FOURTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING:
POE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Business Meeting

The business meeting of the Poe Studies Association was held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel during the Modern Language Association annual convention, 5:15-6:30 p.m., December 29, 1986.

Members in attendance were David Hirsch, Pres.; Glen A. Omans, Vice-Pres.; Richard Kopley, Editor, PSA Newsletter; Eric W. Carlson; Joan Dayan; John T. Irwin; Shoko Itoh; Lea Newman; Carol Peirce; Burton R. Pollin; John E. Reilly.

The Treasurer's Report, submitted by Dennis W. Eddings, dated December 10, 1986, was read and approved. It indicated a 1986 paid membership of 160. Income from dues and interest for the year was $828.85; expenses amounted to $667.04. Total cash on hand was $1249.84. Interest in the PSA Prime Reserve fund was $99.48, bringing the fund to $1619.38. Total assets at the end of the year were $2869.22.

The nomination of Dennis W. Eddings for a three-year term as Secretary/Treasurer of the PSA, forwarded by the nominating committee composed of Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, Chair; Richard P. Benton; and David Jackson, was read by Glen A. Omans. There were no further nominations from the floor. Eddings was elected by a unanimous voice vote of over 45 people at the annual academic meeting of the PSA, following the business meeting.

It was moved and seconded that the PSA make its membership list available to reputable commercial organizations wishing to use it for a fee of $50.00. Individuals and non-commercial organizations wishing to use the membership list should, instead, direct their communications to the editor of the PSA Newsletter. Items inappropriate to the Newsletter by virtue of length or subject matter should be submitted to the Secretary/Treasurer for his or her approval for mailing. Problems involving use of the membership list should be referred to the President of PSA.

It was moved and seconded that the PSA make available copies of the Newsletter to non-members at a price per copy to be determined by the editor.

These two motions have been approved by the Executive Committee of the PSA.

Three amendments to the By-Laws of the PSA were formulated by the members at the business meeting. The following amendments will be submitted to the membership as a whole by mail ballot subsequent to their publication in the Spring issue of the Newsletter.

1. That the following be added to the By-Laws after section IV ("Officers and Their Duties") as section V, and subsequent sections be re-numbered accordingly: "V. Program Committee. The Vice-President, with two other members to be elected by mail ballot for three years, shall serve as a program committee. Nominations for the two positions will be made by the nominating committee called for in the by-laws for election of regular officers. Further nominations may be made by mail to the Secretary/Treasurer by February 1st of the year in which elections are to be held. The Program Committee shall announce the topic or theme of the following year's program in the Autumn Newsletter. All three members of the Program Committee shall read each paper submitted."

2. That the present section VI ("Elections"), re-numbered as section VII (see above), shall be amended to read as follows: "VII. Elections. Election of Officers and committee members shall be restricted to those who have paid their annual dues and shall be accomplished only by mail ballot carried out by the Secretary/Treasurer. The Executive Committee shall choose a nominating committee to present a slate that will be announced in the Autumn Newsletter. Further nominations may be made by mail to the Secretary/Treasurer by February 1st of the year in which elections are to be held. All other voting on issues before the membership shall be by mail ballot. Only current members of the PSA shall be allowed to vote.

3. That the present section VII ("Amendment to By-Laws"), re-numbered as section VIII, shall be amended to include the following sentence: "Amendments shall be proposed by petition to the Secretary/Treasurer by a minimum of 6 current members." This sentence shall appear as the second sentence in section VIII, right after the first sentence which reads: "Amendment to the By-Laws will require a two-thirds majority of those voting." The remainder of section VIII will read as at present: "Balloting will be conducted by mail vote carried out by the Secretary/Treasurer. All amendments shall be circulated to the entire membership at least 30 days prior to the date ballots are to be returned."

Academic Meeting

The academic meeting of the PSA was held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel subsequent to the business meeting, 7:15-9:15 p.m., December 29, 1986, before a group of 48 people. The meeting, arranged and chaired by Glen A. Omans

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The PSA Newsletter is published and distributed by the Penn State/DuBois Campus and is supported by the PSA, Penn State/DuBois, and Penn State/University Park. Copies of the PSA Newsletter are provided to all PSA members.
Log (on which David has worked for nearly fIfty years) to stand and magisterIal standards. No question, therefore, of the PSA attests to mighty labor, considerable literary detective work, publication, in collaboration with Dwight R. Thomas, of aPoe which contains Jackson's own sound investigation of Philip the comic sketches of Hardin E. Taliaferro, Caro/ina Humor scholarly involvements that have given him prominence successful career in insurance. Nevertheless, he maintained growing family led Mr. Jackson ultimately out of Ph. D.

