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12 Early-19th-Century Literature

Kevin J. Hayes

Edgar Allan Poe dominates the scholarship this year with a new volume of his early critical writings, book-length biographical and critical studies, numerous articles on the tales, and several influence studies. Among the poets, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William Cullen Bryant receive a fair amount of attention. James Fenimore Cooper attracts considerable interest, too, though as a sea novelist rather than as the creator of *Leatherstocking*. A new edition of Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* is one of several recent contributions to the study of the humorists of the Old Southwest. Among African American writers Frederick Douglass, unsurprisingly, generated much scholarship, and Harriet Jacobs continues to emerge as a major voice. The fiction and nonfiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott elicited their share of attention. New interdisciplinary approaches promise to enrich the field: Poe, Jacobs, and Stowe receive attention from legal scholars, and Douglass attracted those interested in Enlightenment political philosophy, material culture, and psychoanalysis.

i Edgar Allan Poe

In 1981, Burton R. Pollin published *Imaginary Voyages*, the first volume in the *Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, a projected multivolume set ostensibly patterned after T. O. Mabbott's three-volume *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* and intended to encompass those writings omitted by Mabbott. The long-delayed *Writings in the Southern Literary Messenger: Nonfictional Prose*, ed. Pollin and Joseph V. Ridgely (Gordian), constitutes the fifth volume. It divides Poe's contributions to the *Messenger* into monthly sections. Each section begins with an essay by the editors introducing the themes of the month, followed by a list of "Texts," a

misnomer for what might more properly have been termed “Works Poe Reviewed,” each arbitrarily assigned a number. The texts of Poe’s reviews follow, numbered according to that list and poorly reproduced in facsimile. Extensive notes to Poe’s texts follow.

Placing *Writing in the Southern Literary Messenger* in my library with the earlier volumes of *Collected Writings*, I could not help but sigh and utter, “Poor Poe.” Nearby stand volumes from the Northwestern-Newberry Edition of Herman Melville, shoulder to shoulder and uniformly clad in black buckram trimmed with red and gold, a well-caparisoned regiment prepared for battle. The Poe *Collected Writings*, on the other hand, looks like a backcountry militia. Two volumes are short and stout, another is tall and thin, another short and thin, and this latest tall and fat. Inside is no uniformity, either: the texts, after the first two volumes, have been a combination of facsimile, photo-offset of inexpensive computer-generated texts, and poor-quality illustrations scattered willy-nilly to fill the spare white spaces. Despite my reservations concerning the edition as a whole, there is no doubt that Pollin’s and Ridgely’s annotations form an important contribution to Poe scholarship. Still, I cannot help but wonder if it might have been better to publish them together as a separate volume in the manner of, say, Noel Polk’s “Reading Faulkner” series. The best justification for a separate volume devoted to such a large chunk of Poe’s critical output is to make it readily accessible, yet *Writings in the Southern Literary Messenger* does not really do that, for it lacks a detailed index. One hopes that Pollin and Ridgely will consider preparing a thorough name, title, and subject index for reprintings.

John Evangelist Walsh’s *Midnight Dreary: The Mysterious Death of Edgar Allan Poe* (Rutgers) represents the year’s most important contribution to Poe biography. Since his death, Poe’s detractors as well as his supporters have never tired of trying to explain it. One unsubstantiated theory—a drunken Poe taken round Baltimore’s polling places—has become a virtual fact, while others—R. Michael Benitez’s suggestion that Poe died from rabies, for example—have been forgotten almost as soon as they were set forth (see *AmLS* 1996, p. 43). Walsh’s theory cannot be so peremptorily dismissed as Benitez’s. Shortly before his death, Poe, after having disappeared for several days, was found in the streets of Baltimore beastly drunk and clad in ill-fitting and unstylish garments. This much is known. What is unknown and what Walsh theorizes is where Poe was, how he got drunk, and why he was wearing such bizarre clothing.

Having earlier returned to Richmond, become reacquainted with his youthful sweetheart, the recently widowed Elmira Royster Shelton, taken a temperance pledge presumably on her request, and gotten engaged to her, Poe left Richmond in late September on his way to New York. Her brothers, vehemently opposed to the marriage, followed Poe on the train. Poe did not get out in Baltimore, as had been believed. Rather, he took the train to Philadelphia, where he bought some old clothes for a disguise and where he sought out John Sartain and George Lippard, who helped hide him from his pursuers. So disguised, Poe boarded a southbound train to Baltimore where they caught up with him, and, understanding the one thing Elmira would not tolerate, forced him to drink liquor. Walsh's theory is predicated on his reinterpretation of Lippard's and Sartain's reminiscences of Poe, and it depends on the coincidence that both men independently conflated Poe's September visit to Philadelphia with Poe's July visit there. Believe it or not, Walsh's book makes for exciting reading.

The title of Scott Peeples's *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited* as well as its place in Twayne's United States Author Series (TUSAS 705) suggest that it merely reworks Vincent Buranelli's *Edgar Allan Poe* (see *AmLS* 1977, p. 38), yet Peeples provides a fine original overview of Poe's life and work. Employing a range of critical approaches and analytical strategies to interpret Poe, Peeples reveals the stylistic maturation that Poe's work achieved during the course of his literary career. Besides examining the tales and poems, Peeples devotes considerable attention to Poe's criticism and gives *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* its own chapter. Anyone looking for a good single-volume overview of Poe's life and work can read *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited* with confidence. Johns Hopkins University Press has reprinted Arthur Hobson Quinn's *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* with a new foreword by Shawn Rosenheim (pp. xi–xvii) that provides a brief survey of Poe biography and an appreciation of Quinn.

