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Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV
University of Mississippi

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A TEN-YEAR SHELF OF POE BOOKS

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV

The University of Mississippi

I

Edgar Allan Poe's continual inspiration of books and their makers has created a varied panorama, as the survey below indicates, leading from the copiously annotated work by the Mabbotts and Pollin to Peter Haining's *The Edgar Allan Poe Scrapbook* (1978). This last contains a wealth of valuable illustrations, but its contents otherwise offer questionable worth. With several anniversaries of Poe-related organizations occurring during 1982, with the "Poe industry" in unabated force, and with the appearance of this special Poe issue of *UMSE*, a supplement to my "Poe in the Seventies: The Poet among the Critics" is in order, whether or not unanimous agreement comes to opinions expressed in these pages. Responding to Richard P. Benton's wonderment as to developments in Poe studies—expressed in 1970—I observed the varied approaches apparent a decade ago.¹ Here I outline significant steps taken over paths in the Poesque since that time.

II

Poe's works proper continue to come forth, singly or collectively, in states of differing utility. *Eureka*—aimed at beginning students, in casebook format, and, in second appearance, with critiques and bibliographical aids—twice came out under Benton's supervision (1974, 1975). This tantalizing "prose poem" needs definitive editing, however; perhaps a reworking of Roland W. Nelson's dissertation—a critical edition, published in partial form in *SAR* (1978)—will serve that need. Like *Eureka*, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* draws recurring attention, and in the seventies it appeared twice in papercover. Richard Wilbur's introduction gives luster to David R. Godine text (1973). Harold Beaver's version for the Penguin paperbacks (1975) has drawn reviewers' wrath for its irregular text. Given inadequacies in texts used for generations, Beaver's *Pym* perpetrates no blunders with authorial intentions such as those in *Sister Carrie* before the University of Pennsylvania text or the misplaced paragraph in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* that was placed rightly only by the Tillotsons' edition in 1963. Beaver's introduction, notes, and bibliography are useful for

students. A companion "book" is a symposium of critiques, with a checklist of editions and translations of *Pym* compiled by Pollin, captained by Richard P. Benton [*ATQ* (1978)]. Worthwhile contributions are those by Alexander Hammond, on the composition of *Pym*; Barton Levi St. Armand on themes of metamorphosis; and Grace Farrell Lee on *Pym* and *Moby-Dick*.

John Carl Miller's assembling all installments into one volume of *Marginalia* (1981) makes handy that body of Poe's writings as it first appeared (with a few modernizations). Gaps in Harrison's edition necessitated consultation of installments seven and twelve in periodicals of growing scarcity. Miller's idea that Poe intended ultimate book form and his theory that O. W. Holmes's semi-fiction derived from *Marginalia* may raise eyebrows. Maybe reprinting John C. French's "Poe's Revisions of Marginalia" [*Ex Libris*, 9(1940), 2-3—a Johns Hopkins Library publication] would have enhanced Miller's book. Turning to Poe's critical ventures, we find that he fares poorly in anthologists' hands. The recent exception is Frederick C. Prescott's *Selections from the Critical Writings of Edgar Allan Poe* (1909), in reprint from the Gordian Press (1981), with prefatory essays by J. Lasley Dameron and Eric W. Carlson. Costliness may prevent students from ready access to this collection, a good one, although minus Poe's pillorying of T. S. Fay's *Norman Leslie*, an example of his critical acumen mingled with uproarious comedy. Prescott knew how to slack the fires as regards Poe's often prolix reviews; the extracts are seminal literary theory.

Collective editions, principally of the fiction, vary in format and utility. Earliest among these, *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe: An Annotated Edition* (1975) is a mixed bag, although its single-volume format and—relatively—inexpensive price legislate it for classes treating all of Poe's tales. Arbitrary classifications may annoy some readers, and textual authority is absent. Copious notes enrich the project, although factual errors and intermittent, rather fanciful conjectures creep in. Any bibliography that omits the name of James W. Gargano, surely among the leading Poe scholars during the past thirty years, merits censure. No rigid viewpoint is Procrusteanly imposed on this anthology, although Poe the hoaxer is brought forward. *The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (1981), the work of Stephen Peithman, is worth consulting because its notes often supplement those in Levine and other annotated collections. Again, though, factual errors obtrude (confusing Byron for Keats as author of *Endym-*

ion), diminishing value for students—although the high price will deter all but the intrepid or the collector. Mabbott's work is most minimally acknowledged, and bibliographical work overall is poor. Again there is no evidence of textual weight.

