, he documents this source with its author, page number, and date of publication.

Frequently Ostrom uses more than one card to document a Poe letter. For instance, he cross-references the card for the letter dated October 20, 1837, to another card dated October 20, 1836. Consultation with other scholars such as Arthur Hobson Quinn and Thomas Ollive Mabbott, as well as Ostrom's own research, confirms that Poe misdates this letter, actually written in 1836.

Moreover, surveying Ostrom's personal correspondence, dated as early as 1935, seems essential to understanding his monumental project, for it contains suggestions about the research and composition of The Letters and supplements. Included are letters from Quinn, Mabbott, Burton Pollin, and other recognized Poe scholars; it contains none that Ostrom himself wrote. The correspondence continues until 1986, demonstrating his continual search for additional Poe materials.

Perhaps the most interesting and detailed correspondence in the collection is with Mabbott. It begins in 1941. Ostrom consults Mabbott often about the validity and authenticity of Poe letters that Ostrom then identifies, edits, and documents in his check list. Mabbott often advises Ostrom on matters of editing style and notes. Ostrom's numbering system of Poe's letters probably originates in a letter of March 18, 1942, from Mabbott, who suggests that Ostrom use an intercalated system, e.g., 458m, 458n, etc., to enable putting newly discovered letters into proper sequence.

In one letter to Ostrom, Mabbott considers Poe's penchant for inaccuracy. He remarks that at first a scholar typically believes that Poe is usually truthful but that over the years Poe's inaccuracy becomes strongly apparent. Mabbott responds specifically to Ostrom's question about an editorial note in The Letters concerning the number of tales Poe wrote: sixty or sixty-six. The February 1845 issue of Graham's Magazine calculates sixty, including tales written before and after Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque. In the September 1845 Aristidean, Dr. Thomas Dunn English writes that Poe published seventy-five or eighty tales of magazine length. Mabbott believes that this figure is "inspired" by Poe, a friend of English. In relaying much of this information to Ostrom, Mabbott warns him not to "torture the facts into an accurate count." He concludes by suggesting that Ostrom write a note in The Letters saying that "Mr. M[abbott] writes me he is convinced that Poe was not particularly interested in the accuracy of these statements."

Another long-debated point of Poe scholarship is the nature of Poe's love of his wife, Virginia Clemm. In writing to Ostrom, Mabbott reacts to a review of Quinn's biography which criticizes Quinn's doubt of Poe's love for Virginia. In his March 18, 1942 letter, Mabbott acknowledges his belief that Poe did not have a passionate relationship with Virginia. He doubts that "Annabel Lee" is written for Virginia and is convinced instead that it is for Sarah Elmira Royster. Ostrom speaks on this subject in an article entitled "Poe's Love for His Wife in Poverty and Death," published March 23, 1980, in The [Baltimore] Sun Magazine. Ostrom contends that several biographers misunderstood and exaggerated some Poe letters and emotional outpourings to other women as signifying more than deeply sincere friendship.

Ostrom's most famous speech, "The Letters of Poe: Quest and Answer," delivered to The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore in 1967 and elsewhere, discusses Ostrom's first twenty-five years of Poe research, anecdotally reminding...
about some intriguing scholarly adventures in pursuit of Poe letters. For example, Ostrom says, “In his letter to his foster-father, John Allan, June 25, 1829, Poe says he was robbed while asleep in Belzhooever’s hotel in Baltimore. A photo of the manuscript shows a blank line where some writing originally existed. Dr. Quinn, Poe’s best biographer, printed the letter from a photo of the MS. and left the line blank, later identifying the robber as ‘JAMES Mosher Poe’ from a subsequent letter. A close examination of the MS., however, reveals that the line is blank only because someone pasted a strip of paper over the words Poe wrote. A nosey editor peeking surreptitiously beneath the covering while the librarian was answering the telephone (surely Poe made that call, it was so convenient!) finds that Poe identified the robber as ‘A cousin of my own (EDWARD Moser)—that is, Edward Mosher Poe, son of Uncle Jacob Poe of Baltimore.’

The Ostrom collection illustrates, furthermore, this scholar’s dedication to repudiating Poe’s reputation as a drunkard. The research manifests itself in such articles as “Poe and the Bottle: A New Appraisal,” published in The (Baltimore) Sun Magazine, March 23, 1980, and in a Poe speech delivered on several occasions, “Poe Speaks for Himself.”

Still another aspect of Ostrom’s correspondence begins in 1980, when he updates his check list to The Letters and sends questionnaires to libraries and collectors all over the country, asking for notification of any letters to or from Poe discovered since January 1974. Through this search, Ostrom discovers several and also receives questions about the location or authenticity of a letter.

Officially entitled The John Ward Ostrom Collection of Edgar Allan Poe Materials, it includes, furthermore, numerous letters to Ostrom from libraries, such as Yale University, University of Virginia, University of Pennsylvania, Boston Public Library, Harvard University, West Point Academy, and the Free Library of Philadelphia. It also includes fifty volumes by and about Poe: biographies and critical studies by scholars, in addition to those already mentioned, such as Hervey Allen, Marie Bonaparte, Haldean Braddy, Killis Campbell, Eric Carlson, John H. Ingram, Joseph Wood Krutch, Sidney Moss, Joel Myers, C. Alphonso Smith, and George W. Woodberry, dating from the present. Some are descriptive catalogues of Poe manuscripts.