The meeting concluded with the announcement that the topic of the 1987 PSA meeting (to be held in San Francisco) will be open.

Citation
Few other members of the PSA can boast that they studied as both undergraduate and graduate student under our first designated Honorary Member, the late Jay Broadus Hubbell. Such study, however, was the fortunate lot of David Kelly Jackson when he left his native Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to enter Duke University in the late 1920's. There he produced an M. A. thesis, completed in 1930, on Poe and the Southern Literary Messenger. Another rising young Americanist, Clarence Gohdes, strongly encouraged Jackson's works on Poe. Consequently, Jackson brought out significant work on Poe's "Pinakidia," a book, Poe and the Southern Literary Messenger" (1934), additional articles on Poe, and a follow-up book, The Contributors and Contributions to the Southern Literary Messenger (1936); furthermore, he has continued to bring out solid work on Poe to the present time. Consequences of the Great Depression coupled with the responsibilities of a growing family led Mr. Jackson ultimately out of Ph. D. pursuits within the groves of academe and into what became a successful career in insurance. Nevertheless, he maintained scholarly involvements that have given him prominence among students of American culture--for example, publishing the comic sketches of Hardin E. Taliaferro, Carolina Humor (1938), still the only good edited collection of that Southern humorist; and American Studies in Honor of W. K. Boyd (1940), which contains Jackson's own sound investigation of Philip Pendleton Cooke. A generous scholar and delightful host, David Jackson is now realizing a long-cherished goal: publication, in collaboration with Dwight R. Thomas, of a Poe Log (on which David has worked for nearly fifty years) to stand beside similar resource volumes on Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson prepared by J ay Leyda. The Poe Log (1987) will be open. The Poem as Song: Poe's Views and Practice; Kenneth Alan Hovey (U Texas/San Antonio), "Poe's Poetic Principle in American Context"; and Dana Brand (Rutgers/New Brunswick), "The Silent and Speaking Cities of Poe's Poetry." Following the presentation of these papers, the audience and speakers engaged in a spirited discussion. The meeting concluded with the announcement that the topic of the 1987 PSA meeting (to be held in San Francisco) will be open.

Scholarly Poe Events
The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore and The Enoch Pratt Free Library sponsored the Sixty-Fourth Annual Edgar Allan Poe Lecture at the Pratt Library on Sunday, October 5, 1986. The speaker was Bruce I. Weiner (St. Lawrence U), who delivered a paper titled "The Most Noble of Professions: Poe and the Poverty of Authorship." The Sixty-Fifth Annual Edgar Allan Poe Lecture will be held at the Pratt Library on Sunday, October 20, 1987 to Nicholas Ruddick, Department of English, University of Regina, Regina SK, Canada S4S OA2. The Poe "Studies" section at the NELMA Convention will be held in the Sheraton Boston on Friday, April 3, 1987. The Chair of the section was Dana Brand (Rutgers/New Brunswick); the Secretary was Mary De Jong (Penn State/Shenango Valley). The program opened with Tracy Ware (U of Western Ontario), who delivered a paper titled "The Two Stories of 'William Wilson.' " He was followed by Beverly Voloshin (U of Rochester), who spoke on "Transcendence Outward and Downward: Readings of 'Ligeia' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher.' " The program concluded with Terry Martin (SUNY/ Buffalo), who discussed Poe's first detective story in "Literary Detection and the Introduction to "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." The 1988 NELMA Poe section will be chaired by Mary De Jong; the Secretary will be Beverly Voloshin. The topic of next year's NELMA Poe section will be open; inquiries, abstracts, and papers for the Poe section should be sent by September 15, 1987 to Mary De Jong, Penn State/Shenango Valley, 147 Shenango Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146. NELMA will be held next year in Providence, Rhode Island.


