Reviews

E2  “Poe’s Sense of Time”
Reviewed by J. Michelle Coghlan

E5  “Poe’s Queer Eye”
Reviewed by Gretchen J. Woertendyke

E12  “Poisonous Politics: Gender and Metaphor in Jacksonian America”
Reviewed by Marcia D. Nichols

E16  “(Re)Writing and (Re)Reading the Nation”
Reviewed by N. Christine Brookes

E19  “Sounding Poe’s Poetry”
Reviewed by Travis Montgomery
E22  “Borges’s Poe, Poe’s Borges, and Other Possessed Apostrophes”  
Reviewed by Djelal Kadir

E26  “Material Poe”  
Reviewed by Julie E. Hall

E29  Notes on Contributors
Reviews
Cindy Weinstein begins her incandescent rethinking of the matter of time in American literature by way of, as she puts it, “a rather bizarre reference to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*” (1838) situated early in Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl* (1904): the moment when Prince Amerigo, pondering Mrs. Fanny Assingham’s inscrutable intentions in matching him with Maggie Verver, finds his mind curiously turning to “‘the story of the shipwrecked Gordon Pym’” that he remembers reading as a child [1]. That Weinstein does so prepares readers for the fact that, while only her second chapter will focus explicitly on Poe, his sense of time—and most particularly, his narrative work in *Pym*—is foundational to the story she wants to tell about US literature. Poe, she argues, lengthily delineates time-keeping and at the same time plays with all manner of linguistic temporal markers in his novel, precisely to disorient our grip on time and disrupt the stability of such categories as past or present. And the term Weinstein gives to the narrative structure of temporal disambiguation in novels that paradoxically and self-consciously foreground, down to the sentence level, their obsession with time—“tempo(e)rality”—cements Poe’s place at the center of this temporal turn and literary tradition. Indeed, all the novels analyzed here—Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *The Gates Ajar* (1868), Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* (1925), Edward P. Jones’s *The Known World* (2003)—either anticipate the linguistic and stylistic narration of time in *Pym* or “make greater (or a different kind of) sense” when put in direct relation to it [4]. But her early and emphatic attention to Poe’s text also reflects Weinstein’s interest in what its ever-shifting chronology captures about the temporal registers and anxieties of its specific cultural moment. For, she suggests, “as much as *Pym*, and the other novels that I discuss, upends the logic of chronology through its temporal shenanigans, the fact is that the novel is also inextricably enmeshed in the time of its composition” [6].

Where Weinstein’s analysis in chapter 2, “When is Now? Poe’s *Pym*,” thus attends to how “the [novels] representation of time is inextricably bound up with the antebellum debate about race, and more specifically to the question of whether or not blackness symbolizes a regression in time that
whiteness is destined to overcome” [41], her preceding chapter on *Edgar Huntly* neatly tracks how the narrative’s “temporal rhythms” [19] resonate alongside and against debates regarding the timing of action (or inaction) that raged between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists at precisely the historical moment—1787—in which Brocken Brown situates his sleepwalking protagonist. In turn, her chapter on *The Gates Ajar* movingly explores the ways in which Phelps’s “temporal disorderliness” [74] both archives the Civil War’s trauma and mass death and seeks the narrative tense that will restore lost loved ones to the present, even as her chapter on Dreiser unravels how his contorted sense of grammar and avoidance of verbs reflects not just a modernist sensibility but “the temporal chaos” of modern life [105] identified by Georg Simmel and others at the turn of the century. And Weinstein’s final chapter on *The Known World* performs a dazzling close reading of the novel that casts in sharp relief Jones’s search for the proper tense in which to tell the temporally vertiginous story of American slavery.