Without doubt the foremost editing productions of the decade are the two volumes of *Tales and Sketches* (1978), prepared by the Mabbotts, and *Imaginary Voyages* (1981), edited by Pollin. Both will serve "standard edition" purposes for some time, and both afford mixed benefits. Troubling for students of the Bowers and related schools of textual editing will be the absence of their methods from these projects. Mabbott's work in particular has been singled out by reviewers for his idiosyncratic selection of versions to print. What such critics often overlook is the fifty-years' acquaintance with Poe and his works that underlies Mabbott's choices. The titles in Pollin—*Pym*, "Hans Pfaall," and *Julius Rodman*—involve no such variants as complicate texts, say, for "The Assignation," "Ligeia," "The Imp of the Perverse," "Loss of Breath," and "Bon-Bon."

Mabbott and Pollin present Poe's writings with ample commentary on influences and with attention to variant texts. Headnotes and endnotes in Mabbott tend toward greater brevity than those in Pollin. Pollin's system of numbers and letters in connection with documentation may prove more difficult in practical mechanics of use than Mabbott's. Both editors create a sense of Poe in his milieu, as opposed to persistent views that we are coping with a personage akin to weird characters from sensational fiction. Such editorial intentions are praiseworthy. Additional sources will crop up; Poe's imagination resembles nothing if not a great net into which swam minnows as well as whales. The unmistakable stamp of Thomas Ollive Mabbott pervades his edition. Not only his opinions, the results of his many years working on Poe, expressed with inimitable terseness—the Mabbott hallmark in many items in *Notes & Queries* and other journals—come our way. We discover much considered reliance upon testimony by persons who knew Poe or who knew his acquaintances. Mabbott's "Annals" (*M*, 1: 529-572) set forth a sensible overview of events in Poe's life, countering many untoward charges against him. Some oversights are bound to enter such large projects. In paragraph one of "MS. Found in a Bottle" (*M*, 2: 135) "Pyrrhonism" gets no textual note, although—unless the copy of the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter* is blurred—"Pyrrhenism" stands in the first version. The reference to

Dorothy Sayers in the index cites p. 115 instead of p. 715. The pages of *Imaginary Voyages*, alas, are peppered with typographical errors; despite an errata sheet running an apology by the publisher, these blemishes dictate vigilance when consulting this book. What a melancholy irony that for Poe—whose conceptions as to what a printed text should, and should not, be were lofty—such imperfections mar the results of so much work. J. V. Ridgely's historical essay on the growth of text for *Pym* will prove useful.

Two spinoffs from Mabbott's edition merit notice. First, *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1980) reprints the text, without the "Annals" and certain bibliographical aids, of Mabbott's first volume in the projected *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe (Tales and Sketches* = vols. 2 and 3). For classrooms this is ideal, furnishing reliable texts and commentary about Poe's verse and *Politian*, the never-finished drama that formed the basis for Mabbott's first substantial volume on Poe, in 1923. A companion monograph is Maureen Cobb Mabbott's *Mabbott as Poe Scholar: The Early Years* (1980), another paperback—an occasional publication of The Edgar Allan Poe Society. Familiar with her husband's plans and methods, Mrs. Mabbott recounts his embarkation upon Poe scholarship, his pursuit of what was in those long-ago days of American Literature often elusive quarry, plans for a full-dress edition of Poe's writings, and her own efforts in completing the *Tales and Sketches* after her husband's death. With assistance from Patricia Edwards Clyne and Eleanor D. Kewer, Mrs. Mabbott's task was still Herculean. Poet and scholar that she is, she finished with aplomb.

Two more titles that stem from the available texts of Poe are Burton Pollin's *Poe: Creator of Words* ["Revised and Augmented Edition"] (1980), an amplification of work originally brought out in 1974, and his *Word Index to Poe's Fiction* (1982). The introduction to the former contains insights into Poe's handling of language, and the book entire suggests possibilities for additional study of Poe's word-play. Misprints appear, although this work lays groundwork of importance. The second item will be a working tool until the appearance of Elizabeth Wiley's concordance to all of Poe, because it stands as a companion to the Booth-Jones *Concordance* to Poe's poems, as well as a flank to the Dameron-Stagg *Index* of Poe's critical vocabulary.