Recent Dissertations: April 1986 - March 1987

Kenneth Alan Hovey
University of Texas/San Antonio
These two volumes constitute the third installment in Professor Pollin's Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe, the earlier installments being The Imaginary Voyages: Pym, Pfaall, and Rodman (G. K. Hall, 1981) and The Brevities: Pinakidia, Marginalia, and Other Works (Gordion Press, 1985); and the whole undertaking is a continuation of what Professor Pollin calls "the Mabbott-Pollin edition." There are some surprises in these latest volumes, surprises not in the quality and quantity of scholarship but rather in editorial decisions born of what Professor Pollin calls "adapting perhaps unconventional responses to most demanding needs."

One surprise is the allocation of material. Professor Pollin has devoted the first of the two volumes exclusively to the text of Poe's "nonfictional prose" contributions to The Broadway Journal and the second volume to introductory matter, notes, and index. The material in the first volume is arranged chronologically with items identified at the top of each page by the date of publication on the left and by the volume number, page number, and column (i.e., "L" or "R") on the right. Professor Pollin has numbered the lines on each page of text, thereby enabling him to key the text in the first volume to his notes in the second volume by citing page and line number; i.e., each note is identified by its page number followed by a slash and then its line number in the text. Though this arrangement may sound forbidding, only a minimum of hands-on experience will bear out Professor Pollin's assurance that it saves the reader from "awkward thumbing through separately for the notes and flipping of pages back and forth!" It also saves the text from being cluttered with distracting sigla.

A greater surprise is the text itself. Professor Pollin has chosen not to follow the practice in all the earlier volumes but to furnish instead "a composite facsimile edition" of the original items by Poe as they appeared in the pages of The Broadway Journal. The facsimiles are arranged in a narrow single column on each page. Professor Pollin justifies this departure as saving space: "Since all the authenticated Poe material would require at least two volumes of the print used for the previous volumes of the series, with no room left for the copious notes required for this edition, a separate volume would have to be added, making three in all." But this is not convincing. There are 364 pages of sixty-six lines (as well as approximately fifty illustrations of various sizes) in the facsimile text. Were the material of these pages to be published in the forty-five line format of The Brevities (with the average line length remaining the same), it would amount to approximately 534 pages, or a single volume slimmer than either Imaginary Voyages (667 pages) or even The Brevities (575 pages) and a far cry from the 737 pages of the third volume in Professor Mabbott's contribution to the series. A more convincing argument for the facsimile might be the experience of reading what amounts to the original text of The Broadway Journal to other works by Poe. The quality of Professor Pollin's scholarship in the notes is entirely in keeping with the level established by Professor Mabbott in the very first volume of this edition and maintained thereafter by Professor Pollin himself.

The second volume closes with a thirteen-page index to the facsimile text, an index deserving special mention because it boasts an innovation which would be a welcome feature in any project of this nature. The index employs "letter-symbols attached to the page-numbers to indicate the nature and scope of the material being indexed": "a" indicates an article, "c" a comment, "m" a mere mention, "p" a passage, "r" a review, "q" a quoted remark or article, and "s" a magazine survey by Poe. For anyone consulting the facsimile text by working through the index, this feature will prove a genuine timesaver.

The scholarship in preparing this installment of The Collected Writings is genuinely impressive. Unfortunately, Professor Pollin's work as editor is not uniformly commendable. His decision to furnish facsimiles in an odd-size volume creates the serious shortcoming of a text which is not comfortable to read. Moreover, his preparation of copy is careless. There are numerous inaccuracies in the keying of notes to text, inaccuracies resulting, presumably, from his failure to follow through from adjustments made in the cutting and pasting of the facsimiles to corresponding adjustments in the notes. These inaccuracies often are that kind of annoying near miss which leaves the reader puzzled over just what, specifically, is being annotated. There are also at least three not-so-near misses in the dating of items in the facsimile text: the entry for 15 March is followed by 20 September (p. 43); and the entry for 12 July (p. 170) should read 19 July. It should be noted, however, that in each of these instances it is not the sequence of the text itself that is out of order (as checked against the original of The Broadway Journal) but only the dating. It also should be noted that all three errors in dating
are corrected on an errata sheet which is made available by the publisher. The choice of volume size and the carelessness in preparing copy are, if you will, editorial sins of commission. There are, as well, serious editorial sins of omission. One of them is Professor Pollin’s failure to follow Professor Mabbon’s practice of extending his index to cover not only Poe’s text but to cover the information in the notes, abundant information to which, in the present case, we have no ready access. Equally serious is Professor Pollin’s failure to draw up from his notes some sort of table or list identifying the three dozen or so items in *The Broadway Journal* which he adds, deletes, challenges, or confirms as belonging to the canon of Poe’s criticism. Since the composition of the canon is an issue of fundamental importance to every serious student of Poe, surely such a list or table has a more legitimate claim to space in this edition than Professor Pollin’s lavish comments upon the “special wax process” and “rubber cement” employed in pasting up the facsimiles and upon the computer and word processing program, the model of laser printer, and other “wheels and pinions,” as Poe would have called them, with which the edition was assembled.