As Weinstein herself rightly points out, time has, of late, preoccupied much scholarship on American literature. Dana Luciano’s *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* [New York: New York Univ. Press, 2007] argues that “the grieving body as an instrument of affective time-keeping” reinforced and unsettled linear modes of national time [5]. Lloyd Pratt’s *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* [Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2010] recovers the nested and competing temporalities at the heart of an array of antebellum literary genres, highlighting the ways these temporalities worked against the consolidation of national and racial identities. Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2010] turns its attention to the queer erotics of history that resist the regime of what Freeman aptly terms “chronormativity.” And more recently, Jordan Stein, in “American Literary History and Queer Temporalities,” points to the ways in which queer theory has encouraged us to think “reflexively about chronology” and “challenged us to see the multiple temporalities that history contains” [American Literary History 25, no. 4 (2013): 863]. *Time, Tense, and American Literature* builds on this conversation, but in so doing its fertile methodology approaches a different set of questions that have once again vexed literary studies: namely, what is a text’s relationship to its historical context? and does a commitment to close textual analysis—whether in the form of deep or of surface reading—necessarily abnegate Jameson’s injunction to “always historicize”? In particular, Weinstein’s deft interlacing of “New Formalism,” narrative theory, and historicism in the service of reading American literature’s unruly sense of time seems at once a productive detour around that debate and
an important return to and reworking of New Historicism's original aims. For as Samuel Otter and others have pointed out, New Historicist readings were never quite as unconcerned with form as we might now understand them to be. It seems, then, that Weinstein's turn to tempo(e)rality, and Poe's temporal shenanigans, are particularly timely.

J. Michelle Coghlan

*University of Manchester*
I approached J. Gerald Kennedy’s book with some measure of skepticism. There may be no topic more thoroughly questioned, debated, dismissed, or resurrected than the “nation”—especially in “American” literary studies. Recent criticism, in response to cultural studies and archival expansions, has mostly assumed a post-trans-inter-intra-national and hemispheric perspective. It was in this mindset, coupled with some curiosity, that I began Strange Nation. The study never presents bold claims or provocations; rather, it rewards the reader through a steady and scrupulous accretion of ideas and literary examples. In this impressively extensive analysis of antebellum nation-building, Poe stands apart in his recognition of the jingoism, chauvinism, and hypocrisy that underlie—and finally undermine—the nation. “Against bracing fables of heroic purpose that glorified the United States,” Kennedy writes, “he [Poe] juxtaposed tales exposing the grotesqueness—the cruelty and perverseness, the deformity and enormity—to which nationalism had already closed its eyes” [400]. Poe’s “queer eye” challenges the prevailing sense of national innocence in the decades leading up to the Civil War and reinforces Kennedy’s central premise, that “nationalism produces a way of seeing that is also a not-seeing, and the strange, unresolved contradictions of nationhood and nationality lurk in this cultural blind spot” [3]. Some of the more fascinating readings are of lesser-known works by Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, Lydia Maria Child, and Catharine Sedgwick, but Kennedy also brings Eliza Cushing, John Pendleton Kennedy, William Wells Brown, William Apess, and Black Hawk into his broad national archive. It is Poe’s commentary, however, that serves as the book’s touchstone; in Poe, Kennedy finds trenchant wit, keen insight, and compelling resistance to the nation’s increasingly sanitized story of itself.

The narrative of Strange Nation roughly takes up the years between the War of 1812 and the decade preceding the outbreak of civil war, with occasional nods to earlier works. The 1820 Missouri Compromise, the 1825 passage of an Indian removal bill, implemented in 1830 by Andrew Jackson, and the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law frame thoughtful readings that “defamiliariz[e]
American nationalism by uncovering its contingent and conflicted formation” [4]. Kennedy develops his key terms, nation and strange, in the introduction. Drawing on French historian Ernest Renan’s 1882 lecture “What is a Nation?,” he underscores US “fictions of unity,” historical amnesia, and the brutality ultimately essential to unifying a national body. Nations “exist paradoxically nowhere (in no fixed place) and everywhere” [12], he asserts, even while locating the singularity of American nationhood “in the unprecedented circumstance of a mixed colonial population gaining independence and establishing a republic before it had achieved national solidarity” [18]. The tension between an ahistorical, abstract conception of “nation” as both everywhere and nowhere, and the historically specific context of US nationhood, is richly suggestive and, of course, strange.