III

Poe bibliography steps mightily forward because of Mabbott's

and Pollin's editions. Authorized or pirated publications clarify images of Poe the artist, and more will be sure to come to light as researchers comb recondite periodicals of last century.² Other bibliographical starting points are Esther F. Hynemann's *Edgar Allan Poe: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1827-1972* (1974), an early G. K. Hall guide; and J. Lasley Dameron and Irby B. Cauthen, Jr., *Edgar Allan Poe: A Checklist of Criticism: 1827-1967* (1974). Hynemann gives annotations under title headings, by means of three large sections, divided chronologically, with categorical partitioning in part three. Had she kept the introduction appended to her original dissertation, the work would benefit. Dameron-Cauthen includes more material, arranged alphabetically, with a utilitarian index (better than Hynemann's). Strange lapses occasionally occur: inadequate handling of Dorothy Sayers's classic introduction to the first *Omnibus of Crime* (1929) and Howard Haycraft's authored or edited "classics" chronicling and analyzing detective-mystery writing, to cite but two. Generally, riches await those who open these bibliographies. Some day, perhaps, a team effort may produce as nearly "complete" a harvest of writings about Poe as is possible. As bibliographical as it is historical or critical, Rose London's *Cinema of Mystery* (1975) outlines the Poesque in film. Generous illustration illuminates many of her observations. Before any serious laborers engage the compilation of a new checklist of secondary commentary, a careful reading of Hershel Parker's strictures upon the G. K. Hall Melville volume [ALS/1973] and Nina Baym's equally devastating onslaught upon the similar Hawthorne guide [ALS/1972] is recommended.

A different sort of bibliographical effort on Poe's behalf is Joseph J. Moldenhauer's *A Descriptive Catalog of Edgar Allan Poe Manuscripts in the Humanities Research Center Library, The University of Texas at Austin* (1973). Rich stores become accessible by means of such cataloguing. As outgrowth of this book, an essay on "The Spectacles," came out in *SAR* for 1977; one wishes for kindred examination of "The Domain of Arnheim" and the *Marginalia* leaves. A related variety of study is that in my collection of edited essays, *Poe at Work: Seven Textual Studies* (1978), scrutinizing the Folio-Club project, "Bon-Bon," "Silence—A Fable," "William Wilson," "Murders," and "Marie Roget," all in terms of Poe's revisions. Robert W. Burns's guide to studies of Poe's revisions makes for quick familiarity with the topic.

IV

Poe's biography remains attractive; ironically, it draws more attention from those eager to sensationalize than from those ready to see this life steadily and whole. After forty years, a successor to A. H. Quinn's still standard life remains offstage. An ideal biography would deftly unfold circumstances in Poe's life and offer sound criticism of the writings. Meantime we make do with less than the best, although G. R. Thompson's ample sketch in *Antebellum Writers in New York and the South*, ed. Joel Myerson (1979) is sensible. Biography of Poe is keenly limned by Alexander Hammond's "On Poe Biography: A Review Essay" [*ESQ*, 28(1982), 197-211], which employs A. H. Quinn as a point of departure. Separating fact from fiction in facing Poe's life remains shadowy after nigh a century-and-a-half. A reprint of Sarah Helen Whitman's *Edgar Poe and His Critics*, originally brought out in 1860, comes to bear properly on this topic. It staunchly defends Poe against calumniators. This edition, with an introduction by Oral Sumner Coad appeared first in 1949, and its present publication (1981) is owing to the Gordian Press.

Wolf Mankowitz's *The Extraordinary Mr. Poe* (1978) and Julian Symons's *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1978), blemished by faulty scholarship and knowledge of their subject, add nothing to biographical interpretations. Symons also lessens the credibility of his critical ventures in demeaning the analyses of Richard Wilbur, long accepted by Poe scholars as sound and penetrating. Mankowitz in particular leans too heavily upon psychoanalytic theories of Marie Bonaparte. Worse yet, John Evangelist Walsh, in *Plumes in the Dust: The Affair of Edgar Allan Poe and Fanny Osgood* (1980), argues for Poe's paternity of Fanny Fay Osgood, in 1846. Not of the same strong stuff as his *Poe the Detective* (1968), a convincing analysis of circumstances underlying "Marie Roget," this book tosses out too many conditionals in phraseology intended to make points of evidence. After all the influence of Krutch, Bonaparte, & Co., such an opposing view is to be expected. Instead of the impotent, sexually depraved Poe, we perceive a macho, or at least more masculine, hero for *Plumes in the Dust*. A close relative to Walsh's speculative methods, David Sinclair's *Edgar Allan Poe* (1978) should be consigned to whatever dreary region useless biographies are destined. One would think that a latter-day Griswold were among us. Playing fast and loose with facts, Sinclair portrays a Poe that, in my estimation, would have been incapable of producing

envious compositions, particularly in prose fiction, whatever else they might be said to be. With relief one turns to Vincent Buranelli's revised *Edgar Allan Poe* (1977), in TUSAS, wherein little that is startling, and just as little that is egregious, is recorded.