Among the miscellaneous reference items relating to Poe, J. R. Hammond's *Edgar Allan Poe Chronology* (St. Martin's) contributes little. The work is designed for an undergraduate readership, yet its 70-page chronology is hardly more detailed than the chronologies appended to the Library of America editions of Poe. Still the best source of this kind of information, the *Poe Log* (1987), is now accessible to undergraduate and casual readers in paperback (Macmillan). Bonnie Szumski's *Readings on Edgar Allan Poe* (Greenhaven), though it contains no new information, is a nicely printed collection of excerpts from critical essays intended for an

undergraduate readership. Benjamin F. Fisher's Poe entry, pp. 173–80 in Marie Mulvey-Roberts's *Handbook to Gothic Literature* (NYU), provides a good general overview of Poe's gothicism, emphasizing his tendency to use Gothic conventions while simultaneously mocking them. Fisher also provides insightful links between Poe's use of the Gothic and new forms of storytelling, specifically the detective story and science fiction.

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is the subject of one book-length study and several critical essays. Ronald C. Harvey, *The Critical History of Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym: "A Dialogue with Unreason"* (Garland)—the subtitle comes from Michel Foucault and could easily have been omitted—presents a detailed survey of *Pym* criticism. Harvey displays a mastery of the secondary scholarship regarding Poe's only completed novel, yet I cannot help but fault the work's organization and purpose. While its title tells us that it will be a history, the book is organized thematically, not chronologically, its middle chapters treating the psychological, structural, and historical aspects of the novel. In his first chapter Harvey discusses the critical theory underlying reception history; I would argue that reception history involves much more than surveying pertinent literary criticism; it should also consider a work's bibliographical, textual, social, and cultural history. Harvey makes no mention of intriguing aspects of the novel that have occurred outside the scholarship. A copy of a cheap London edition of *Pym*, for instance, went round the Rossetti household in 1849; the image of Christina and William sharing the poorly printed, paperbound copy provides a delightful contribution to the cultural history of Poe's novel, yet it does not enter Harvey's critical history. Similarly, Peter Delpet's excellent film adaptation of *Pym, Forbidden Quest* (1995), represents another facet of the novel's cultural history, yet it does not enter Harvey's work. Nevertheless, Harvey's *Critical History* is a useful reference, and it should help prevent such jejune essays as Samuel Maio's "The Word Lunacy Was Never Employed: A Defense of the Structure of Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*" (*SDR* 35, i [1997]: 54–67). Though Maio claims originality, he cites no scholarship later than the mid-1950s, and the "original" point he makes that *Pym* is a "tightly unified novel"—is itself a throwback to the heyday of the New Criticism.

Victoria Nelson provides a good contribution to *Pym* scholarship in "Symmes Hole, or the South Polar Romance" (*Raritan* 17, ii [1997]: 136–66). Part personal essay and part intellectual history, this article exemplifies what scholarship can offer when it speaks not to the critical

elite but to educated readers in general. Tracing the romantic allure of the South Pole and its place in the Western imagination, Nelson begins with the idea that we project our inner psychological states onto the earth's physical contours. In the 17th century, theories regarding the polar regions belonged to the Neo-Platonic natural philosophers, most notably Thomas Burnet, but by the late 18th century the psychological associations with the polar regions had become a matter for the literary imagination, not the scientific. *Pym*, Nelson observes, "is an *imagined* story in the full sense of the word. In Poe's only novel, action must be imaginatively anticipated before it can be made manifest, events seem only to proceed while the first-person narrator lies in a swoon, and Pym awakens each time to find himself regressed into ever more outrageously claustrophobic and life-threatening predicaments. This repetitive retreat into lowered or obliterated consciousness is a microcosmic journey to his own self's Terra Incognita, an ongoing dress rehearsal of the outer journey that will end so obscurely."

Studies of *Pym* and race have become tiresome in recent years, yet Teresa A. Goddu invigorates the subject with "The Ghost of Race: Edgar Allan Poe and the Southern Gothic," pp. 73–93 in her *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (Columbia, 1997). After surveying how American literary history has situated Poe, Goddu discusses the theories underlying attitudes toward race among Poe's contemporaries. Though previous interpretations of *Pym* and race have generally assumed that Poe accepted the belief that whites were inherently superior to blacks, Goddu suggests that this belief is based on polygenism, the theory that the races are innately different, which had yet to prevail over monogenism, the belief in the original sameness of man. According to monogenism, external factors determine racial difference, but as polygenism has it biological differences determine racial differences. *Pym*, Goddu persuasively argues, reflects the theory of monogenism, which allowed Poe to challenge racial boundaries and convey the ease with which the self could be transformed into the other. Paul Lyons's treatment of *Pym* and race is much less successful. While "Opening Accounts in the South Seas: Poe's *Pym* and American Pacific Orientalism" (*ESQ* 42 [1996]: 291–326) purports to situate *Pym* within its trans-Pacific context, the article amounts to little more than a reiteration of earlier criticism concerning *Pym* and race.

"The Black Cat," one of many Poe tales to receive critical treatment this year, is interpreted by Lesley Ginsberg in terms of race in "Slavery

and the Gothic Horror of Poe's 'The Black Cat,'" pp. 99–128 in *American Gothic*. Though the essay brings together an impressive number of contemporary documents to show parallels between slavery and pet ownership, the argument that "The Black Cat" allegorizes slavery is reductive and unconvincing. Malini Johar Schueller's treatment of Poe and race in *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Michigan, pp. 113–23) incorporates her earlier reading of "Ligeia" (see *AmLS* 1995, p. 46).

Few tales are more frequently used to understand Poe's depiction of race than "The Gold Bug." Norman Stafford's "Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Gold Bug,' the Trickster, and the 'Long-Tail'd Blue'" (*Thalia* 18: 72–83) provides a necessary corrective for those who have interpreted the character of Jupiter in "The Gold Bug" as evidence of Poe's alleged racism. Poe's depiction of Jupiter, Stafford observes, "is no worse than those of other traditional comic figures and in itself does not reveal Poe's racism, but more accurately the racism of the society which created the stereotype." Stafford identifies Jupiter as "the long-tail'd blue," the African American counterpart to Yankee Jonathan. Stafford's essay also shows how Poe used humor to undermine the narrator's perspective and mitigate the story's potentially horrific elements. David Tomlinson's flippant and anachronistic "Eddie Didn't Do Stand-Up: Some Keys to Poe's Humor," pp. 186–95 in *New Directions in American Humor*, contributes little to the discussion.