Kennedy characterizes that strangeness as the “inadvertent baggage, traces of the ruptures, schisms, or debacles that nationalism always strives to conceal”—those “monstrous figures, bizarre actions, or strange narrative inconsistencies” [13]. At times his understanding of “strange” implies estrangement, especially in the early chapters when Irving, Cooper, and Child struggle to reconcile their sense of place, their nation-ness, against Europe; but at other times, “strange” simply means an event or concept that a writer cannot account for. This capaciousness makes the term, and the work Kennedy wants it to perform, a bit elusive. Drawing on Fredric Jameson’s concept of a political unconscious, Kennedy identifies the “split personality” produced by sectionalism and the nation’s increasingly disassociative relation to itself. As a result, “strange” takes on more precision and theoretical rigor. Ultimately, the book’s historical depth, literary breadth, and interpretive freshness tell a wonderfully compelling story and, perhaps, hint that “strange” has a higher use value than “queer” (reserved for Poe) or “alien.”

The first three chapters attend most to expatriate writers whose work reflects anxieties about how Europe imagines the United States, how the United States emulates or radically departs from European principles, and how such comparisons may look to the future of the newer nation. In chapter 1, “Refiguring the Foreign: Irving, Poe, and America’s ‘Europe,’” Kennedy suggests that Irving and Poe especially “invented Europe” for American readers. Identifying the “pervasive melancholy” of Irving’s *A History of New York* (1809), *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820), *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), and *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), Kennedy demonstrates the author’s sense of loss in the transition from the Old World to the New World. Irving differentiates between England and the US to “expose the chauvinistic self-delusions of each” [41], but in “Traits of Indian Character” and “Philip of Pokanoket,” he displays both compassion and condescension toward Native Americans. Nevertheless, Irving
“unmasked the genocidal impulses of the Puritans” [48] before both Cooper and Sedgwick, in whose writing Kennedy locates pointed anti-Puritan sentiment. While Irving tends to valorize and romanticize Europe, Poe situates many of his early tales there because of his inability to reconcile Jacksonian America with his idea of the nation. Irving homogenized Europe for American readers but Poe’s strange “European fables helped him to encode what seemed horrifying national problems” [72].

In chapter 2, “Writing Against the Nation: Cooper’s Gleanings,” Kennedy reads several of Cooper’s works, including The Spy (1821), The Pioneers (1823), and The Last of the Mohicans (1826)—which receives further attention in chapter 4—but the truly fascinating revelations come from Cooper’s Gleanings in Europe (1837), which began “with an earnest desire to know Europe and to correct its misapprehensions about America” but “ended, somewhat surprisingly, with Cooper’s dismantling of his nation’s most cherished illusions about itself” [75]. Kennedy asserts that for Cooper, “US nation-building was an act of cultural imposture” [75]. The final chapter attuned to Europe, “Patriotic Anti-Nationalism: Minority Reports from Abroad,” traces the increasingly critical responses to US nation-building in the works of three writers: Catharine Sedgwick, Margaret Fuller, and William Wells Brown. In Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home (1841), according to Kennedy, Sedgwick expresses concern over balancing what she sees as “patriotic partiality with foreign perceptions of her native land” [101]. Her perspective, in his view, seems most similar to Irving’s in its reverence for Europe and especially England. “I have been struck with the identity of the English and the New-England character—the strong family likeness,” she writes, emphasizing the regional affiliations but also betraying a cultural bias against other regions across the US [quoted in Kennedy, 101; emphasis original].

Sedgwick offers an interesting counterpoint to Fuller, who, in 1846, went abroad for Horace Greeley’s New-York Daily Tribune as America’s first female foreign correspondent. Fuller published thirty-seven letters there between 1846 and 1850 under the heading “Things and Thoughts in Europe,” which chronicle, like Cooper’s Gleanings, her shift from a recognition of US potential to a scathing critique of the nation’s injustices. The “utopian socialism” of France encouraged her developing anti-patriotism: “The more I see of the terrible ills which infest the body politic of Europe, the more indignation I feel at the selfishness or stupidity of those in my own country who oppose an examination of these subjects” [quoted in Kennedy, 109]. Kennedy concludes this chapter with William Wells Brown, who brings together a cautious admiration of European principles with an unapologetic critique of US policies, especially slavery. In addition to considering Brown’s well-known work Clotel; or, The
President’s Daughter (1853), Kennedy reads his Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met (London, 1852) against the expanded version he retitled The American Fugitive in Europe: Sketches of Places and People Abroad (1855), which appeared in Boston, Cleveland, and New York. While the two evince minor differences, Kennedy argues that together they constitute “the boldest interrogation of American nationalism to emerge from the conventionally benign discourse of antebellum foreign travel” [127].