Shades of ambiguity relevant to Poe's biography also hover over John Carl Miller's *Building Poe Biography* (1977) and *Poe's Helen Remembers* (1979). Making available documents from John Henry Ingram's collection of Poeiana, now in the University of Virginia, these publications also dramatize the often strange characters who played crucial parts in Poe's life and in the shaping of biographical portraiture after his death. *Poe's Helen Remembers* is as notable for bringing to life in front of us the near Jamesian essences in the personalities of Sarah Helen Whitman and Ingram himself, as they toyed with each other in communicating over Poe-as-hero. Miller's earlier catalogue of Ingram's collection is being revised by John E. Reilly; together with these volumes it forms a cluster unavoidable by any future biographer of Poe. Would that Robert Jacobs's promised chronicle of Poe's life would speed ahead. One wonders why, after all this time and after much of Poe's mature journalistic life has proved so uneventful, sensationalism continues active in this sphere? Poe himself, with his readily offered inaccuracies and romanticizings about his circumstances, did much to create the persistent image.³ Adapting events in his brother's life, harassing many who might have helped him (Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, among others), selecting the very worst in literary executors: no wonder that Poe cemented a certain groundwork—just as surely as Montresor “masoned” Fortunato—for calumnies that live on.

In line with erratic biographies, J. A. Hammond's *An Edgar Allan Poe Companion: A Guide to the Short Stories, Romances, and Essays* (1981) could mislead the unwary. Beginning inauspiciously (why omit “poems” from the title and then devote space to them?), this book makes hash of much that is Poesque. Shaky knowledge (Hammond is a specialist in H. G. Wells) is everywhere unmistakable. Poe's texts are mishandled, critical perceptions betray Hammond's imperfect knowledge of the subject, and omissions of recognized Poe scholars and scholarship are glaring. Caution is once more a necessity.

V

Critical response to Poe's *oeuvres* parades before us varied percep-

tions, although the ten-year bookshelf, generally, reveals responsible use of work by predecessors. Time-honored tradition in French appreciation for Poe is upheld by Roger Forclaz's *Le Monde d'Edgar Poe* (1974) and Claude Richard's *Edgar Allan Poe: Journaliste et Critique* (1979). Both mammoth (the former running 611 pages, the latter 962), they generously acknowledge debts to those who have preceded them. In typically European dissertation custom, footnotes bristle upon the pages and bibliographies are expansive [reminiscent of Georges Lafourcade's still "standard" *La Jeunesse de Swinburne (1837-1867)*, published in 1928]. Forclaz gracefully synthesizes previous theories with his own thought to produce stimulating criticism. He most notably credits Poe's Gothic heritage as the origin of much that seems *outré*, to use one of Poe's favorite terms, in the fiction. Likewise, the drug addict-alcoholic gives way before Forclaz's convincing demonstration that one need not take opium to create gripping characterizations of opium trances, which function as dramatic vehicles for the Romantic imagination at play—often at grim games. Poe's literary, as contrasted with his emotional—à la Bonaparte—sources for weird writings are stressed, as are his considered revisions in successive publications of individual works. An inaccuracy requiring righting is that the Ms. prologue for the "Folio Club" is held in Harvard University collections, not in the Virginia State Library in Richmond. The other surviving fragment of *Tales of the Folio Club*, an incomplete version of "Silence—A Fable," reposes there. Riches await those who tread the span of Richard's book. Outstanding are his analyses of the Folio-Club tales (pp. 241-271) and of the tales entire (pp. 335-364). Substantial bibliographical advances, so far as attributions go, are another plus. Poe as Adam to the New Criticism is also brought to the fore, and anyone wishing to pursue themes of the confidence man, that first-rank American literary type, would do well to pay attention to Richard on Poe and plagiarism. Would that both these behemoths could be quickly translated for wider currency in the U.S.A. Length aside, these French books afford ample introductions and overviews to Poe's life and art. Their no-nonsense viewpoints are welcome antidotes to much that has passed for "criticism" of Poe.

Elsewhere on foreign soil Poe has made a mark. Joan DeLaney Grossman's *Edgar Allan Poe in Russia: A Study in Legend and Literary Influence* (1973), a remodelled Harvard dissertation from 1967, follows Poe's fortunes in Russia from the 1830's writers and critics

toward Nabokov and his era. In a style far from pedestrian, this book's great merit is the assessment of Poe's impact upon authors like Sologub, Brjusov, and Andreev, who respectively represent tastes for Poe as Decadent, Utopian-Symbolist, and horrific, mad genius (of the Poe legend). Russians prefer Poe's fiction to the verse. He is also classified as Gothicism, science-fictionist, detective-story monarch: in short, a pop figure. Grossman's catch-all term, "occult," is never clearly defined, although since no other critic clarifies its use in reference to Poe she may be pardoned. Odd too is her hiding away of Patrick F. Quinn's *The French Face of Edgar Poe* (1957), which she could not have avoided in her French-upon-Russian influence of Poe. Quinn's study, not those it supersedes, ought to be properly credited here. Caveats aside, the list of translations, the bondings of Poe's name with English, French, and Russian Decadence and Symbolism, and the Poe sources or analogues for Russian writings increase a sense of his fame abroad.