Finally, Ostrom’s teaching materials—lecture notes, research assignments, cross-referenced texts, visual aids, and sample letters to edit—complete the collection.

A description of particular items as well as a total listing may be obtained by writing to Special Collections Librarian, Thomas Library, Wittenberg University, Box 720, Springfield, Ohio 45501.

Richard P. Veler
Wittenberg University

(The editor gratefully acknowledges the permission of the Special Collections of Wittenberg University’s Thomas Library to publish excerpts from correspondence in the Ostrom Collection.)

Continued Discount on New Poe Iconography

The University Press of Virginia is still offering to PSA members at a 20% discount Michael Deas’ new book, The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe. The list price of the book is $50.00 (cloth) and $29.95 (paper); the price for PSA members will be $40.00 (cloth) and $23.96 (paper), plus $2.00 postage and handling for the first book ordered, $.75 for each additional book. Virginia residents add 4 1/2% sales tax ($2.16 per cloth copy, and $1.08 per paper copy). Checks should be made payable to “The Poe Studies Association” and sent to Dennis W. Eddings, Secretary/Treasurer, Poe Studies Association, Department of English, Western Oregon State College, Monmouth, Oregon 97361. Please allow four to six weeks for delivery.

Scholarly Poe Events

From February 14 through April 14 of this year, at the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Burton Pollin (CUNY, Emeritus) offered an eight-session minicourse titled “The World-Wide Influence of Poe, America’s Most Original Writer.” On March 13, at the Universidad de Salamanca, Pollin gave two talks titled “Edgar Allan Poe: His Influence on Music and on the Art of the World.” Later this spring, he will speak at Estremadura (Caceres), Castellon de la Mancha, Leon, and Zaragoza.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (19 April 1989) reports that Kenneth Silverman (NYU) has received a Guggenheim fellowship to support his writing of a biography of Poe.

On April 23, 1989, The Poe Museum celebrated the opening of The Poe Shrine in April 1922 by holding a reception honoring Poe scholars. Featured at the reception were Norman George, Michael Deas, Geddeh Smith, and Ulrich Troubetzkoy.

On Sunday, October 1, 1989, Joan Dayan (Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY) will offer the Sixty-Seventh Annual Edgar Allan Poe Lecture at The Enoch Pratt Free Library; the title of her talk is “Poe’s Love Poems.”


The Poe Studies session of NELMA 1990 (Toronto) is titled “Historical/Anthropological Approaches to Poe.” Inquiries and proposals should be sent by November 1, 1989, to Paige Matthey Bynum, Dept. of English, Greenlaw Hall, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

Members of the Poe Studies Association will be participating in an American literature conference planned for May 17-20, 1990, in San Diego.

Other Poe Events

The National Endowment for the Humanities has recently awarded a script-writing grant to Film America, Inc. for its proposed documentary life of Poe. The producer of the documentary is Karen Thomas, formerly Associate Producer of “Herman Melville: Damned in Paradise”; the screenwriter is Dan Smith, playwright and Professor of History at the University of Kentucky.


On April 21, Norman George performed as Poe at the New American Theater in Rockford, Illinois. The actor was recently featured in Yankee (January 1989) and People (6 February 1989).

In January 1990, Sotheby’s in New York will auction the American Literature Collection of the H. Bradley Martin Library; included in the auction will be a first edition of Tamerlane and Poe’s annotated copy of Eureka.

Poe's life and writings have always tempted commentators to indulge in exaggeration, romance, and high drama, so it is hardly surprising that his portraits over the years have elicited similar treatment. While we might excuse the madcap Mary Phillips for reproducing crazy Poe likenesses among the locks of hair and other chotchkes which illustrate her *Edgar Allan Poe: The Man*, we are dismayed to find the author's more discerning critics and biographers throwing their weight, at one time or another, behind some pretty improbable pictures— from E. C. Stedman, whose early essay on Poe portraits repeated the Poe-Brady legend; to James Southall Wilson and Amanda Pogue Schulte, who pointed the right way in many directions but who accepted, without reservation, the Charles Hine painting of Poe with the bust of Pallas; and finally, to Thomas Ollive Mabbott himself, whose many Poe portrait "authentications" can be characterized only as well-meaning but naive. However great their contributions to the world of literary scholarship, many Poe scholars have shown themselves to be ill-prepared for their sporadic forays into the dense woods of Poe iconography. Lacking the proper knowledge, tools, and eye necessary to pass informed judgements on things visual, some members of this otherwise discriminating and hard-working group have frequently gotten in over their heads.