Chapters 4 and 5 offer the most thoroughly historical and far-flung of the book’s nine chapters. In “Cleansing Actions: Rewriting the Border Wars” and “Removal and Remorse in Jacksonian America,” Kennedy focuses on the “older, odder, and more pervasive than any other American struggle, the so-called Indian problem,” which “haunted nationalistic myth-making from 1820 to 1850 while it complicated territorial expansion and western settlement” [129]. He traces works inspired by two figures: the Mingo chief Logan and Wampanoag Metacomet, also known as King Philip. The former motivated Irving’s Indian tales, Samuel Woodworth’s The Champions of Freedom; or, The Mysterious Chief (1816), and Samuel Webber’s Logan: An Indian Tale (1821); the latter gave impetus to Cooper’s The Pioneers and The Last of the Mohicans, John Dunn Hunter’s Memoirs of a Captivity Among the Indians of North America (1823), and James E. Seaver’s A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison (1824). Kennedy claims that Lydia Maria Child’s Hobomok, a Tale of Early Times (1824) helped “clarify an emerging critique of imperial nationalism” [143] and that Cooper’s The Last of the Mohicans offers the best illustrations of “the weird tension between cultural shame and racial pride” [148]. Chapter 5 ends with a consideration of Sedgwick’s third novel, Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts (1827), as a response to both Child’s and Cooper’s novels. For Kennedy, the novel’s real power lies in its critique of national myths, and particularly the effects of Puritan ideology on the native population [161]. Sedgwick, then, draws our attention to Puritan providentialism as the precursor to American exceptionalism.

The following chapter shifts attention to Native perspectives on Native American removal. Along with A Son of the Forest (1829), William Apess’s The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe (1833) “deserves study for its case histories of conversion—in the face of derision by whites—and for its provocative closing essay, ‘An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man’” [178]. A discussion of Apess’s 1836 public addresses in Boston, his “Eulogy on King Philip” [179], and A Son of the Forest reveals that he felt “estranged from his tribe . . . from the bigoted white community, and from the republic for which he fought” in the War of 1812 [180]. Especially insightful is Kennedy’s treatment of the appendix, where Apess makes several “key claims”—pointedly
that the Indians are God’s chosen people in the New World, and that as descendants of the Jews, they are “bound to Christ by blood as well as faith.” As such, Apess “shifts the implication of his assurance that Christ died for everyone: of course Christ came to redeem his own tribe and nation, Apess implies, but he also died even for white Europeans” [184, Kennedy’s emphasis].

Black Hawk’s narrative, however, is “the most compelling Native exposé of the dark side of American nation-building” [185]. Kennedy here gets at the heart of clashing cultural values and their tragic consequences. In The Life of Mā-ka-tai-me-she-kia-k or Black Hawk (1833), Black Hawk writes: “My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. The Great Spirit gave it to his children to live upon, and cultivate, as far as is necessary for their subsistence. . . . Nothing can be sold, but such things as can be carried away” [quoted in Kennedy, 187]. Kennedy argues that, while “Native attitudes about place . . . respected the natural order” and “tribes felt intimately bound to the land formations that defined their world,” as articulated by Black Hawk, Anglo-Saxons sacrificed and exploited nature for economic gain [188]. In this way, Black Hawk’s narrative exposes the logical extension of eighteenth-century British conceptions of “improvement”—that to improve the land was to profit from it, and thus Puritan world-views led to agrarian capitalism. Again, Black Hawk’s language expresses this connection: “We can only judge of what is proper and right by our standard of right and wrong, which differs widely from the whites, if I have been correctly informed. The whites may do bad all their lives, and then, if they are sorry for it when about to die, all is well! But with us it is different: we must continue throughout our lives to do what we conceive to be good. If we have corn and meat, and know of a family that have none, we divide with them” [quoted in Kennedy, 191]. Kennedy concludes the chapter by identifying “dirty sentimentalism” as “the use of emotional manipulation to rationalize the monstrous devastation of Native America by European settlers,” epitomized by William Cullen Bryant’s assertion, in “The Prairies” (1832), that Indians quietly and naturally migrated [218, 219].