If the publication date for Grossman's book is meaningful in terms of relevance for the early 1970's, we might also turn to Haldeen Braddy's *Three Dimensional Poe* (1973) as part of that same era, although it is a far lesser performance. Chapters of critical dross extravagantly claim affinities between Poe's life and his writing (surely a timeworn preoccupation even at that date). Irregular documentation weakens the book, as do some similarly erratic aperçus. For example, the first "To Helen" hardly delineates merely another among Poe's "pallid heroines" (p. 2), and, we might well ask, *do* the poems overall reveal the "feminine" Poe that Braddy discerns? One can as readily ascribe to Poe's periodical milieu the foundation for such effeminate verse, if effeminate it be, or look to Hawthorne's notebooks for attitudes toward woman as "wife." As disputable is Poe's supposed concentration on lyric poetry as a female form. Can we overlook the lyric gems of Shakespeare (or of those medieval lyricists with whose work Braddy's routine training and teaching surely made him knowledgeable?), Tennyson, Frost, or Cummings, to give serious support to such theorizing? Had Braddy recalled F. L. Lucas, who long ago wrote of *la princesse lointaine* among the Romantics of Poe's own century, he might not have perpetrated this gaffe. I am also not of the opinion that Poe's recollections of London inform "The Assignation" nearly so much as Moore's *Life of Byron* does. Braddy's sense of Poe's debts to Gothic tradition, to Coleridge, and to Byron (other than in the instance just noted) is viable. The case for Poe the drug addict smacks

altogether too much of a fashionable bow toward the 1960's and early 1970's, during which period *Three Dimensional Poe* was written. A pretentious, flawed bibliography is another blot on this 'scutcheon. Lofty claims for his own bibliography do not obscure Braddy's faults in ignoring more extensive, and more accurate, work by Richard P. Benton or J. Lasley Dameron—who are, however, cited in his lists. Misspelling, misattributions, and sloppy "keying" draw to a dreary close this weak effort.

Casebooks of criticism grew increasingly popular during the late 1960's and early 1970's. One that falls within our scope is David B. Kesterson's *Critics on Poe* (1973), designed for the Readings in Literature series. In a spectrum from Poe's day (represented by Margaret Fuller and Evert A. Duyckinck) through the 1960's (culminating with Katherine Harris's fine critique of "Cask") critical and biographical materials are marshalled mainly for students with sparse library resources. In spots the abridging of original articles may limit overmuch. Along with earlier harvests of critiques, by Carlson, Howarth, and Regan, Kesterson's will function servicably for undergraduates.

The sweep of full-length critical books from American academics is not broad, lining up just three books during these past ten years. Had David R. Saliba housecleaned more of the dissertationese from *A Psychology of Fear: The Nightmare Formula of Edgar Allan Poe* (1980), he would have produced a first-rate critical study. The perspective, devolving from Jung's and other theories of dream, involves a "formula for fear" that basically sketches the movement of a reader from willing disbelief to "that willing suspension..." mentioned by Coleridge. Saliba thinks that many readers who perceive dream structures in Poe's tales do not go far enough in their outlook; that is, they should aim for greater precision and find thereby the "nightmare" methodology repeated time and again. Saliba knows criticism of Poe; he also knows reader-response approaches and psychological theory. Poe's Gothic background (and not restrictively a literary foundation but one embracing architecture and landscape) receives just dues, especially in its contributions to inwardness of emotion and to simulated nightmares. Although Saliba is quick to attempt qualification of James W. Gargano's ideas about Poe's narrators, Gargano and he seem not so mutually exclusive in their approaches as Saliba implies (and then, if I read aright, contradicts in examining "Metzengerstein"—pp. 94ff.). Along these lines, the shock of revelation in "The Assniation," for which Saliba otherwise provides sound

analysis, stems not so much from fear of the unknown as from the ultimate jarring sustained by the narrator's stupidity, which remains altogether bound to tangibles while intangibles crowd upon him with force of assault. Readings of "Berenice," "Ligeia," "MS. Found," and "Usher" are as thought-provoking as those for "Metzengerstein" and "The Assignment," although one might question how "Masque" or "Hop-Frog" or "Cask" would yield to Saliba's principles. In general, however, his viewpoint is one that could be adapted to treating other Poe tales, and it might profit some intrepid reader to revaluations of the verse of narrative dimensions.