John E. Reilly
College of the Holy Cross


Evan Carton’s *The Rhetoric of American Romance* is a prime example of a kind of criticism that has flooded the academic market lately, in the wake of the breaching of the New Critical dyke and the consequent inrush of the shallow seas of deconstruction. It is clever and intelligent, but operates in such a way as to dismay anyone interested in the human, holistic resonances of texts. For to shift my metaphor necessarily from outside to inside, this is a painfully academic criticism that, in spite of its pretension to philosophical sophistication, builds a hall of mirrors in which the texts studied are polished to such a high gloss that they reflect only the consciousness of the critic, not the minds of their makers, minds which in turn were situated in very particular historical contexts. The result is that genius becomes generic, that it paradoxically suffers a loss of both identity and integrity, and that texts become pretexts for the critic’s sublimely egotistical dialogue with himself. Hence we get reflections on reflections, an endless metamorphosis where everything eventually pupates into its own antithesis, a kind of hypostatized alternating current of the brain. At the beginning, there is the promise of a new, revisionary reading of American romance through a look at its ideological roots in Kant, a project of nationalist demystification that is certainly overdue. But as the work’s subtitle indicates, it is really Hegel who presides over Carton’s enterprise, and so his reading of Kant is very limited indeed, confined mostly to the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, so popular with contemporary theorists, is the true sacred text here, and this choice dooms Carton to the infinitely self-reflexive dialectical narcissism that must be any romantic’s reading of romanticism.

According to Carton, every romantic work of art, whether by Dickinson, Poe, or Emerson, stands and falls while automatically becoming a paradigm—that is to say, an allegory—of romantic textual subversion. Poe, who is our main concern here, is therefore “like many of his leading protagonists, both mesmerist and subject, manipulator and experimenter” (p. 67); his fiction in general is “an expression of and a response to the amalgamation of truth and artifice that *Eureka* identifies as the world’s originating and informing principle” (p. 134); and in *The Premature Burial* we see that “The hoaxed reader, in his own imagination, has prematurely buried the narrator—has participated in the blurring of the boundaries between life and death, truth and fiction, passion and parody” (p. 147). All of this reads very finely indeed, but a little thought will force us to realize that it has all been said before, and said with much more conviction, justification, and vindication. Why? Because it was said by those old New Critics who admired the technical achievement of Poe’s texts no matter how much they despised his sound (hysterical and high-pitched) or his sense (pseudo-occult nonsense). Every modernist was by vocation a hypocrisre lectrer, and as a practical, professional, systematic critic, Poe exacted his fraternal tribute from the best minds of that manda-rinized generation. But as a post-modernist, Carton uses Kant and Hegel and Schlegel only to choreograph an empty ballet of words—rhetoric—which is playfully free of all conviction, and so which inevitably draws Poe in: “[his] vague but expansive adjectives...suggest the gap that divides all of Poe’s words from the objects they seek and the perpetual brinksman-ship by which, in romance, language sustains its own tenuous viability” (p. 142). Whose language, or viability, or romance, we may well ask—Poe’s or Carton’s?

Carton is a recessive or reactionary romantic precisely because he has made rhetoric itself into an absolute, doing precisely what Poe did in “The Power of Words.” But in conclusion I would suggest that while Poe knew exactly what he was about, Carton does not. It is astonishing to me that he can claim that “Poe investigated the mechanics of the imagination more insistently than did Emerson or Dickinson” (p. 60), yet with all his gestures toward Kant never differentiate between the Reason and the Understanding or utilize the *Critique of Judgement* as a means of clarifying the debate about the nature of the sublime and its relation to expression that consumed each member of this strange but true triumvirate. Only when that essential work of preservation and recovery is accomplished—the hard work of historical scholarship that plumbs a line from Kant through Coleridge to Poe and Emerson, and thence to Dickinson, with Ruskin as her later particular medium—can we really begin to assess romantic rhetoric from a critical perspective. Carton writes as if this literary tradition never occurred, or as if it never mattered, and that is why he writes in his carpet all bleed into one another, or into one overarching consciousness and phenomenology which is the critic’s own apocalypse of mind. That is the abyss on the brink of which Carton and many others like him proclaimed today, and truly I cannot tell the dancers from their exhibitionist *danse macabre*. All I can tell is that I will not soon again read a critical treatise on American literature with the work “rhetoric” in its title, for as it was well said of a certain German book, *es lässt sich nicht lesen*—it does not permit itself to be read.

