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Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, ed. Poe and Our Times: Influences and Affinities.

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REVIEWS

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here he deals with those Poe items that are most closely associated with landscape and offers some new ideas about them. His discussion of "Landor's Cottage," for example, goes beyond source study to look at Poe's themes from the vantage point of the sublime and the picturesque.

This is a book filled with new insights into individual tales and poems by Poe, shaped by a theory of the sublime and the picturesque in landscape painting and writing (but unfortunately marred by numerous typographical errors). The book is primarily useful, I think, for its comments on various individual works by Poe (including a new reading of "Ligeia" in the context of landscape), but it also provides a solid theoretical background for them.

Donald Barlow Stauffer

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Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, ed. *Poe and Our Times: Influences and Affinities*. Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1986. 156 pp. \$18.00.

As I read Fisher's collection of essays, *Poe and Our Times*, I was repeatedly reminded of that afternoon in June 1982, when, standing at the head of a line at the Endicott Bookstore on Manhattan's Upper West Side, watching Isaac Bashevis Singer autograph my copy of *The Collected Stories*, I'd asked this great and honored man if he had ever been influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. The influence of Poe is, after all, the focus of Fisher's book; it furnishes, as Fisher states, the "single major theme" of the fourteen essays included. Indeed, the contributors to *Poe and Our Times* consider Poe's influence on poets and critics, playwrights, fiction writers, and scholars.

Relying upon Paul Valéry's notebooks and correspondence, Lois Vines reveals Poe's influence on the poet, and assesses the relationship between Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" and Valéry's life-long study of the creative process. With care and cogency, Laura Jehn Menides treats the varied evaluations of Poe by William Carlos Williams and T. S. Eliot. Discussing Charles Baudelaire's fascination with Poe, and his creation of the romantic French Poe, Roger Forclaz considers, too, Claude Richard's challenge of this legend. Furthermore, the persistence of the legendary Poe in the American theater and the difficulty of dramatizing the "man behind the legend" are ably delineated by John E. Reilly.

Comparing thematically Poe's influential detective stories with his enduring "unsolved mysteries," Bruce I. Weiner contends that the latter

are "more compelling because more akin to our experience of mystery in the world." Considering Edith Wharton's short story "The Duchess at Prayer," Eleanor Dwight reveals the influence of Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" on both language and details of plot and setting. Kent Ljungquist persuasively argues that Poe's "Eleonora" influenced language and imagery in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*, and that Poe's "To Helen" shaped such elements in Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*.

Carol Marshall Peirce documents a clear affinity between Poe and J. R. R. Tolkien; Maurice J. Bennett illuminates the Poe-Borges relationship, showing the influence of "William Wilson" on "Deutsches Requiem." Fisher himself demonstrates that Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" influenced both Stephen King's flawed novel, *The Shining*, and John Dickson Carr's admirable one, *Corpse in the Waxworks*. Linda E. McDaniel makes evident that Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" critically affected the tone and plot of William Styron's *Set This House on Fire*; Craig Werner examines the influence of Poe's "The Raven," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and other works on Ishmael Reed's novels *The Free-Lance Pallbearers*, *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*, and *Flight to Canada*.

Finally, D. M. McKeithan and Henry W. Wells elaborate upon the lives of two great scholars, Killis Campbell and Thomas Ollive Mabbott—men who were vitally influenced by Poe, and who, in turn, vitally influenced our understanding of him.

Clearly, as this fine volume attests, a variety of important writers have been vitally influenced by Poe. Yet perhaps, I wondered, as I finished Fisher's book, casting back to that afternoon in the Endicott Bookstore, the word "influenced" may be, in some cases, too weak. I vividly remember that in response to my inquiry as to whether Poe had influenced him, Isaac Bashevis Singer had paused from inscribing my book, turned up to me with gleeful eyes and grin, and declared, emphatically, "Not 'influenced'—'inspired'!"

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Joan Dayan. *Fables of Mind: An Inquiry into Poe's Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 273 pp. \$24.95

Joan Dayan's *Fables of Mind*, as suggested by the subtitle, is an inquiry in the philosophic sense—an exploration of Poe's views regarding the human mind and the dilemma of knowing and knowability as the mind interacts with the facts of the material universe. Dayan