Martin Priestman, *Crime Fiction: From Poe to the Present* (Northcote House), provides a brief yet insightful overview of the Dupin stories, not only identifying Poe as the inventor of the modern detective story but also as the inventor of the "single-hero-series form." Furthermore, with the character of the Minister D— in "The Purloined Letter," Poe created the "figure of the villain-genius," which would become a prominent motif for the genre. Peter Thoms's "The Stories of Poe's Dupin," pp. 44–70 in his *Detection and Its Designs: Narrative and Power in Nineteenth-Century Detective Fiction* (Ohio), examines the three Dupin stories, looking specifically at how Poe's detective verbally unravels his solutions to gain control over both his victims and his auditors. In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," for example, Dupin obtains pleasure by imposing his power on both the narrator and the sailor whom he traps. Thoms draws a parallel between the sailor's attempt to control the captured orangutan and Dupin's attempt to use power as a means of control. Thoms's treatments of "The Mystery of Marie Roget" and "The

Purloined Letter” are less detailed than his discussion of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” yet still worth reading. As part of his discussion, Thoms cites a work outside literary scholarship, yet one that deserves inclusion in Poe bibliography. In *Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit* (Scribner's, 1995) John Douglas and Mark Olshaker characterize Dupin as “history's first behavioral profiler” and call “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” “the first use of a proactive technique by the profiler to flush out an unknown subject and vindicate an innocent man imprisoned for the killings.”

Daniel J. Philippon, “Poe in the Ragged Mountains: Environmental History and Romantic Aesthetics” (*SLJ* 30, ii: 1–16), makes a solid contribution to our understanding of “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains.” Philippon places the story in the context of both the social and natural history of the countryside surrounding Charlottesville. He displays a fine grasp of Poe's Virginia heritage, making use of 19th-century novels that took the Virginia backwoods as their setting, classics of early American literature from Captain John Smith to Thomas Jefferson, local histories of Albemarle County, and nonprint sources, too, especially local legends from the area. The locality and the backward folk who inhabit it provide important contexts for appreciating the story's ironies and understanding the relationship between its Orientalism and its local resonances. Jochen Achilles also examines the cross-cultural implications of “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” in “Edgar Allan Poe's Melting Pot: Skeptical Soundings of Cultural Composition” (*Anglia* 115 [1997]: 352–74). Achilles also discusses several other tales and sketches: “Four Beasts in One—The Homo-Cameleopard,” “Instinct vs. Reason—A Black Cat,” “Morning on the Wissahiccon,” “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether,” and “Hop-Frog.”

Sickness and death provided further themes for critical exploration. Sarah Boykin Hardy devotes the first half of “The Art of Diagnosis” (*Narrative* 6: 157–73) to a discussion of “The Fall of the House of Usher,” interpreting the narrator as a diagnostician and showing how Poe's story anticipated the work of William Carlos Williams. “Usher” is also the subject of Steven Carter's “The Two Tarns: A Note on ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ and Chapter II of *Walden*” (*TSB* 223: 1–2), which compares Poe's image of the tarn with Thoreau's. Though both describe inverted images that appear on the surface, Thoreau's tarn reflects the heavens and symbolizes rebirth, whereas Poe's provides a narcissistic reflection of the self and thus prefigures death. Judith E. Pike begins “Poe

and the Revenge of the Exquisite Corpse” (*SAF* 26: 171–92) by situating Poe within the context of funeral practices in his day, a time when new embalming practices sought to give corpses lifelike appearances. In American culture, these exquisite corpses became fetishized; Poe, however, recognized the problematic nature of lifelike corpses and sought to reassert the dead body’s corporeality through his tales of premature burial. Pike touches upon several stories, devoting the most space to “Berenice.”

“The Tell-Tale Heart” received attention from scholars in different disciplines. In “The Illusion of Transparency: Biased Assessments of Others’ Ability to Read One’s Emotional States” (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75: 332–46) Thomas Gilovich et al. use the tale to introduce their theory that “people often overestimate the extent to which their thoughts, feelings, and sensations ‘leak out’ and are available to others.” Having his narrator imagine that the police officers in the story could discern his guilt, Poe expressed what social psychologists are only now beginning to confirm empirically. Robert Batey, “Literature in a Criminal Law Course: Aeschylus, Burgess, Oates, Camus, Poe, and Melville” (*Legal Studies Forum* 22: 44–77), cites the usefulness of “The Tell-Tale Heart” as a pedagogical tool; it provides an excellent case study on which law students can prepare an insanity defense.

Minor source studies concerning Poe’s fiction include Richard C. Frushell’s “Poe’s Name ‘Ligeia’ and Milton” (*ANQ* 11, i: 18–20), which claims that Poe’s source for the name is Ligeia in Milton’s *Comus*. This attribution is not new. Further, Frushell is mistaken in asserting that “Ligeia” represents Poe’s only literary use of *Comus*; he ignores Poe’s numerous references to the work, which he preferred over *Paradise Lost*. John Gruesser’s “Poe’s ‘The Cask of Amontillado’” (*Expl* 56: 129–30) contrasts the meaning of the characters’ names in Poe’s story, finding Montresor to be derived from the Latin thesaurus, meaning a storehouse or hoard, and Fortunato, meaning prosperous or happy, with specifically religious undertones; Fortunato means God’s favorite, whereas Montresor is rooted in the physical and material world. Burton R. Pollin, “The Contribution of Young’s *Night Thoughts* to Poe’s Tale, ‘The Premature Burial’” (*PSA Newsletter* 26: 1–2), locates specific passages from Edward Young that might have inspired Poe’s tale, which even mentions *Night Thoughts*. Young’s influence, however, was more general than specific: Poe was well aware of the graveyard poetry tradition, and his reference to Young is offhand.