Barton Levi St. Armand
Brown University

**Poe Letter Obtained**

The Rare Book Department of the Free Library of Philadelphia has acquired an Edgar Allan Poe letter long thought to be lost. Written by Poe in Philadelphia, on 14 July 1839, to his cousin, George W. Poe, of Houston, Texas, it has heretofore been known only in an inadequate nineteenth-century transcription. The letter had descended in the family of the original recipient.

In the four-page letter, Poe relates briefly his own life and provides a family tree of descent from his grandfather, John Poe. The autobiographical section is at best fanciful, with a number of white lies and embroideries on truth. Poe does take care, however, to point out a number of familial relationships and intermarriages to his correspondent.

This extraordinary letter has returned to the city of its origin, where it joins the manuscript of “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” as well as other letters, manuscripts, and books in the exceptional collection of Edgar Allan Poe material formed by Richard A. Gimbel.

Barton Levi St. Armand
Brown University
Recent Poe-related Books


Forthcoming Poe-related Books

Soon to be published is Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987), 217 pp., Cloth, $35.00. Also due out shortly is a collection of humorous essays, Yo, Poe, Frank Gannon (New York: Viking, 1987), 160 pp., Cloth, $14.95. Scholarly Poe books anticipated for the future include Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV’s collection of essays on Poe, Poe and His Times, as well as John T. Irwin’s study of Poe and Borges, Stuart and Susan Levine’s edition of Eureka, Kenneth Silverman’s biography of Poe, Elizabeth Wiley’s concordance to Poe’s poetry, and Michael Williams’ critical study of Poe’s works.


In this uneven but indispensable collection, varying approaches to Poe demonstrate, often with great acuity, the pervasiveness of Poe’s influence on imaginative literature and call into question the view of Poe as macabre anomaly forever separate from his time and locale. This effort--this continued struggle to get beyond the beguiling image of the legendary Poe--still constitutes, as Fisher reminds us in his introduction, one of the major tasks of Poe criticism. Recognizing the need for our appreciation of a “many-sided Poe,” of a “polyvalent” writer too long delimited by the myth of America’s poete maudit, Fisher has brought together essays that take us from the French Poe of Valéry and Baudelaire to new and original analyses of Poe’s influence on contemporary writers as diverse as Fitzgerald, Tolkien, Borges, and Reed. The variety of voices and critical methods in this volume is refreshing in a time when far too many editions of scholarly essays are coerced into single-minded polemic or trendy ideological discourse.

The two opening articles on Poe and France by Vines and Forclaz clarify Poe’s emphasis on method, that fierce analytic that drove him, in the words of William Carlos Williams, “to get from sentiment to form.” With their concentration on the cerebral Poe, the analyst of language and mind, these essays form the necessary ground for the subsequent examinators. For whether we read Reilly’s witty presentation of how playwrights, beguiled by the lure of the lurid Poe, find their theater degenerating into farce, or Fisher’s analysis of Stephen King’s reduction of the Poe of “sensation” into the merely “sensational,” we are reminded of the Poe whose demand for “luminous and precise thought” terrified his less analytic (or self-conscious) contemporaries.

Weiner’s “‘That Metaphysical Art,’” an attempt to distinguish the detective tale of ratiocination from the fable of transcendental vision, returns us to one of the most important questions in Poe studies today: just how privileged is the tortured narrator of Poe’s “unsolved mysteries”--how seriously does Poe intend us to take the desire for occult or transcendental knowledge? Furthermore, is there really a firm opposition between the “investigation of metaphysical problems” and the “consideration of physical crimes”? To paraphrase Poe in Eureka: “it appears that the law of physics and metaphysics are one.” This necessary convertibility of opposites is captured in Bennett’s brilliant example of comparative criticism in “The Infamy and the Ectasy.” Confronting “the radically personalized focus of the Poe story” with “Borges’s meta-personal interests,” Bennett also recognizes that Eureka provides “a metaphysic that, discretely and cautiously read into the earlier work, illuminates what otherwise appears as gratuitously aberrant.”