“National Awakening: Reconstructing the Revolution” investigates the “imperfect concealment of Revolutionary radicalism” at the core of early nation-building, especially “the greed, opportunism, racism, and factionalism that plagued the new states” and were “incompatible with national myth-making” (221, 222). Kennedy examines Cooper’s The Spy, Simms’s The Partisan (1835), Cushing’s Saratoga (1824), and Sedgwick’s The Linwoods (1835), each of which “constructs a story of American devotion that portrays actual battles and historical personages,” even as it “betrays, in its representation of family relations, domestic circumstances, and local conflicts, details that unsettle the ostensibly national themes of the text” [224–25]. Jameson’s political
unconscious helps Kennedy to show how revolution becomes disfigured in fictional representations that promote ideal national narratives. In the following chapter, this disfiguration appears again in an excised paragraph from a draft of the Declaration of Independence, in which Jefferson “blames the Kind of England for ‘this execrable commerce’ and the notorious Middle Passage, but . . . also affirms the ‘sacred rights of life and liberty’ of Africans brought to the New World in bondage” [263]. In “America Against Itself: The South, Slavery, and Dissociative National Identities,” Kennedy argues that the “deletion of this paragraph effectively canceled recognition of African American human rights and changed the course of history, legitimating an institution already too well entrenched to be swept away” [264]. The deletion was a concession to South Carolina and Georgia, Jefferson explains in his Autobiography; the sectional tensions that led to the Civil War, then, were written into (and written out of) the nation’s founding document. Kennedy identifies this uniquely American pathology as the “evolution of a frightening dissociation in national consciousness” that produced “a split national personality” [267].

In the final chapters of the book, Kennedy organizes his analysis of race and slavery into three categories: the first centers on David Walker’s Appeal (1829) as a foundational cause of Southerners’ deep fear of black violence; the second on Southern nationalism, which repeatedly defended slavery even as it increasingly called for separate nations; and the third on Poe’s recognition in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838) that whiteness, rather than blackness, was the pernicious sin haunting the country. In the penultimate chapter, “Cartography of Destiny and the Savage West,” Kennedy “investigates the relentless enlargement of national ambition, projected upon the West and culminating in the ideology that fueled war with Mexico, secured Texas and California as states, and added the vast Utah and New Mexico territories to the map of the nation-state” [327]. Antebellum writers never understood precisely where the frontier existed, Kennedy contends, and thus the “west” (like Jennifer Greeson’s “south”) functioned more as a conception, or fantasy, than a geographical marker. Fueled by Manifest Destiny, the gold rush, and an idealized portrait of a land of freedom and opportunity, writers routinely overlooked or denied the brutal reality of frontier existence. Long readings of Richard Penn Smith’s Col. Crockett’s Exploits and Adventures in Texas (1836), Cooper’s The Prairie (1827), Irving’s Astoria; or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains (1836, written with the author’s nephew Pierre Munroe Irving), and John Rollin Ridge’s The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta (1854) round out the chapter. Cooper’s novel, for example, is “strangely surreal” and “lacks any geographical particularity” [349]. Kennedy highlights this “placelessness” to suggest a “landscape already devastated by wastefulness” and thus “not a virgin
land” [350]. Particularly suggestive is the description of Murieta as a “shape shifter,” a bandit-hero who taunts his pursuers, accompanied by “Three-Fingered Jack”—details that make the romance/novel resonate strangely with the figure of insurrectionary Haitian slave Makandal in Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World* (1949).