More widely ranging than Saliba, David Ketterer's *The Rationale of Deception in Poe* (1979) recalls Gertrude Stein's triple rose in that deception becomes deception becomes deception, or so it appears as this book progresses. A visionary Poe, one not new, emerges. An artist impatient or dismayed over bounds to human perceptions and transcendence, he is prompted to "strategies of deception" in artistry. Ketterer's certainties about where and how that art deceives readers, perhaps Poe himself (if deception is paramount, then even the artist must recognize duplicity upon an individual as his own potential lot), may cause disagreement. Readings of single works in this overview of the canon offer fine comment on oft-neglected titles like *Politian*, "The Sphinx," and "A Tale of Jerusalem." Choosing Poe's metaphor of "the half-closed eye," Ketterer traces an art developing from the "grotesques" (portraying deception in reality and reason) through "arabesques" (imaginative combinations resulting from deception) to syntheses in the ratiocinative tales and *Eureka*. In these comprehensive texts reason and imagination fuse as "intuition," within a world prevalently transcendental. Ketterer's by-passing of the horrific may seem too easily elusive to some sensibilities, although his sense of the Poe-Melville relationship is praiseworthy. The dismissal of "Eiros and Charmion" is superseded by Gargano's study in the present *UMSE*. Dupin's green spectacles (p. 240) might bear tighter comparison with those of *De Rerum Natura* in the Folio Club than with decor in "The Assignment." Ketterer's usually impressive scholarship overlooks some significant studies during the 1970's by Carlson (Poe's imaginative vision), Babener (doubling in "The Purloined Letter"), Kennedy (*Pym* and other aspects of hoaxing), Ljungquist (landscape tales), and Fisher (shifting comic perspectives and revisions). Nevertheless, like G. R. Thompson, Ketterer has "seriously interfered with" others' work on Poe.

A second panoramic consideration of "Poe whole," as it were, is Elizabeth Phillips's *Edgar Allan Poe: An American Imagination* (1979)—an American-Studies approach. Poe's imaginative reactions to his America (and the notions of Democracy whence that imagination sprang) are central in the first of three large essays. We learn that Poe's probable awareness of the contemporaneous scene was far greater than is customarily credited to its account. In light of Phillips's succinct use of *Politian* for illustration, this creditability is pointed. That Poe often removed the familiar onto strange seas of thought or into regions not readily discerned by those among his contemporaries eager to have an American literature preeminently featured by realistic character types of native settings, is reinforced by such works as "MS. Found," with its contemporaneous date, "Eldorado," "The Gold-Bug," and *Pym*. Poe's awareness of landscape takes center stage in Phillips's second essay, where Rousseau, Moore, Byron, Baudelaire, and Stevens—and Cole the painter—illustrate interaction of natural scene with imaginative vision. Poe's verse, that playground for those wanting a weepy, vague, febrile author for it, is particularly used to advantage in illustrating his firm footing in reality. Poe's was, of course, no Wordsworthian or Meredithian nature; his was more analogous to Baudelaire's conception of nature-apprehended-through-dream.

The third section, "Mere Household Events: The Metaphysics of Mania," supplements biographical lore, correcting, for example, A. H. Quinn on Poe and the *Messenger*, and setting up interpretations sans axe-grinding about Poe's personal and literary use of alcohol and alcoholism. Phillips's links between Poe's familiarity with medical writings on mania, especially that mania related to alcohol consumption, and his creative impulse are well forged. Her sections on "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Man of the Crowd" supplement studies of Poe's debts to Dickens; all his debts were not to literary models. Her awareness of materials relevant to "Berenice" and "Usher" is helpful to others. Well, almost. Biographical implications notwithstanding, Poe's drunken narrators and motifs of intoxication have large roots in literary convention, as it appears, for example, in fiction by T. L. Peacock, by the host of terrorists in *Blackwood's*, and by numerous contributors to literary annuals and gift books. Obvious kindred to Poe are Hawthorne's "Fancy's Show-

Box," "Old Esther Dudley," and "Dr. Heidigger's Experiment." Poe frequently turns to strategies of intoxication as they engender comedy, very notably that of satiric-hoaxing proportions. Had Phillips familiarity with such studies of literary alcoholism in Poe's writings as one by Thomas Thornburg, another by L. Moffitt Cecil, and several of my own, she might have given a different cast to her essay. A like gap in the screed on landscape is the consequence of Phillips's failure to draw upon pertinent criticism by Kent Ljungquist. Indexing would also impart useableness to this book. In the main, though, Elizabeth Phillips imbues Poe studies with good sense.