More work needs to be done on Poe’s poetry, and Menides’ essay marks a good path of entry. Her examination of the way that both Eliot and Williams discovered in Poe “a model or version of himself” is perceptive, and her meditation on the problem of the long poem will prove useful in evaluating Poe’s program for a specifically modern American poetic. His emphasis on method, the crossing or layering of prose and poetry, and the turn to science reveal Poe to be the unacknowledged legislator of what Whitman, in his preface to the 1855 Leaves of Grass, celebrates as “the gangs of kosmos and prophets en mass.”

The case of Poe in America remains difficult to judge--Whitman’s dark figure driven through wind and waves on a spectral ship or Crane’s unbound, agate-eyed face in the subway window. Fortunately, like most of the essays in this volume, both Ljungquist’s detailed inquiry into Fitzgerald’s female characters as inheritors of Poe’s double images of terror and beauty and Werner’s exciting study of Reed’s complex, subversive response to “an ambivalent Afro-American tradition that alternately repudiates and endorses Poe’s vision” help restore Poe to the American locale that was and continues to be his base.

Joan Dayan
Graduate Center, CUNY


Since this book is useless for students of Poe, the immediate question that arises is: what is the audience for this assemblage of eight reprinted essays? A peep at its contents suggests the general non-specialist reader. We have Valéry’s 1921 essay on Eureka; D.H. Lawrence’s 1923 chapter from Studies in Classic American Literature; Allen Tate’s 1951-52 essay “The Angelic Imagination”; Richard Wilbur’s 1959 lecture “The House of Poe,” followed by what is titled “Poe’s ‘Ligeia’ and the Romantic Tradition,” a version of Clark Griffith’s 1954 essay “Poe’s ‘Ligeia’ and the English Roman-

Poe on the French Riviera

Burton R. Pollin
Professor Emeritus, CUNY

Poe on the French Riviera

Between the 2nd and 4th of April, 1987, "Edgar Poe and Visionary Reason" was the topic at the Troisième Colloque International de Science-Fiction held at the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Nice. While there were a few hitches, for the most part, papers in English were simultaneously translated into French and papers in French into English. Approximately fifty people attended.

The papers presented on the first day were as follows: "Poe et Calvino," by Cristina Benussi of Trieste; "Poe’s Angelic Tales as a Utopian Paradigm Against Science," by Fernando Porta of Salerno; "Edgar Poe and the Popular Culture of his Day," by John Dean, an American academic based in Paris; "The Rise of the House of Usher" (the tale read backwards), by Angela Carter, the well-known London-based writer; "Cosmic Perspectives in XIXth Century Literature" (about Eureka), by Brian Stableford, the writer and University of Reading sociologist; "The Raven" and "The Philosophy of Composition: Poetry as Fantasy and Criticism as S.F." (forthcoming in Parrinder’s The Failure of Theory), by Patrick Parrinder, Professor of English, the University of Reading; "The Sexual Abyss: Consumption in "The Assignment" (forthcoming in Poe Studies), by David Ketterer, Professor of English, Concordia University; "From this dim Thule: Poe and Speculative Poetry," by Mark Rich, an editor of The Magazine of Speculative Poetry based in Beloit, Wisconsin; and "How Puzzling to Meet Mr. Poe," by Brian Aldiss, the famous Oxford-based author of science fiction.

On the second day, the following papers were presented: "Tromperies et duperies dans Les Aventures d’Arthur Gordon Pym" (an inventory of true and false or deceptive details in the narrative), by Annette Goizet of Caen; "Les Aventures d’Arthur Gordon Pym de Poe et Le Sphinx des glaces de J. Verne," by Mireille Gouaux of the University of Nice; "Edgar Poe: avancée scientifique et voyage fantastique," by Bernard Terramorsi of Aix-Marseille; "Edgar Poe et la littérature française de l’imaginaire au XIXe siècle," by Jean-Baptiste Bonells of the University of Nice; "Edgar Poe: la somme de la raison? Les écrits hypnotiques de Poe et leur fortune littéraire" (mainly about "Mesmeric Revelation"), by Gwenhâel Ponnau of Toulouse; "Le Vortex: raison et vertige" (about "A Descent into the Maelstrom" and cone symbolism), by Henri Justin of Paris; "Le rôle de la cryptographie chez Poe" (about "The Gold Bug"), by Henri Diament of Haifa; and "La physique d’Edgar Poe" (about the perverse principle in Eureka), by Claude Richard of the University of Montpellier.