The book’s concluding chapter, “The Interpreter of National Maladies: Poe’s American Turn,” focuses on the often-explicit relationship between queer nationalism and Poe’s disaffection with Jacksonian America. Here Kennedy looks at lesser-read stories, such as “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” (1844), “The Oblong Box” (1844), and “Some Words with a Mummy” (1845), to illustrate Poe’s shift in focus from Europe to the United States. Poe’s fear of and disdain for popular democracy and “mob” rule, two features of Jacksonian nationalism, are central aspects of this “turn.” Just thirty pages, the shortest in the book, this chapter provides an apt conclusion for Kennedy’s thesis: Poe comes to embody the multiple fissures of the US—playing a “patriotic skeptic” and “resisting the seductions of Anglo-Saxon progress” [400]. His strange and critically difficult *Eureka* (1848) represents the polarized nation, as manifest in its meditation on the one and the many (and how this relational status destabilizes meaning). In the end, Poe not only reads (and writes) with a queer eye; he is for Kennedy the *embodiment* of a strange nation, a nation unable to reconcile its violence, brutality, and racism with the principles of equality, freedom, and communitarianism.

Gretchen J. Woertendyke
*University of South Carolina*
Poisonous Politics: Gender and Metaphor in Jacksonian America


Sara L. Crosby’s *Poisonous Muse: The Female Poisoner and the Framing of Popular Authorship in Jacksonian America* could not have come out at a more apropos time. Although Jacksonian America has long been a popular topic among scholars, our current president’s frequent praising of the seventh president and our tumultuous political arena make Crosby’s book particularly relevant. Its incisive analysis of the female poisoner as a dominant metaphor in popular and literary discourse offers new insights into Jacksonian-Democratic hegemony before the 1850s that, perhaps, bear lessons for our own day.

Crosby argues that the ubiquity of the figure of the female poisoner in antebellum literary culture should be understood in the context of the ongoing debate over the “shape and legitimacy of popular print and popular authorship.” According to Crosby, the poisoner-as-muse “associated authorship with the popular, with the voice of the people, a de-centered authority, the celebration of which became almost sacred dogma in the Jacksonian era” [4]. In *Poisonous Muse*, she identifies five primary types of poisonous women: the British lamia, the American lamia, the partisan poisoner, the humbug poisoner, and the vengeful poisoner, who is touched on only briefly in the epilogue. The first half of the book examines the lamia as envisioned by Keats and Poe. Crosby begins her analysis in Britain with the traditional, patriarchal image of the lamia—the evil snake-woman whose attempts to seduce and murder the young hero are thwarted by the vigilance and authority of the philosopher. Crosby argues that John Keats, in response to criticism that his poetry lacked “Burkean” (that is, masculine) sublimity, creates the “Romantic lamia” [34–35, 31], the belle dame sans merci who combines beauty with sublime power. While Keats and his potent romantic poisoner should have appealed to American audiences because of the association with popular authorship, Crosby notes that the characterization of his work as effeminate affected Keats’s reception, and he was overshadowed by Byron and other “manly” romantic poets. Poe, however, preferred Keats and envisioned an American romantic lamia, to which we will turn in a moment.
In the second half of her book, Crosby contends that the strong cultural association between women, fluidity, snakes, and poison meant that all female poisoners were represented as lamia-like. Two other poisonous female figures, she suggests, influenced Jacksonian discourse to a greater extent than Poe’s romantic lamia: the partisan poisoner and her near relation, the humbug poisoner. Placing the partisan figure at the center of Jacksonian discourse, Crosby argues that Jackson himself established the trope in his defense of Margaret “Peggy” Eaton, the new wife of Secretary of War John Eaton, during the “petticoat affair.” As a tavern-keeper’s daughter with a questionable sexual history, Peggy was snubbed by the wives of the Washington elite. By championing Peggy, Jackson cultivated the image of a selfless hero who put the interests of the common person before his own; indeed, he linked the attack on an “innocent” woman with an attack on democracy and the people at large. This set the stage for a rhetorical trope that cast the Democrats as defenders of virtuous womanhood against the calumny of malicious patriarchs (namely Whigs). Crosby’s claim that the innocent poisoner played a prominent role in Democratic rhetoric, however, is not entirely convincing, as she tends to gloss over or ignore actual political activity in which many women of the era engaged. Nevertheless, her treatment of the newspaper coverage of the criminal trial of Hannah Kinney, who was accused of poisoning her husband, is fascinating.