Finally, some attention must go to John T. Irwin's *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (1980), a book that, not wholly devoted to Poe, places him yet centrally among the giants of the American renaissance. Such positioning redresses in large measure the slight perpetrated upon Poe by F. O. Matthiessen in *American Renaissance*, the Bible for many enthusiasts of nineteenth-century American literature since it came out in 1941. Nearly 200 of 371 pages go to Poe in *American Hieroglyphics* while Irwin recreates a setting wherein hieroglyphics—as they came to Americans from Egyptian origins through travel literature, through Biblical inspiration, through currents in the cultural air—enlivened responses to language and its subtleties among writers during American-renaissance years. Poe's attunement to such timely stimuli greatly surpassed that of his usually preferred (among scholars) contemporaries, and *Pym* stands in the center of that thorny crown of ambiguous writing flowing from Poe's pen, although "MS. Found," the ratiocinative fiction, and *Eureka* are accorded stellar positions in the same diadem. Just as it wins importance elsewhere among titles included in this essay, the Poe-Melville affinity ranks high in Irwin's pages.

VI

Arriving at the end of the ten-year shelf of Poe books, one concludes that in many respects the past has subtly transformed into the future, that dreams have become realities, and that Poe scholarship has evolved into higher, more sophisticated planes, with interpretations tapping excellences in recent modes of critical thinking. Tradition does persist; discoveries in and assays of Poe's sources and models keep coming, and their revelations continue to be important.

Truth to tell, many books on the shelf do not depart widely from previous materials insofar as methods go, although purposes for employing familiar procedures and the results reached may indicate new tacking. Books that have passed in parade here signal the sustained attention that J. Albert Robbins sought for Poe as long as fifteen years ago. Indeed, commonality on the ten-year shelf intensifies because of what Benton foresaw in 1970: "a fuller understanding of Poe's art and greatness, which, though defying complete assessment, still can challenge perceptive readers."⁴ If several of those challenges have been met, others await champions; many of the works named above raise questions in the process of laying others to rest.

Logically, we might ask: what of the future? Several wants are pressing, others less urgent, all worthwhile. A variorum *Eureka* is necessary, for an authoritative text and for evaluating Poe's revisions. Maureen Cobb Mabbott states that treasures await readers of *Marginalia*; proper editing would bring us a text to free that hoard. May Mrs. Mabbott's opinions about a selective volume of the tales, based on the Mabbott edition, also, and quickly, see print. A reliable narrative of Poe's life, that draws in critical perspectives developing after the time of A. H. Quinn, would be welcome. The forthcoming *Poe Log*, by David K. Jackson and Dwight Thomas, will undoubtedly promote sound biographical practices because of its wealth of factuality. A better handbook than J. A. Hammond's pathetic attempt should be had, to guide the uninitiate through the canon. An inexpensive *Complete Tales* (perhaps with *Pym* included) would widen classroom views. Not everything therein would be an "Usher," "Murders," or "Cask," to be sure; but, then, "Bon-Bon," "The Angel of the Odd," "The Assignment," "The Sphinx," and "Tarr and Fether" offer art of no mean quality.

Turning to interpretations, we might want further thinking about Poe's Gothic impulses, although good criticism already exists. Poe among his contemporaries also warrants more time. Hawthorne and Melville are names readily voiced in this context, but those of Lowell, Brownson, Paulding, McJilton, as well as others more slenderly known today, merit attention. Across the literary sea, Byron and Scott, Bulwer and Carlyle stand as literary models for Poe. No extended study of any of them paired with the American is handy, and that with several fine brief treatments on record. Poe's outlook on optimism and progress in his time is skeptical in many instances

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when he scans the contemporary scene. Themes of human perfectibility, a preoccupation with which he had better than passing acquaintance, customarily moved him to satiric mirth. More intensive examination of this topic would enlarge our views of Poe as a genuine human being, living in a real world. Causes of Romanticism, more specifically those germane to Poe, would accrue scope in a consideration of Poe's poetry with that circulated in popular periodicals—gift books and annuals as well as magazines and newspapers. This variety of criticism might disperse the Poe-as-languishing-bird-of-paradise-versifier, whose "music" too quickly grows repetitious and sleazy. Instead, a writer's consciousness of publishing vehicles and of audiences, an artist hoping for an appropriate expression for his poetic imagination, might take center stage. Atrocities of "critical" acumen—e.g., that women in Poe's poems, not to mention those in the tales, floated out of his own warped psyche or sex life (or lack thereof)—might thus be killed off, and a more realistic Poe in his times portrayed. Were this clarity achieved, books like *The Unknown Poe: An Anthology of Fugitive Writings by Edgar Allan Poe* (1980), with its not-so-unknown contents, might enter the oblivion they deserve. Conversely, empathic imaginative responses like Dave Smith's *Homage to Edgar Allan Poe* (1981), a sensitive rendering in verse of Poesque inspiration upon a contemporary poet, might win larger audiences.