A screening of Jean Epstein’s La chute de la maison Usher (1928) and George Ivan Barnett’s The Fall of the House of Usher

NEW MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL FOR 1987

I wish to receive the PSA Newsletter in 1987.

Enclosed is my $5 check for dues and subscription for the year. (Check should be made out to “Poe Studies Association” and mailed to Dennis W. Eddings, Poe Studies Association, English Department, Western Oregon State College, Monmouth, Oregon 97361.)
On the Writing of
"Wax Poetic"

It began with a title eight years ago. If one is sufficiently in tune with the games our language plays with us, "Wax Poetic" should be immediately suggestive. A figure in wax. Madame Tussaud's famous museum. Poe.

At that time, I set down in a brief paragraph an idea for a shipboard whodunnit with supernatural overtones set in the late nineteenth century, and centering around a group of wax figures being shipped from London to a New York museum. One of these would be Edgar Allan Poe. It would be this figure that would apparently become animate during the dog watches and kill passengers in locked staterooms. At a crucial juncture, credence would be lent to the supernatural explanation to the crimes by the discovery that there were human bones beneath the wax of the figure. In the end, Poe's figure would be exonerated and a very human murderer unmasked.

Nothing came of the idea. I'm not sure I even attempted to sell it to anyone other than myself. But the title and the premise continued to haunt me over the years.

Since I first began reading the novels of John Dickson Carr as a teenager, I've been fascinated by impossible crimes—not simply locked room puzzles, but all variations of the form. And despite the obvious necessity for additional exposition (not only who, but how), I've managed to write some twenty impossible crimes for television. Therefore, when Blacke's Magic, a television series wherein a magician solves impossible crimes, was announced, I slid into the program like a killer's hand into a soft suede glove.

Substituting Alexander Blacke's apartment for an ocean liner was simple. As a book collector myself (impossible crimes and nineteenth century detective fiction), I've always thought television unfairly neglected book collectors when choosing interesting characters to portray, so I settled on an auction of a previously undiscovered Poe manuscript.

My first experience with Poe was reading him, not seeing his name taken in vain by filmmakers. But I knew I'd need to do some research. The Murders in Cemetery Square was to be a full-length novel featuring C. Auguste Dupin, and set in New York. I created a provenance for the manuscript, showing when it had been completed (1848), and how it had come to be found in a trunk in the attic of a one-time rooming house on New York's Lower East Side. Although the title remains, much of the rest was excised. While it was interesting to me, others thought it served only to slow the forward momentum of the story.

I originally credited the wax figure to Madame Tussaud, but was convinced by Universal's legal department that it was better not to suggest, despite her use of death-masks, that this eminent (and elderly) lady went about digging up corpses from Baltimore churchyards to add authenticity to her creations. A scene that included the restorative powers of Amontillado was also cut because the show was too long.

What remain are over two dozen Poe references both obvious and subtle: character names, situations, etc. Even if some of these were missed by the general public, they didn't slow down the story, and the show remains a Poe puzzle in itself for those who care to piece it together.

Casting? Vincent Price sprang instantly to mind. How could he not? Star of the Corman/Poe thrillers of the early sixties, he is also remembered fondly for his famous meltdown (long before Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl) in the 3-D remake of "The House of Wax." He is the only member of the cast who recognized most of the Poe allusions.

"Wax Poetic" aired on May 7, 1986, and Blacke's Magic was given a premature burial by NBC shortly thereafter.

Lee Sheldon
Carmel, California

(1950) during the evening of the second day prepared for the mixed-media presentations of the final day: "Edgar Poe et la bande dessinee: des adaptations raisonnables aux adaptations visionnaires" (Poe and the comic strip), by Jacques Tramson of Paris; "Poe, Usher, Epstein: raison scientifique et fiction visionnaire," by Rene Predal of Grenoble; and "Visions" (a video based largely on "Anna Bel Lee" with guitar accompaniment), by Lionel Pfister "et l'equipe de la Banque du Temps" from La Roque-sur-Pernes. A stimulating time was had by all. A Proceedings volume of Revue Metaphores will follow.

David Ketterer
Concordia University