Two articles treat Poe's critical theory. In "Poe, 'Simplicity,' and *Blackwood's Magazine*" (*MissQ* 51: 233–42) J. Lasley Dameron defines "simplicity" as a critical concept and compares Poe's use of the word to that of the British magazinists of his day. Joyce Carol Oates, "Beginnings: 'The Origins and Art of the Short Story,'" pp. 47–52 in *The Tales We Tell: Perspectives on the Short Story*, ed. Barbara Lounsberry et al. (Greenwood), observes that "Poe's aesthetic is a curious admixture of the romantic and the classic: the intention of the artwork is to move the reader's soul deeply, but the means to this intention is coolly, if not chillingly, cerebral. Poe in his philosophy as in his practice is both visionary and manipulator."

Poe's poetry receives little attention. The most significant essay is Daniel Hoffman's entry in Eric L. Haralson's *Encyclopedia of American Poetry* (see below). Two source studies supply the remainder of the discussion of Poe's verse. Wesley Britton, "Edgar Allan Poe and John Milton: 'The Nativity Ode' as Source for 'The Bells'" (*ANQ* 11, ii: 29–31), identifies verbal similarities. Burton R. Pollin, "Dickens's *Chimes* and Its Pathway into Poe's 'Bells'" (*MissQ* 51: 217–31), identifies parallel passages between the Dickens Christmas story and the poem.

Poe's influence provides the subject for several sophisticated, wide-ranging critical studies. Rachel Polonsky's "Edgar Allan Poe and the Magic of Words," pp. 97–114 in her *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge), details Poe's profound impact on turn-of-the-century Russian poets. For Konstantin Balmont and Valery Bryusov, Poe was "a kind of shaman, endowed with preternatural powers of intuition, an interpreter of hieratic wisdom, an unlocker of mysteries." For Andrei Bely, "The Power of Words" and "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" served as "proto-Symbolist poetics in fictional form" and emphasized the importance for man to recapture his poetic intellect and give words new meanings imbued with myth. Polonsky concludes that "Poe finds his place for Russian Symbolist readers at the intersection of science, magic, and poetry. He comes to exemplify the atavistic 'poetic intellect' which, for the Symbolists, was one of the greatest discoveries of nineteenth-century science, but which would enchant mankind back to primitive, pre-scientific insight in an intoxicating spell of vocal sound."

Ever since Walter Benjamin associated the idea of the *flâneur* and Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," scholars from a variety of disciplines have used Poe's story as a touchstone for understanding the modes of perception in the modern urban environment. In "Welty, Hawthorne, and Poe: Men

of the Crowd and the Landscape of Alienation" (*MissQ* 50 [1997]: 553–65) Noel Polk shows how Poe's story anticipates Eudora Welty's "Old Mr. Marblehall." Tom Gunning, "From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and *Traffic in Souls* (1913)" (*Wide Angle* 19, iv [1997]: 25–61) argues that "The Man of the Crowd" engages three different spectator positions: the *flâneur* and the detective, both represented by the narrator, and the *badaud* (or gawker), represented by the man of the crowd. Gunning's essay is provocative, yet I cannot help but question his identification of the man of the crowd with the *badaud*. Gunning is apparently unaware of Poe's knowledge of the term, which he used in one of his conundrums in *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*: "Why is the fifteenth letter of the alphabet, when mutilated, like a Parisian cockney? Because it is a bad O—*badaud*." Poe's implicit definition of the *badaud* as a lower-class, unsophisticated person does not precisely suit the man of the crowd. After examining these modes of perception, Gunning applies them to early film spectatorship.

Poe and film comprise the subject of Dennis R. Perry's "Imps of the Perverse: Discovering the Poe/Hitchcock Connection" (*LFQ* 24 [1996]: 393–99). Perry begins his essay by showing that François Truffaut, as well as his compatriots in the French New Wave, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, recognized Alfred Hitchcock's debt to Poe. Poe and Hitchcock, Perry convincingly argues, shared similar attitudes toward suspense, audience manipulation, and artistic craftsmanship. *Vertigo* in particular reflects Poe's influence and specifically echoes "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," and "The Man of the Crowd." Perry's essay represents a good start at a complex and fascinating subject, yet he ignores a vital piece of evidence: a Paris edition of Poe's *Histoires extraordinaires* (1960) contains an introduction by Alfred Hitchcock.

ii The Poets

Eric L. Haralson's long-anticipated *Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (Fitzroy Dearborn), intended as a companion to John Hollander's two-volume anthology, *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (see *AmLS* 1993, p. 169), has finally appeared. Haralson covers all of the poets included by Hollander, and quotations of verse are keyed to Hollander's edition. Each entry combines biography with a critical appreciation, and the length of each entry serves as a rough guide to the poet's relative importance. The individual articles should prompt

readers to reconsider the value of many poets. Gary Scharnhorst's essay on Longfellow (pp. 265–70), for example, notices Longfellow's declining reputation since the midpoint of the 20th century and calls for a more sympathetic understanding of his work.

As if to answer the call, Virginia Jackson in "Longfellow's Tradition; or, Picture-Writing a Nation" (*MLQ* 59: 471–96) attempts to resuscitate the poet's reputation by arguing that he intentionally fashioned *The Song of Hiawatha* to be popular. Subtly incorporating his immense classical and linguistic erudition into a straightforward and easy-to-read style, Longfellow gave readers access to an "advanced literacy" regardless of their linguistic competence. Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "El Gran Poeta Longfellow and a Psalm of Exile" (*AmLH* 10: 395–427), situates *Evangeline* within the context of New World Spanish literature. Wayne Grady, "Acadia, Acadia!" (*QQ* 105: 383–91), discusses *Evangeline* from a Canadian point of view to show that Longfellow grossly distorted the historical background surrounding the removal of the Acadians in 1755. The redcoats were not responsible for their removal; rather, colonial Massachusetts forces were.

Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, and John Greenleaf Whittier serve as examples for Ken Egan's "The Poetry of Technological Empire" (*WHR* 52: 56–71), which draws parallels between antebellum American poetry and the technological development of the West, using *Hiawatha*, "The Prairies," and "Snow-Bound" for support. George Monteiro's "William Cullen Bryant to Josiah Barstow: Three Letters" (*ANQ* 11, ii: 32–34) presents three newly discovered letters from Bryant to Josiah Whitney Barstow, friend, neighbor, and fellow gardening enthusiast. Michael P. Branch's "William Cullen Bryant: The Nature Poet as Environmental Journalist" (*ATQ* 12: 179–97) emphasizes Bryant's reputation not only as a poet but also as a journalist and examines his newspaper writings for their celebration of the American landscape.

iii James Fenimore Cooper

James Fenimore Cooper: The Birth of American Maritime Experience, a special issue of *American Neptune* (57 [1997]) guest-edited by Robert Foulke, contains several fine essays on Cooper and the sea. In "Becoming James Fenimore Cooper" (pp. 299–314) Wayne Franklin surveys some of the fundamental problems with Cooper biography and uses one incident—his 1826 decision to change his name from James Cooper to

James Fenimore Cooper—as a way of understanding Cooper’s life and character. Franklin’s essay combines evidence and insight to make a good contribution to Cooper biography. Furthermore, it enhances the importance of names in Cooper’s fiction. Natty Bumppo’s “seemingly endless sequence of sobriquets,” for example, reveals much “about the fluidity of Cooper’s sense of self.” Franklin’s “Cooper as Passenger” (pp. 351–57) provides a key to understanding Cooper’s sea fiction. When he sailed aboard the *Stirling* in his youth, he did so not as a forecandle hand but as “a well connected young man with a landed identity that would give him special status on board, a not uncommon figure in Cooper’s sea fiction.”

Thomas Philbrick, “Fact and Fiction: Uses of Maritime History in Cooper’s *Afloat and Ashore*” (pp. 315–21), shows how *Afloat and Ashore* marks the third phase in Cooper’s sea fiction. Whereas his earliest sea fiction had been set in America’s past and his sea novels of the middle period took their themes and settings from European naval history, *Afloat and Ashore* was set in the recent past and treated much humbler events and characters. His reacquaintance with Ned Myers and his retelling of his story in *Ned Myers* prompted him to seek other more realistic and contemporary settings. In a related essay, “James Fenimore Cooper’s Ned Myers: A Life before the Mast” (pp. 323–29), William S. Dudley provides background detail regarding the real-life Myers and Cooper’s story. Dudley argues that by the early 1840s sea literature had begun to turn away from the kinds of highly romanticized stories that Cooper had written to feature more realistic accounts among common sailors. *Ned Myers* represents Cooper’s effort to write a book akin to Richard Henry Dana’s *Two Years Before the Mast*. Harold D. Langley, “Images of the Sailor in the Novels of James Fenimore Cooper” (pp. 359–70), traces Cooper’s depiction of the sailor from Tom Coffin in *The Pilot* through *Red Rover*, *Afloat and Ashore*, *Miles Wallingford*, and *Sea Lions*. Langley too emphasizes the importance of Cooper’s reacquaintance with Myers.

Hugh Egan, “Enabling and Disabling the Lake Erie Discussion: James Fenimore Cooper and Alexander Slidell Mackenzie Respond to the Perry/Elliott Controversy” (pp. 343–49), describes the Battle of Lake Erie, during which Captain Jesse D. Elliot had come under suspicion for shying away from battle while Oliver Hazard Perry’s vessel suffered crippling damage. Perry eventually overtook Elliot’s ship and brilliantly won the battle against a much larger British force. After Cooper avoided casting Elliot in a bad light in his *History of the Navy*, Alexander Slidell

Mackenzie critiqued Cooper's account, and Cooper voluminously responded. Robert D. Madison's "Nelson Resartus: Legitimate Order in Cooper's Fleet Novel" (pp. 331–34) provides a good appreciation of *The Two Admirals*, identifying its major influences and themes. Though Admiral Nelson does not explicitly figure in the story, the hierarchical relationship that Robert Southey described in his *Life of Nelson* formed an important source for the novel, as did the Perry-Elliot Lake Erie controversy. Madison's "Cooper and the Sea: A Bibliographical Note" (pp. 371–72) supplies a brief overview of both primary and secondary works.

April Alliston and Pamela J. Schirmeister add further insight into Cooper's relationship with the sea and the commercial opportunities it offered in "James Fenimore Cooper: Entrepreneur of the Self" (*PAAS* 107 [1997]: 41–64). They reconstruct Cooper's purchase of the whaling ship *Union* in 1819, a venture that roughly coincided with his initial attempt at novel-writing. Both efforts represent Cooper's quest to make his fortune or, to be more precise, to disburden himself from his ever-increasing debts. Regardless of its commercial success, the *Union* gave Cooper ample opportunity to navigate Long Island Sound, descriptions of which would make their way into *The Water-Witch*, *Miles Wallingford*, and *Jack Tier*. Alliston and Schirmeister conjecture that Cooper reoutfitted the vessel in 1820 to finance the publication of his first novel, *Precaution*, and possibly *The Spy* too. They shrewdly observe that "the confluence of *The Pioneers*' success and the sale of the whaler suggests perhaps that Cooper had used the *Union* to keep himself afloat, and that when his writing finally showed signs of allowing it, he sold off a good investment at a better price in order to devote himself wholly to his newfound career as an author."