The second figure, the humbug poisoner, arose from the popularity of the partisan version in the form of over-the-top true crime hoaxes (what we might term “fake news”) that relied on discerning readers to separate truth from fiction. Crosby makes the case that these humbugs threatened to undermine Democratic hegemony by questioning the truthfulness of popular print, the capacity of the common person to discern truth, and the belief in woman’s inherent purity. In response to the rise of the humbug poisoner, Democratic writers created a new version of the partisan poisoner—the figure of the innocent poisoner. This was a poisonous woman who seemed threatening but was in reality the victim of a power-hungry man, as in Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” or the related figure of a woman who was indeed a guilty poisoner but at the same time a sympathetic victim of male machinations, such as Dora Livingston in George Lippard’s The Quaker City.

Both the partisan poisoner and the humbug poisoner defanged the lamia, undermining female agency and authorship. However, Crosby identifies two more alternative figures that challenged the inherency of feminine weakness and victimhood: the avenging poisoner of midcentury, who is touched on only briefly, and the American lamia created by Poe. Relating Poe to contemporary debates about the legitimacy of popular authorship, Crosby argues that, although not a populist himself, Poe too opposed the “centralized hierarchies
in print culture” and sought “to make Jacksonian print culture safe for outsider geniuses by consciously crafting an anti-Burkean aesthetic that used the lamia to reframe popular authorship” [49, 51]. The meaning of genius is at the heart of Crosby’s reading of Poe. She contends that critics, both contemporary and modern, who place Poe’s skillfully plotted short fiction at the center of his canon have mistaken what Poe thought was ingenuity for genius itself. And she counters that horror is caused by “epistemological uncertainty that . . . provoke[s] the reader’s imaginative play.” Thus, for Poe, “a fully clarified, perfect plot lacking this epistemological openness would be a plot without connection to that [human] existence, a text without a soul and thus incapable of elevating” the reader [55]. Urging scholars to take seriously Poe’s claims that “Ligeia” was “his ‘best tale,’ his ‘loftiest work’ of ‘highest imagination’” [51, emphasis original], Crosby sets the lamia at the apex of Poe’s artistic and critical endeavors.

In many ways, “Ligeia” reworks both Keats’s “Lamia” and Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué’s Undine. In all three pieces, a mysterious, intelligent woman is killed by a male lover’s desire to dominate her. Keats’s lamia simply dies, but Fouqué’s Undine and Poe’s Ligeia both return to wreak vengeance. Giving Ligeia the final triumph, Poe redefines the Burkean notion of beauty by incorporating sublimity within it. In his tale, he depicts fluid femininity not as weak but as abject (in the Kristevan sense), powerful, and dangerous. Thus, Poe creates an alternative “dialectic between ‘beauty’ and ‘deformity’” [60] in female characters who are both transcendent and indeterminate, imbued with a poison that is both divine and abject. For Crosby, scholars often assume in error that the male narrators in Poe’s stories and poems stand in for the author. Rather, she claims, the figure of Ligeia and the other revenants assume the authorial position, whereas the dominating male narrators should be read as patriarchal philosophers whose hubris drives them to try to master the lamia. Crosby asserts, “The tableau that ends ‘Ligeia’ encapsulates [Poe’s] allegory of authorship, with Ligeia standing in for the ideal American author, the outsider author of the beautiful, once repressed by the man of power but then using the alternative power of poison, of abjection, of indeterminacy to return and triumph over him” [66–67]. Unlike the partisan or humbug poisoner, Poe’s romantic lamia, by championing the outsider position, opens up authorship to women and people of color, a possibility that not only contemporaries but also Poe himself found disturbing.