Into this field ripe for exploration and ridden with mistakes has now come Michael J. Deas' definitive study, *The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe*. Scrupulously researched and beautifully illustrated, this volume brushes mystery and melodrama aside and gives us instead a factual, thorough, and exceptionally astute guide to the visual lore of Edgar Allan Poe. Using the tools of both the art and photographic historian and the eye of a practiced artist, Deas traces the history of the known life portraits of Poe, both graphic and photographic; the many copies and variants of these images; the numerous and often hilarious spurious reproductions that seem to persist; and, as an added and valuable bonus, a short account of portraits of Poe's wife. As Deas' account makes clear, there is no reason to invent stories about the author and his portraits when the facts are entertaining enough. Deas has spent long hours with Poe biography, long hours with art history, and long hours looking; his precise, elegant, and witty prose, based on the mammoth effort required to blend these various strands of biography, iconography, and connoisseurship into one.

First, the life portraits: as Deas points out, most people know Poe from a handful of daguerreotypes taken in the last two or three years of his life, and the Deas volume sets out to correct this imbalance by setting forth detailed examinations of Poe's earliest likenesses, one of which is published here in book form for the first time. Starting us off is what may be the most important plate in the book, a large clear duotone of the lost McKee daguerreotype, Poe's earliest known portrait, taken sometime between 1840 and 1843. Even those familiar with Schulte's derivative illustration of this obscure portrait cannot fail to be startled by the image, the only photographic likeness we have of Poe without his moustache: for the first time we see the youthful reality of a face we know so well. Little is known about this picture and the circumstances under which it was made, but Deas' speculations are sound; his emphasis on the daguerreotype's sale in the 1905 McKee auction at New York's Anderson Galleries may help bring this most intriguing portrait to light.

With the McKee firmly before us, it is easier to comprehend the early graphic portraits, namely, the stiff Pinkerton and Parmelee *Saturday Museum* woodcut of March 1843, the benign A. C. Smith likeness for a February 1845 issue of *Graham's*, and even the Osgood oil portrait, documented representations all, all done in Poe's lifetime, and yet all with that peculiar unreality drawn and painted portraits sometimes have when we know, through photographs, what someone "really looked like." We are treated not only to a discussion of these portraits and the occasions of their making, but also to their place in the larger Poe scheme of things, the histories of their creators, and Poe's amusing, but understandably dismayed, reaction to two of them. As he did for the McKee daguerreotype, Deas has given us a large, legible reproduction of the rare Pinkerton and Parmelee cut—Poe's first published portrait—and, for the first time in book form, a reproduction of the original watercolor by A. C. Smith, now in the Huntington Library, which was engraved by Welch & Water for *Graham's*. And, as he does for the Poe daguerreotypes, Deas has gone beyond the standard artistic dictionaries and farther afield into contemporary journals, city directories, and the like in order to trace the history of Poe iconography. Lacking the proper knowledge, tools, and eye, many of them beneath their cover glasses and brass mats. He guides us carefully through every sitting, and with his close reading of relevant memoirs, letters, and Poe commentary, he is able to give us the exact or probable time frame, exact or probable photographer, and exact or probable line of ownership for every piece known. The recent explosion in serious photographic history has given Deas an advantage over the likes of a Stedman or a Schulte, and he has successfully utilized treatises on the daguerreotype, dictionaries of early photographers, and lists of daguerreotype plate marks that simply were not available even ten years ago. As monographs on individual daguerreotypists begin to be published, new information on Masury and Hartsorn, Edwin Manchester, William Pratt, and some still-unnamed Poe photographers may come to light; until then, we have an accounting of Poe daguerreotypes and complete plates of any sort of photographic imagery or in terms of current photographic scholarship—an accounting accompanied by excellent, detail-rich reproductions of a medium that is notoriously hard to reproduce.

Deas' wonderful section entitled "Apocryphal Portraits" teaches us why, in fact, most of us think of Poe the way we do, for here are the legion engravers, etchers, mezzotinters, lithographers, romanticizers, and popularizers who have put Poe in the public eye, adding a moustache here, subtracting a sprig of holly there, sometimes using reality as a guide, sometimes not. This is art history at its best, giving us details about the Sartrains, Fishers, and Coleman of this world, along with all of the other now-forgotten artists whose Poes we readily recognize. In this section, Deas also gives us, in incriminating detail, merciless descriptions of those fabulous fakes and all the scholars and collectors who swallowed them hook, line, and sinker—Mabbott and the *Graham's* fashion plate, Phillips and the Charleston "Navy Yard" portrait, Louis Untermeyer and the childhood photograph of Poe, taken 30 years before photography was invented. We wish Deas had been able to reproduce them all, and we cry out "More, more!" for his wonderful anecdotes.