The Leatherstocking Tales did receive some attention this year. Lawrence Rosenwald's articulate and engaging "*The Last of the Mohicans* and the Languages of America" (*CE* 60: 9–30) is less a specific treatment of Cooper's most important novel than it is an example designed to emphasize the importance of scrutinizing the way that American authors represent and incorporate the spoken language in all its forms, accents, and dialects. Clay Daniel, "Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*" (*Expl* 56: 126–28), finds echoes of Milton's *Comus* in the novel. In "Man with a Cross: Hawkeye Was a 'Half-Breed'" (*James Fenimore Cooper Society Miscellaneous Papers* 10: 1–8) Barbara Mann devotes considerable effort to proving that Natty Bumppo has Indian ancestry, but the effort seems

pointless. Insisting on Natty Bumppo's Indian blood, Mann detracts from the character's complexity and flatly contradicts Cooper's continual insistence that Hawkeye is white. Making Hawkeye white and having him acquire Indian characteristics, Cooper reveals the fluidity of racial boundaries and suggests that race is a construct, not a given.

Cooper's landscape aesthetic forms the subject of two essays. James J. Schramer's "'A Union of Art and Nature': Cooper and American Landscape Aesthetics" (*James Fenimore Cooper Society Miscellaneous Papers* 10: 9–15) contributes to Cooper biography as it surveys his plans for and theories behind landscape gardening. In the same journal, Nancy C. Shour's "Heirs to the Wild and Distant Past: Landscape and Historiography in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*" (10: 17–23) examines the symbolic meaning of Cooper's landscape descriptions in *The Pioneers*, which "invoke not the optimistic, limitless possibilities of the American future, but serve as a record of the past, a record whose 'meaning'—whose history—must be passed from generation to generation, as illustrated by the development of Elizabeth Temple into the type of citizen-historian who becomes the custodian of cultural memory." *The Pioneers* is also the subject of "Cooper and the Sources of American National Identity," pp. 15–40 in Susan Schekel's *The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton), a slightly revised version of an earlier essay (see *AmLS* 1993, p. 173).

Miscellaneous Cooper articles include John McWilliams, "James Russell Lowell on Cooper: Forgotten Tributes" (*James Fenimore Cooper Society Newsletter* 9, iii: 3–4), which identifies previously neglected opinions of James Russell Lowell, who satirized Cooper in *A Fable for Critics* yet later in life recommended Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* as books that readers could return to time and again. David B. Baldwin, "Whitman on Cooper" (*James Fenimore Cooper Society Newsletter* 9, i: 4–6), similarly surveys Walt Whitman's scattered references to Cooper. The newsletter contains numerous shorter articles that Cooper enthusiasts will want to consult. While space limitations prevent listing each of these separately, I cannot help but mention Hugh C. MacDougall's "Cooper's Library" (9, i: 1), an exciting announcement that a direct descendant of Cooper has recently donated 200 books inscribed by Cooper to the New York State Historical Association. As a tantalizing hint of the collection's value, MacDougall quotes Susan Fenimore Cooper's lengthy inscription from her father's copy of Shakespeare.

iv Humorists of the Old Southwest

Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's Georgia Scenes Completed: A Scholarly Text (Georgia), ed. David Rachels, provides an important contribution to the study of the humor of the Old Southwest. Rachels's detailed introduction and his companion piece, "Oliver Hillhouse Prince, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, and the Birth of American Literary Realism" (*MissQ* 51: 603–19), establish his expertise. The edition, however, has its problems. Longstreet contributed many newspaper sketches set in Georgia and revised a selected number of these to form *Georgia Scenes* (1835), a collection that quickly established itself as a classic of American humor. In this new edition Rachels includes Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* as it was constituted for the first book publication, "Uncollected Georgia Scenes," and numerous other items that Rachels astutely attributes to Longstreet. Where Rachels goes awry is in his underlying textual approach, for he creates an eclectic text, an outmoded process of editing that leads him to several wrongheaded decisions. He takes the original newspaper texts as his copy-texts and emends from the first edition of *Georgia Scenes*. His emendations, however, are by no means consistent. Recognizing that Longstreet revised his text for *Georgia Scenes*, Rachels incorporates some of Longstreet's revisions, though not all of them. In an appendix, Rachels lists previous editions of *Georgia Scenes* with commentary. He criticizes the 1975 Beehive Press edition, based on the first edition of *Georgia Scenes*, because it is "'corrected' without any reference to the newspaper appearances of the sketches." I, for one, prefer the text of the Beehive edition over Rachels's, for it takes the first edition of *Georgia Scenes* as copy-text and emends only typographical errors. Scholars interested in the biographical introduction or the uncollected sketches will want to consult Rachels's edition, yet anyone looking for a good reading text of *Georgia Scenes* might prefer the earlier edition.

Other contributions to the study of the humor of the old Southwest include Stephen Meats's "Joseph Gault, An Unknown Georgia Humorist" (*MissQ* 51: 589–602). Though the title of Gault's *Reports of Decisions in Justice's Courts, in the State of Georgia, from . . . 1820 to 1846* (1846) sounds serious, it is actually a burlesque. Providing an overview of his life and work and examples from Gault's *Reports*, Meats makes a convincing case for his importance to the history of American humor. One hopes Meats will continue his research and prepare a new edition of Gault's

Reports. Michele Valerie Ronnick, “William Gilmore Simms and the Second Earliest Example of the Pseudo-Latinate Noun ‘Absquatulation’ in Nineteenth-Century American Letters” (*MissQ* 51: 699–700), situates Simms’s use of the word with other contemporary usages. Her effort to identify a precise source is, however, misguided; the use of bizarre-sounding pseudo-Latinate words had long been part of American humor.