Poe's presence in the corridors of time may elsewhere be advantageously followed. For example, British and American periodicals from the 1890's frequently bracketed Poe with M. P. Shiel, a writer of fantasy whose *Prince Zaleski* (1895)—a volume of stories in John Lane's Keynotes series—was labelled Poesque. In like manner, William Chambers Morrow's *The Ape, The Idiot, and Other People* (1897) was heralded as a descendant of Poe's macabre. Beardsley, Dowson, and Wilde have also been teamed with Poe, although no deep delving has gone into any of these relationships or influences. Similarly, Poe's shadow falls across the literature of mystery and detection that succeeds his own productions in such modes. E. F. Bleiler has begun placing Poe within Victorian circles, major and minor. Poe's followers—M. R. James, Frederick Irving Anderson, John Dickson Carr (most outstanding of all, perhaps), Stephen King, as well as numerous writers for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and others of its stamp—have reinterpreted his art and refashioned his image in their own fiction. To this type of work add science fiction and fantasy

literature. Poe towers over them all, conjured as a figure of pop culture.

No overview such as this would be complete without mentioning Poe the comic artist, for as such he has been, more and more, established. Recognized as infiltrating his tales with comedy by reviewers of his day, Poe has had to wait pretty much until past meridean of this century for rediscoverers and interpreters along lines of humor. Ted N. Weissbuch and Richard P. Benton led off what has become a growing group who emphasize Poe's comic impulse. Additional knowledge of his origins and models in such writing can enlarge our views on that matter. Once more, as is so often the case, we must return to literary periodicals and other fashionable literary creations of Poe's era. His immersion in writings that, initially weird-seeming, featured comic portrayals of alcoholics could lead to analytical and biographical revaluations. For those as yet not versed in an Edgar Allan Poe who is not a gloomy versifier or maker of lurid autobiographical squibs in his tales, there is another, smilingly sophisticated author in the wings. Poe's urbane humor assumes growing importance for serious students, and a forthcoming collection of essays—most of them previously published—edited by Dennis W. Eddings, *Poe as Satiric Hoaxer*, will disseminate views of Poe's comedy, as expressed by Weissbuch, Benton, Cox, Griffith, Gargano, Thompson, Kanjo, Fisher, Kennedy, Ljungquist, and Weiner. Whether all of Poe's fiction embodies subtle humor, lurking just below its narrative surfaces and eager to entrap unwary readers, is a debated point. The existence of such possibilities has lured many recent speculators.

VII

In closing it is worth noting how often books on the ten-year shelf simultaneously manage to raise additional questions from the issues defined within their covers. The world of Poe holds out heterogeneous tasks for willing hands—of entrants and seasoned scholars alike. As the old evolves into the new, certain forces maintain their strengths. Names like Harrison, Campbell, Quinn, Mabbott, and Stovall (the sole survivor among these pioneers) are household words as regards the study of Poe—attested throughout the pages of this special *UMSE* as well as in books named in my essay. Work of the past decade will remain vital for those who keep probing the circumstances of Poe's life and art. His vitality is not a jot on the wane; *au contraire*, it intensifies. During 1982 three organizations centering upon Poe celebrated impor-

tant anniversaries; two of these groups have prospered over many decades. Closest to concerns of the ten-year shelf, The Edgar Allan Poe Society, headquartered in Baltimore and distinguished because of its publication of annual lectures as monographs, now boasts a *History* (1982), prepared expressly for appearance during the society's sixtieth year. From the energetic pen of Emeritus President, Alexander G. Rose III, these volumes demonstrate Poe's being more than solely the property of a few academics. Like Poe's own compositions, much fine criticism about him appears in brief form. Nevertheless, books on the ten-year shelf testify to overall quality in the making of many longer studies. Could he but witness these continuing signs of his fame, Edgar Allan Poe would be exceedingly gratified.

NOTES

¹ Benton's remarks appear in *New Approaches to Poe: A Symposium* (Hartford, 1970), p. 3; my essay is in *MDAC*, 2(1973), pp. 129-141.

² A reprinting of "The Business Man—Story by Edgar Allan Poe" turns up in the Providence, RI *Manufacturers and Farmers Journal* for 11 May 1843, p. 4. It is handy in *The New England Writers and the Press*, ed. Kenneth Walter Cameron (Hartford, 1980), pp. 9-11.

³ Probably manufactured by Poe himself for the most part, a sketch that plays hob with factuality and that supposedly came from the pen of Henry B. Hirst appeared in the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum*, 25 February 1843. The sketch, so far as we know, survives in just a few copies of the reprint, 4 March 1843. Griswold's rifling Bulwer's *The Caxtons* for a description that passed for Poe in actuality is a similar tack, although a damaging one.

⁴ Robbins's "The State of Poe Studies" appears in *PoeN*, 1(1968), 1-2; Benton's query is *New Approaches*, p. 3.