Hard work, meticulous research, and good writing aside, what ultimately distinguishes Deas' study from earlier ones of its type are Deas' own talents as a draughtsman and painter. A gifted and experienced artist, Deas is accustomed to thinking with his eyes as well as his mind, and he is quick to pick up on visual cues that other researchers and historians might miss. Once pointed out to us, these cues are impossible not to see; the
mark on the left breast of four of the "Ultima Thule" plates that condemns them all to the realm of copies; the source for the spurious "Whitty" portrait in an 1850's wood engraving. Of course the greatcoat that Poe wears in the McKee daguerreotype is the one that reappears in the Whitman; of course the sloping shoulders of the A. C. Smith portrait are not exaggerated—once has only to compare the "Daly." Deas speaks with authority when he writes that the Osgood portrait's brushwork is "loose and painerly, the pigments applied in a thick impasto over what appears to be a black and white underpainting" or describes "the lusterless left eye" that characterizes both the McKee and the Saturday Museum portraits. It is in making his argument for the McDougall miniature as a genuine life portrait of Poe that Deas is at his best: firmly as he establishes an historical context and provenance for the portrait, it is his description of McDougall's accurate recording of "certain nuances of Poe's appearance"—"the gentle fall of the hair above Poe's right temple," "the long, finely incised nostril," "a slight thickness at the nape of the neck," "the long earlobe joined to the cheek"—that is finally convincing, and we believe him when he states that "the portrait possesses an immediacy, a lifelike assertiveness that would be difficult for any artist to manufacture." It is an artist's eye that is all too often missing from iconographic research, and Deas' Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe benefits enormously from its author's professional perspective.

The only flaws I can find in this fine volume seem almost too trivial to point out: in his introduction, Deas states that Daguerre introduced the daguerreotype in Paris in the summer of 1839, and that "news of his discovery reached American shores the following autumn." In fact, the daguerreotype's invention was announced in Paris in January of 1839, and the news spread like wildfire, reaching America in only a few weeks; what Deas undoubtedly intends is that the details of the daguerreotype process were not given out until August of 1839, again in Paris, and the practice of daguerreotypy in America did not begin in earnest until that fall. In his discussion of the "Annie" daguerreotype, Deas states that Mrs. Richmond's referring to the photographer as "the artist" might indicate that the daguerreotypist was Samuel P. Howes, a professional portrait painter as well as a photographer; in fact, many early photographers chose to dignify their calling by terming themselves "artists," and while Howes may well have taken the "Annie" and "Stella" plates, someone who was only a photographer at the time is just as likely a candidate. Deas himself reveals what may be a touch of the romantic nature when he writes that the two volumes by Poe's side in the Pinkerton and Parmelee wood-cut possibly refer to the author's two-vo1ume Tales of the Gothic and Arcasque, published in Philadelphia in 1840. If these are the Tales, then they are unique, large-paper, extra-illustrated copies (1), for the two-volume Tales was only duodecimo in size; the volumes in the Pinkerton and Parmelee portrait, which, as Deas points out, is based on a daguerreotype, are just as likely the props used by the photographer to steady Poe's arm, similar to those commonly provided in the daguerreotype parlors of the time.

In terms of changing the book, I might not be alone in wishing that the section on copy daguerreotypes had been placed immediately after the "Life Portraits," instead of at the end, for proximity might make them easier to compare with their sources. And I am certain I will not be alone in wishing that Deas had gone ahead and published everything he had, including an entire section on Poe sculpture. This book sets a new standard for iconographic studies of famous figures, and the Poe community is lucky that the capable, talented Deas chose Poe for his subject. Thanks to this publication, some of the lost portraits and daguerreotypes may yet emerge; Deas has laid the groundwork for all future Poe portrait studies, however, and any new information that comes to light can only be additions to this exceptional work.

Denise B. Bethel
Swann Galleries

Honorary Members of The Poe Studies Association:
The First Fifteen Years

1974 Jay B. Hubbell
Mrs. Thomas Ollive Mabbott
Floyd Stovall
1975 Richard H. Hart
John Ward Ostrom
1977 Arlin Turner
1978 Eric W. Carlson
Alexander G. Rose III
Richard P. Benton
Kenneth Walker Cameron
1981 Richard Wilbur
Frederick Dannay ("Ellery Queen")
1982 James W. Gargano
1985 Burton R. Pollin
1986 David K. Jackson
1987 Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV
1988 G. R. Thompson
J. Lasley Dameron

Recent Dissertations: November 1988 - February 1989


Recent and Forthcoming Poe-Related Books


More on WordCruncher

The Electronic Text Corporation states that while it has not yet included the Library of America Poe volumes in its computer program WordCruncher, it is planning to do so eventually. For further information, write to Electronic Text Corporation, 5600 North University Avenue, Provo, Utah 84604, or call 1-801-226-0616.
In Memoriam: Claude Richard, 1934-1988

For over a hundred and forty years, Poe has been in good hands in France. Even before Baudelaire’s first translation of a Poe tale appeared in 1848, other writers had published some of his stories and written about his work. Mallarmé picked up the Poe cult where Baudelaire left off, and Valéry continued to mention his devotion to Poe in his Notebooks just months before he died in 1945. Who has carried the banner for Poe in France since Valéry? As one reviewer remarked rather facetiously, “Any French critic worth his salt writes on Poe.” It is true that a number of big names in recent French criticism have applied their theories to a reading of Poe. Lacan, Derrida, and Ricardou, just to mention a few, have brought us new approaches. But if we look for a post-Valéry French scholar who has devoted a lifetime to studying Poe, there is only one: Claude Richard.