Paul Andrew Hutton, “‘Going to Congress and making allmynacks is my trade’: Davy Crockett, His Almanacs, and the Evolution of a Frontier Legend” (*JW* 37, ii: 10–22) surveys Davy Crockett’s life and posthumous reputation, looking at how Crockett contributed to the creation of his public persona and examining how posthumous almanac-makers perpetuated and extended his legendary exploits. Hutton examines the general themes of the almanacs and quotes from them generously, observing that after 1841 they “became mouthpieces for Westward expansion and a wildly jingoistic nationalism.” Hutton presents a fine general overview; now it is time to get down to specifics. Someone should prepare a thorough tale-type and motif index of the Crockett almanacs. For a new biographical treatment of Crockett, see William C. Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis* (HarperCollins).

v African American Voices

Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* continues to provoke critical exploration. Sarah Emsley, “Harriet Jacobs and the Language of Autobiography” (*CRevAS* 28, ii: 145–62), provides a good appreciation of *Incidents*, exploring how Jacobs negotiated between two literary genres, autobiography and sentimental domestic fiction, to tell a story of sexual oppression that had the potential to alienate contemporary Northern readers. Jacobs’s life, while illustrative of the evils of slavery, also exemplified a woman who deliberately defied traditional moral codes as a way of asserting herself. In *Voices of the Nation* (pp. 90–97) Caroline Field Levander catalogs references to the oral culture in *Incidents*, specifically to the sexually abusive language of slave masters and the forced public silence of their slaves. Alexis Brooks De Vita’s “Escaped Tricksters: Runaway Narratives as Trickster Tales” (*Griot* 17, ii: 1–10) briefly situates Jacobs’s *Incidents* within the tradition of African trickster tales, a topic worthy of more detailed treatment. Taken together, the essays of Emsley

and De Vita depict Jacobs negotiating between the discursive space of Anglo-American domestic sentimentalism while telling a story reminiscent of traditional African narrative. To what extent did Jacobs reshape her story to suit her contemporary readers—white, Northern, middle-class, female—and to what extent did she remain faithful to her folk roots? One possible way to answer these questions would be to examine runaway narratives that survived in the African American oral culture and thus were not reshaped for the mainstream culture. These narratives, many gathered by the WPA during the 1930s, offer much potential to understand the relationship between runaway narratives and trickster tales, for they often combine motifs from both.

Christina Accomando takes a different approach to Jacobs in “‘The laws were laid down to me anew’: Harriet Jacobs and the Reframing of Legal Fictions” (*AAR* 32: 229–45). After an inappropriate attempt to link her topic to current events, Accomando settles into a fine comparison of Thomas Cobb’s *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States* (1858) and Jacobs’s *Incidents*. As a prologue to a lengthier study mainly devoted to 20th-century figures, Patricia Felisa Barbeito’s “‘Making Generations’ in Jacobs, Larsen, and Hurston: A Genealogy of Black Women’s Writing” (*AL* 70: 365–95) discusses the paradoxical status of Harriet Jacobs’s narrator-protagonist in *Incidents*, who, while freed from slavery, cannot escape the stigma of the fallen woman. Deriving his title, “Incidents in the Life of a White Woman: Economics of Race and Gender in the Antebellum Nation” (*AmLH* 10: 239–65), from Jacobs’s narrative, Russ Castronovo argues that authors of antebellum plantation novels co-opted the rhetorical strategies of the slave narratives to bolster their pro-slavery discourse. Castronovo’s title is misleading, however, for all but one of the novels he cites postdate Jacobs’s *Incidents*, and he does not specify which slave narratives influenced the plantation novels.

Frederick Douglass received two book-length studies this year. David B. Chesebrough devotes the first part of *Frederick Douglass: Oratory from Slavery* (Greenwood) to biography, specifically concentrating on Douglass’s development as an orator. The second part, which begins with an analysis of rhetorical techniques, includes the texts of three speeches, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852), “Negroes and the National War Effort” (1863), and “The Lessons of the Hour” (1894). Chesebrough appends a chronology of selected speeches. Gregory P. Lampe’s *Frederick Douglass: Freedom’s Voice, 1818–1845* (Mich. State) treats Douglass’s development as an orator, concentrating on his

early life. Lampe appends Douglass's speaking itinerary through 1845 and the texts of three speeches. Lampe's work contains much more biographical information than Chesebrough's, producing what may be the fullest treatment of Douglass's early life to date.

Several articles also are devoted to Douglass. Douglas Anderson, "The Textual Reproductions of Frederick Douglass" (*Clio* 27: 57–87), beginning with his oratory but mainly discussing *My Bondage and My Freedom*, examines Douglass as a conscious literary stylist. Daneen Wardrop's "'While I Am Writing': Webster's 1825 *Spelling Book*, the Ell, and Frederick Douglass's Positioning of Language" (*AAR* 32: 649–60) has potential, but her subject gets lost amid a flurry of misleading critical jargon. Carole A. Raybourn, "The Black Aesthetic in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*" (*Postscript* 14 [1997]: 29–41), viewing Douglass through an aesthetic movement first defined in the 1960s, finds that Douglass incorporated aspects of traditional African American oral culture—spiritual, sermons—in his *Narrative*, another topic that deserves more detailed study.

Douglass is also the subject of a variety of interdisciplinary approaches. Gwen Bergner's "Myths of Masculinity: The Oedipus Complex and Douglass's 1845 *Narrative*," pp. 241–60 in *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (Columbia), notes how psychoanalysis has traditionally neglected race, and, pairing Douglass's *Narrative* with Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex, seeks to understand how race relates to notions of identity and sexuality. Sarah Luria's "Racial Equality Begins at Home: Frederick Douglass's Challenge to American Domesticity," pp. 25–43 in *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*, ed. Eleanor McD. Thompson (Winterthur), examines a problem central to racism after the Civil War: while many who advocated civil rights were willing to accept blacks into public spaces occupied by the white citizenry, they were unwilling to admit them into their homes. Beginning with Douglass's comments about the importance of the home in his writings, Luria goes on to examine how Douglass's own home furnishings reflect his philosophy of racial integration. Bernard R. Boxill, "Radical Implications of Locke's Moral Theory: The Views of Frederick Douglass," pp. 29–48 in *Subjugation and Bondage: Critical Essays on Slavery and Social Philosophy*, ed. Tommy L. Lott (Rowman and Littlefield), discusses Douglass's understanding of such Lockean concepts as elitism, freedom, human malleability, human rights, and liberty.