Richard made outstanding contributions to Poe scholarship on both sides of the Atlantic. When Poe Newsletter was founded in 1968 (changing its title to Poe Studies in 1971), Claude Richard was a member of the editorial board and continued to serve faithfully in that capacity until his death in May, 1988. His review articles and carefully researched bibliographies kept us up-to-date on critical studies, translations, and new editions of Poe that never cease to flow from the French presses. His first book-length study of Poe, Configuration critique d’Edgar Poe, was published in 1969.

As professor of American literature at Université Paul Valéry de Montpellier, Richard gained a reputation as an innovative, enthusiastic teacher who inspired both colleagues and students to attempt new approaches to the study of literature. In an effort to overcome the traditional student-teacher relationship, Richard organized a research team made up of students and professors devoted to the task of presenting Poe to French readers in a new light. The goal of their research was to rectify the distorted image of Poe created by Baudelaire and handed down from one generation to another. The process of “demythification” was carried out by presenting a dossier of evidence to prove that the real Poe was not a poet of disorder but rather the “literary engineer” who fascinated Valéry. The eighteen researchers translated and edited many documents that had not been available to French readers. Published in the series “Cahiers d’Études Américaines” in 1976, Richard’s collective essays and critical studies directed by Richard provided new sources on which French readers could base a judgment of Poe.

Richard’s devotion to teaching is also evident in a collection of Poe’s poems he edited (Poèmes/Poems, translated by Henri Parisot [Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1978]), which includes a long, well-documented introduction designed to help students appreciate Poe’s poetry. Richard’s reviews of other Poe translations brought a critical eye to work that was sometimes inaccurate or slipshod.

In 1975, Richard founded Delta, a journal devoted to the study of southern literature in the United States. The editor’s strong interest in Poe was evident from the first issue, which contained six essays on Poe’s fiction. Highly regarded in France, the journal has continued over the years to publish insightful articles on American literature, including numerous pieces on Poe. The final issue, an homage to Claude Richard, will appear in late 1989.

Richard’s chef d’oeuvre is his Edgar Allan Poe: journaliste et critique (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979). One can only imagine the incredible amount of meticulous research that went into the preparation of this 963-page volume of fine print. Patrick Quinn mentions in his review of the book in Northern Irish Review (December 1980), 37) that “a reviewing task force representing different kinds of interest and expertise” is necessary to produce a long review that would do justice to the book. Nevertheless, within the limitations of three pages, Quinn did an excellent job describing the many qualities of Richard’s extraordinary study. Much of the research was conducted at the University of Virginia, where Richard spent two years (1965-67) on a fellowship. Eric W. Carlson and J. Lasley Dameron recall vividly conversations with Richard on the subject of Poe during their visits to the Charlottesville campus. Dameron mentioned that “Professor Richard was an excellent conversationalist and a scholar who conveyed considered opinions with respect to Poe’s life and writings.” Richard wrote an essay, “The Heart of Poe and the Rhymed Poems,” specifically for Carlson’s Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe (1987).

In America as well as in France, students and colleagues appreciated the knowledge and enthusiasm Richard brought to his teaching. He returned to the United States as a Visiting Professor at the Universities of Virginia, Texas-Austin, Iowa, Colorado, and Massachusetts-Amherst. An expert on modern American literature, he served as literary advisor to the French publisher Alinea, which has become known for its translations of recent American authors. Although we are most familiar with Richard’s studies on Poe, he is also a short story writer and translator of Shelby, Foote, Dos Passos, Grace Paley, Charles Reznikoff, and several American poets published in Delta.

Eager to try new approaches, Richard wrote several essays applying text-oriented theories of literary analysis that make other approaches seem old-fashioned. Taking “letters” as a theme (letters in the sense of literature, the alphabet, and a message sent to someone), Richard explored this unifying motif in specific works by Poe, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Melville, and Pynchon. Published as a collection of essays entitled Lettres américaines (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1987), Richard’s final volume begins and ends with essays on Poe.

It is difficult to imagine how such a productive scholar and energetic teacher could have time to relax. During the precious leisure time he allowed himself, Richard enjoyed sailing the Mediterranean on an old sloop named Antidote. At the time of his death, he was writing a novel and working on a new French edition of Poe’s complete works, which will be published by Robert Lafont in 1989.

Claude Richard will be remembered by many students in the United States and France for his brilliant lectures and animated personal conversations. His legacy of scholarly studies, translations, and essays will continue to enrich our lives for many years to come. American literary scholarship and Poe studies in particular have lost a talented scholar who brought new insights to our own literature.

Lois Vines, Ohio University
Noëlle Batt, Université de Paris-Vincennes


Two essays in the 1987 issue of SAR are of particular interest to Poe scholars: Richard Kopley’s “The Very Profound Under-current of Arthur Gordon Pym” (143-75) and Mary G. De Jong’s “Her Fair Fame: The Reputation of Frances Sargent Osgood, Woman Poet” (265-83). Arguing that Pym be read as the kind of allegory Poe sanctioned—submerged and suggestive, Kopley finds the key to it in the first episode, the destruction of Pym’s sloop, the Ariel, and his rescue by the Penguin, which alludes, Kopley argues, to the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied in Isaiah 29: 1-2 (“Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!”) and the redemption offered in the vision of Christ and coming of a “new Jerusalem” in Revelation. Kopley reveals a significant undercurrent of Pym, but the allegory of destruction and redemption seems to continue in the redemptive signification of the Ariel episode by reference to the apocalyptic language and events in the last chapter and chapter 21, which Poe apparently added to the novel late in the process of composition. The case for the redemptive significance of the Penguin is based even more tenuously on the connection between its figurehead, which Pym never observes or describes, and the famous white-shrouded figure (Christ?) that
loomed up before him at the end. Although the argument does not warrant the claim Kopley would like to make for *Pym*—namely, that it is a consciously intended, subtly executed and coherent allegory, future readers of the novel will have to attend to the undercurrent of biblical allusions he illuminates.

De Jong examines the work of which Frances Sargent Osgood's work and reputation were devoured by Poe and his contemporaries, who, in applauding femininity in a woman poet, equated it with spontaneous effusion of the heart rather than careful artistry. De Jong charges Poe scholars with perpetuating the nineteenth-century notion of the "woman poet" by finding largely a biographical significance in Osgood's relationship with Poe and failing to come to terms with her popularity and Poe's praise of her as a poet. De Jong is calling for a reevaluation of Osgood's poetry in its cultural context, although this essay only hints at what that reevaluation might tell us about her poetry or relationship with Poe.

Bruce I. Weiner  
*St. Lawrence University*

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**Letter to the Editor**

Dear Sir,

To be praised by Dwight Thomas for "attention to the small details of the Outis letter," then to be chastised for lack of "specificity," ("Outis: A Gordian Knot Still Beckons," *P S A Newsletter*, XVI, Fall 1988) is a bit like having the whips and the salve simultaneously applied. Lest this latest outburst of "Outis-mania" turn into what Poe perhaps should have avoided, namely a large account of a small matter, my response to Thomas' critique will touch on just three bibliographical issues.

Outis' letter presents several bibliographical tangles, not the least of which is offered by the poetic fragment ("The trees like crystal chandeliers") that Burton Pollin attributes to Poe. Current critical discourse has encouraged sensitivity to the vagaries of a shifting literary canon, but in the case of this fragment, never has a work been so quickly de-canonized. Drawn from Joseph H. Nichols' *The Falls of the Housatonic,* this line was so widely reprinted in the 1820's that several periodicals, including John Greenleaf Whittier's *National Philanthropist,* singled it out for praise. The Boston Courier noted that the line "was reiterated and re-echoed from Boston to Bangor," praise consistent with Outis' comment that it was quoted "by everyone in the land." If such comments by Outis have an authentic basis in literary history, in what sense can his letter be deemed a hoax?

Other poems cited by Outis, Thomas Hood's "The Death-Bed" and James Aldrich's "A Death-Bed," present another bibliographical tangle. Rather than conveniently over-looking the appearance of "The Death-Bed" in *The Rover*, as Thomas claims, Professor Jones and I noted Lawrence Labree's citation of the poem. In an interesting turn of phrase, Outis claimed that it was "more than probable that Hood had not seen" Aldrich's poem. Outis seemed to imply that this fact would "disqualify him as the author of the letter." The Poe attribution has had a certain logic about it, for Poe loved fights, hoaxes, and publicity. Moreover, as Professor Pollin has ably demonstrated, Outis' letter contains multiple passages reminiscent of Poe's writings. Notwithstanding the apparent plausibility of the hoax hypothesis, the solid evidence discovered by Ljungquist and Jones ought to deter all scholars from simply dismissing Outis as "probably Poe himself." Before I could vote for the Poe attribution, I would need to see a new document which unequivocally implicated him.

The Labree attribution strikes me as more ingenious than substantial. Professors Ljungquist and Jones do indeed cite the previous appearance of Hood's "The Death-Bed" in *The Rover,* what they neglect to mention is the fact that Outis stated he had never seen the poem before Poe quoted it in the *Evening Mirror* of January 14, 1845. If Outis' letter is accepted at face value, then this statement disqualifies any editor or reader of *The Rover,* second volume. In my opinion, there is a large difference in tone between Outis and Labree. The former would seem to have been middle-aged, mellow, and soft on plagiarism. Labree often sounds young, abrasive, and downright inquisitorial on plagiarism. Thanks to Ljungquist and Jones, we know that Outis knowledgeablely referred to actual literary events of the late 1820's—viz., the vogue of Joseph H. Nichols' poem and the plagiarism accusations John Neal made in the short-lived *Yankee* of 1828 and 1829. By 1845, of course, these events had long since ceased to be topics of current interest. Was Labree old enough to have remembered them? His reminiscence of ice-skating on Maine's Kennebec River ("The Rover," April 19, 1845) conveys the impression that "about sixteen years ago"—ca. 1829—he was still a small boy.