vi Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott

David Grant, “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the Triumph of Republican Rhetoric” (*NEQ* 71: 429–48), shows how Stowe’s novel incorporated the Free Soil rhetoric of its time and anticipated the Republican discourse that would soon become prevalent. Lauren Berlant’s overlong essay, “Poor Eliza” (*AL* 70: 635–68), explicates the use of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I* and explores the story’s relationship to several other popular, though slight, 20th-century texts as a way to assert the lasting cultural importance of sentimentalism. Doris Y. Kadish in “Gendered Readings of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*: The Example of Sand and Flaubert” (*NCFS* 26: 308–20) contrasts George Sand’s understanding of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* with that of Gustave Flaubert to argue that Sand’s appreciation and Flaubert’s dislike are gender-biased reactions. Kadish significantly weakens her argument by identifying the notion of art for art’s sake as an exclusively male aesthetic judgment. Early in “Stowe Takes the Stage: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *The Christian Slave*” (*Legacy* 15: 78–84) Eric Gardner mentions that he has located more than a dozen contemporary reviews of Mary Webb’s performance of Stowe’s *The Christian Slave*, yet his notes and bibliography only list five.

Never before has Stowe’s *Dred* received the amount of erudition Alfred L. Brophy gives it in “Humanity, Utility, and Logic in Southern Legal Thought: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Vision in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*” (*Boston University Law Review* 78: 1113–61). Brophy’s purpose is threefold: to recognize ideas of jurisprudence circulating in the popular culture at the time, to understand how Stowe believed Southern lawyers and judges reasoned, and to compare Stowe’s “depiction of the reasoning processes of Southern legal thinkers to the processes that they actually undertook.” While some literary critics may find Brophy’s legal erudition intimidating, all Stowe scholars will want to consult this fine article. Another article about *Dred*, Natasha Sajé’s “Open Coffins and Sealed Books: The Death of the Coquette in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Dred*” (*Legacy* 15: 158–70), compares the coquettish behavior of Nina to contemporary notions of true womanhood.

Other Stowe novels receive attention too. Like Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*, which had appeared the year before, Stowe’s *Agnes of Sorrento* is a hastily assembled romance that incorporates large chunks of text from her Italian travel diaries. Annamaria Formichella in “Domes-

ticity and Nationalism in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Agnes of Sorrento*" (*Legacy* 15: 188–203) finds meaningful patterns in Stowe's disjointed narrative and, in so doing, may make *Agnes* out to be more important than it is. Edward Tang, "Making Declarations of Her Own: Harriet Beecher Stowe as New England Historian" (*NEQ* 71: 77–96), treats *The Minister's Wooing*, *Oldtown Folks*, and *Pogonuc People*, observing how Stowe "interweaves memory, history, and nostalgia both to critique the past and to come to terms with a tumultuous present."

Stowe's nonfiction provides the subject of Susan A. Eacker's "Gender in Paradise: Harriet Beecher Stowe and Postbellum Prose on Florida" (*Journal of Southern History* 64: 495–512). Eacker examines Stowe's *Palmetto-Leaves*, a compilation of sketches from Florida that basically functioned as a promotional tract for female readers. Florida not only offered women the opportunity for physical health, but it also gave them considerable personal freedom. By no means is *Palmetto-Leaves* unique, for other contemporary promotional tracts by female authors voiced similar ideas. Eacker observes that Florida offered "a sort of gender abandon for these female authors partly because it represented the antithesis of northern bourgeois order and decorum, which Stowe equated with 'propriety' and 'starched linen cuffs.'"

This year's Louisa May Alcott scholarship, though less extensive than the Stowe scholarship, is of high quality. Madeleine B. Stern's *Louisa May Alcott: From Blood and Thunder to Hearth and Home* (Northeastern) reprints her essays on Alcott originally published from 1943 through 1995. While containing nothing new, this collection is worth mentioning as a tribute to a scholar who has devoted her career to studying Alcott and making a case for Alcott's literary complexity and her importance to American literature. While Stern set a high standard for Alcott scholars to follow, the works of Sheryl A. Englund and Claudia Durst Johnson indicate that today's Alcott scholars are rising to the challenge. Englund's "Reading the Author in *Little Women*: A Biography of a Book" (*ATQ* 12: 199–219) takes up where Stern leaves off, combining an enthusiasm for Alcott with a fine understanding of book culture. Englund shows how Alcott and Jo March, her narrator-protagonist, became conflated in the popular imagination, how Alcott's contemporary and posthumous editors capitalized on the association between the two, and how Alcott herself ultimately accepted the association in correspondence with her fans. Englund's essay is not just a contribution to Alcott scholarship; it is also a contribution to the history of the book. Johnson's "Transcenden-

tal Wild Oats' or The Cost of an Idea" (*ATQ* 12: 45–65) analyzes Alcott's retelling of her family's experience at the Fruitlands utopia and therefore has much to say about her father, Bronson Alcott, who is also the subject of Glen A. Ebisch's "Bronson Alcott: Educator of the Spirit" (*Religious Humanism* 32: 51–65). Where Ebisch provides a general appreciation of Bronson Alcott, Johnson convincingly shows that Louisa May Alcott's "Transcendental Wild Oats," which has generally been seen as a light-hearted treatment of the Fruitlands experiment, is bitterly parodic. Abel Lamb, her father's fictional counterpart in the story, comes off as an incompetent bumbler. "Though there are hilarious moments in the sketch," Johnson observes, "its ridicule is brutal, its final tone bitter, its disclosures withering. And Abel Lamb is an ineffectually foolish and destructively weak man, hopelessly naive in his union with Timon Lion [Charles Lane] and blindly insensitive and self-serving in his role as husband and father." These Alcott essays provide a convenient stopping point for this chapter. Incorporating social, cultural, biographical, and bibliographical contexts of Alcott's work, they could serve as models for others who wish to explore 19th-century American literature.

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