Professor Ljungquist may be correct in identifying "The Pirate's Treasure" carried by *The Rover* as the tale Labree had in mind. This does not affect the main point I wished to make: unlike Outis, Labree was quite ready to join—or even to instigate—the then fashionable witch-hunts after plagiarists. On February 8, 1845, he wrote that Longfellow had been detected "in one of the most flagrant and unscrupulous pieces of plagiarism that ever occurred in our literature"; he reprinted Longfellow's poem alongside its source in *Motherwell,* adding afterwards: "Singular coincidence, eh?" Three weeks later came a thinly veiled accusation linking "The Gold-Bug" and "The Pirate's Treasure:" Labree chortled, "We have another gun shotted for some one!" Heavens! Can this be the very graceful and gentlemanly Mr. Outis?  

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Dwight Thomas replies:

Professors Ljungquist and Jones should be twice-praised for their attentive reading of Outis' letter and Poe's reply; their extrapolation from these texts to Labree's columns in *The Rover* is another, much more speculative matter. In the first instance they have indicated discrepancies between the letter and the reply which most strongly support their conclusion that Poe was unaware of several sources cited by Outis, and that this fact would "disqualify him as the author of the letter." The Poe attribution has had a certain logic about it, for Poe loved fights, hoaxes, and publicity. Moreover, as Professor Pollin has ably demonstrated, Outis' letter contains multiple passages reminiscent of Poe's writings. Notwithstanding the apparent plausibility of the hoax hypothesis, the solid evidence discovered by Ljungquist and Jones ought to deter all scholars from simply dismissing Outis as "probably Poe himself." Before I could vote for the Poe attribution, I would need to see a new document which unequivocally implicated him.

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As members of The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore will recognize, the books under review all had their origin in public events—*The Most Noble of Professions* and *Passion in Poe* in the Society's 1986 and 1985 commemorations, respectively, and *Myths and Reality* in the transfer in 1983 of Sir Moses Ezekiel's statue of Poe to the University of Baltimore. That Poe, who had so little support for his literary labors, should find his American readership in the twentieth century is one of the ironies of his career.

Some years ago, William Charvat marked out an important area of American literary history: the relations between production, distribution, and consumption of the literary work; the relation of literary careers to material and cultural conditions of production; the literary work as response to these material and cultural conditions. Bruce Weiner's stimulating essay on Poe and the poverty of authorship is one example of renewed interest in these issues.

As Weiner writes, "The spread of literacy, the concentration of population in urban centers, creating larger markets for consumer goods, and better methods of producing and distributing books transformed literature into a commodity capable of generating profit for enterprising publishers and authors." American authors were particularly vulnerable because of the absence of an international copyright law, which made it more profitable for publishers to pirate foreign books than to pay American authors. Poe made his career as poet, short story writer, critic, journalist, and editor in this precarious literary marketplace, his income from his many literary labors amounting to genuine poverty. Because of this, Poe, like Hawthorne and Melville, sought government positions, but unlike them, Poe was never supported by the state. Weiner focuses on Poe's responses to his uncertain position as well as to the commodification of literature itself. Though Poe aspired to the status of gentleman-amateur and to that of Romantic writer superior to the marketplace, he attacked gentlemen-authors as well as reviewers who manufactured reputations for such friends; in other words, we might say, Poe's attacks show how the gentleman-amateur became a commercial success, and hence no gentleman. Poe's rhetorical bite is at least partly attributable to his feeling that authors like himself were at a commercial disadvantage. Poe's attacks were not limited to the literati. He also protested that publishers took most of the profit of the literary enterprise, leaving little for the author. Poe came to recognize that literature was a commodity, but his attempt to coin his brain in the latter part of his career met with little material success.

Weiner concludes with a fascinating discussion of the theme of found wealth in Poe's late fiction. Legrand of "The Gold-Bug" and Dupin of "The Purloined Letter"--two impoverished gentlemen-amateurs resembling Poe's image of himself--transform imaginative labor into wealth. In "Van Kempelen and His Discovery," Van Kempelen goes beyond his financial need to perfection of the work, producing, as Weiner writes, absolutely pure gold, which undermines gold as a standard of value. The merely clever narrator, on the other hand, merely capitalizes on Van Kempelen's discovery. Poe was like his narrator, a literary laborer "stretching an article to make it pay," while he also identified with Van Kempelen, who undermines commercial standards in his search for "a higher, purer standard of value."

John Ward Ostrom's contribution to *Myths and Reality*, "Poe's Literary Labors and Rewards," is a nice companion piece to Weiner's essay. Ostrom's research has enabled him to conclude that by any reasonable standard, Poe's income from his literary labors was below the poverty level. Poe's meager earnings must have been disappointing, even humiliating, and Ostrom argues that we must take Poe's disappointment and impoverishment into account in assessing his reported weaknesses, including his drinking.

Other contributions are Richard P. Benton's "Friends and Enemies: Women in the Life of Edgar Allan Poe," W. T. Bandy's "Dr. Moran and the Poe-Reynolds Myth," Clifford Krainik's, "The Sir Moses Ezekiel Statue of Edgar Allan Poe in Baltimore," and Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV's "More Pieces in the Puzzle of Poe's 'The Asignment.'" Benton's account of Poe's attachments and remarkable entanglements, though careful, leaves the reader with the sense that we have not yet found the keys to understanding Poe's relationships with women. Bandy's purpose is to demystify Poe's death. One of the oddest details about Poe's death at Washington College Hospital in Baltimore is that Poe seems to have been held virtually incommunicado. His cousin Neilson Poe was refused permission to see him and was shocked to learn of Edgar's death a few days later. The story—nay, stories—of Poe's death come to us from the resident physician, Dr. John Joseph Moran, who wrote three accounts of the event and who, late in life, lectured on Poe. Moran's published accounts do not agree with each other. Bandy concludes that Moran's accounts show very little concern for accuracy and that some of what he wrote must be invention. In particular, Bandy doubts the statement in Moran's first account, his letter to Maria Clemm, that Poe repeatedly called for one Reynolds when dying. Since Harrison's 1902 edition of Poe's works, this Reynolds has been identified by most of Poe's biographers with J. N. Reynolds, a man whose ideas are among the sources of Pym and other works of Poe. The reference to Reynolds is quite different in the account of 1875, in which Moran reports that he, Moran,
sent for a family named Reynolds; this cannot refer to J. N. Reynolds of New York. Finally, in his account of 1885, Moran says that he sent for the Herring family (relatives of Poe). Bandy concludes that Moran gradually corrected his reference to Reynolds. While it is reasonable that Poe or Moran might have summoned Henry Herring, who had helped bring Poe to the hospital, can we reverse the old privileging of Moran’s first account and now accept his last? Recall also that the last two accounts, written for publication, are rich in pure fabrication. Whatever one concludes about the relative unreliability of Moran’s three accounts, one cannot doubt that with Dr. John Joseph Moran as his defender, Poe was almost as unlucky as he was with Rufus W. Griswold as his literary executor.

In 1882, Moran was asked by a group of distinguished Washington, D.C. citizens to help erect a memorial to Poe. In “The Sir Moses Ezekiel Statue,” Clifford Krainik traces the history of one memorial which did materialize, though after a number of striking setbacks, including the destruction by fire of the first plaster model, the destruction by earthquake of the second, and a delay in sending the finished statue from Europe to the United States during and after World War I. Shifting from the matter of Poe in life and in memory, Benjamin Franklin Fisher concludes this volume with a study of Poe’s sources for “The Assignation.”

Glen Allan Omans’ Passion in Poe, a substantial piece of scholarship, is also concerned with Poe’s literary ideas and their origins. Omans concludes that Poe’s aesthetic theory diverged from the tradition of British empirical aesthetics. Omans is not concerned with all of Poe’s aesthetic theories, or a complete aesthetic theory, but with Poe’s theory of poetry, or to use Poe’s phrase, “pure poetry,” and the pure poetic effect. The key element setting Poe apart from the British tradition in aesthetics, from Shaftesbury and Hume through Wordsworth and Coleridge, is Poe’s excluding passion from the “poetic sentiment.” As Omans notes, in the eighteenth century, “passion” had taken on a range of meanings, and in Poe’s critical writings, “passion” and “the passions” are not always clearly delimited terms either. What Poe seems to be ruling out is disturbing feelings and desires, such as anger and lust, and the Burkean experience of the sublime.

The effect of pure poetry for Poe is an excitement and elevation of the soul; poetry is associated with ideality and with beauty. Has Poe reversed the hierarchy of Addison, Burke, and many other theoreticians, for whom the sublime is a higher object and emotion than the beautiful?

Omans traces a lineage or support for Poe’s theory of poetry in Kant’s Critique of Judgment and the works of Kant’s followers. For Kant, the aesthetic experience is the experience of the beautiful. This experience is disinterested; the beautiful does not stimulate emotion, passion, desire. Similarly, the form is more significant than the content of the aesthetic object.

Among Kant’s followers, Schiller in his Letters Upon the Aesthetic Culture of Man, Omans persuasively argues, came closest to Poe’s formulation of the pure aesthetic experience. One problem with placing Schiller in a genealogy is that despite Schiller’s popularity in Britain and the United States in Poe’s period, the Letters was not translated into English until 1845. Although there is no hard evidence that Poe read the Letters, Omans thinks that Poe did come to know Schiller’s ideas in some form at some point in Poe’s career as critic—that Poe read the Letters in German or that they were translated for him by one of his literary acquaintances.

Omans concludes that “German Idealist aesthetic thought” helped Poe “stand against the otherwise alien and overwhelming tradition of British Empirical aesthetics.” Though Poe’s theory of poetry takes on a welcome clarity and coherence in light of the aesthetics of Kant, Villers, Cousin, and Schiller, I would dispute the larger implication that the British tradition was alien to Poe. I have argued elsewhere that, at least with respect to fiction, Poe did not depart from the tradition of British empiricism, though he refashioned it in strange ways. But that is another story.

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