The radical possibilities of Poe’s romantic lamia likely explain its minority position in a Jacksonian America that sought to legitimize the voices of the “common man” by silencing women and people of color in the popular press and in politics. But as the historical record amply shows, women and people of
color were never completely silenced, and the poison pen remained a powerful weapon for marginalized individuals. Although Crosby’s *Poisonous Muse* offers fresh insight into the popular nineteenth-century press and American romanticism, I am struck not so much by what her story tells us about the past as by how it suggests the lessons of the past might help guide action in the present. *Poisonous Muse* forcefully reminds us of the power of metaphor in popular and political discourse. As I read, I found myself asking, what are the dominant metaphors animating the current revival in populism? What metaphors could bind together those resisting demagoguery and the attack on democracy? In fact, Crosby’s reading of “Ligeia” made me long for a similar metaphor for our current time, a Ligeia who can stand in triumph over the men of power who still seek to dominate and destroy women, people of color, and other marginalized groups.

Marcia D. Nichols  
*University of Minnesota Rochester*
(Re)Writing and (Re)Reading the Nation


Another title for Gretchen J. Woertendyke’s book might have been *The Nation is Dead! Long Live the Nation!* In five nimble chapters with ample sources from beyond the United States, her *Hemispheric Regionalism* undoes the staid structures of nation and associated national literary identities only to put them back together again—and smartly so—in something loosely resembling the original. In so doing, Woertendyke elaborates standing definitions of romance as a genre and gives it a new role and consequent importance within American (in all senses) literary studies. This concise yet ambitious work therefore yields many treasures in the course of an intellectual re-exploration of the New World and the United States’ nascent identities within it.

The book’s title reveals up front the tensions that Woertendyke masterfully negotiates in her study. The expression “hemispheric regionalism” is meant to signify “multiple scales of geography and history in dynamic relation, rather than . . . a static space against which either hemisphere or region gets defined” [2]. Further, it implies going beyond national boundaries to emphasize hemispheric relations even as it accentuates the relative insularity of a region proper. In particular, this work brings into view an interplay of the American South with the Caribbean and the New World with the Old.

To begin, *Hemispheric Regionalism* looks closely at the Haitian slave revolts in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century and their impact on the American literary field. Here, Woertendyke invites the reader to contemplate the complex dynamics of slave insurrection and eventual Haitian independence—the first such victory in the New World—in 1804. Seen through the lens of a slaveholding American South, nineteenth-century representations of this uprising, according to Woertendyke, play out in two ways. In chapter 1, she considers the recountings by white writers of slave uprisings or conspiracies led by Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner. Read in light of the Haitian Revolution, these tales tapped directly into an implicit fear of violence (on white “innocents”) in the American South, inscribing themselves as part of the anti-abolitionist movement.
While these semi-fictional accounts borrowed from the gothic and other popular literary forms of the time, the romances of Scots writer John Howison and Americans Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville, the collective subject of chapter 2, spun fictional narratives of adventure on the high seas that capitalized on gothic fears about fugitive slaves. With the sea functioning as a space of past, present, and future, where anything can and did happen, these stories projected the apocalypse of black mutinies, a uniquely New World nightmare not limited to one geographical region. Woertendyke begins this chapter with an examination of Howison’s story “The Florida Pirate,” published in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine in 1821, which keyed up the “racial fantasy and fear” present in both the old- and new-world Atlantic [62]. Likewise, in a story that shares much with Howison’s, Poe’s The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838) exploited fear of the Haitian revolution without naming it as such. As Woertendyke shows, the trope of violent rebellions against whites—or, in this case, only the threat of one—was well in place by the time Poe’s adventure story hit the press. Not subtly, Poe mined this entrenched opposition between black and white in an attempt to reach the average reader, all the while riffing on the Blackwoodian tales that inform the gothic romance’s understanding and reception. Melville, in perhaps a stronger and less-veiled reference to Haiti, drove that message home aboard the San Dominick in his 1855 Benito Cereno, serialized in Putnam’s Monthly. Here, in a terrifying narrative that condemns the violence of slavery, Melville collapsed history by weaving together the hemispheric tensions of Haitian revolution, real-life incidents (a slave-ship rebellion off Chile’s coast in 1805), and the growing national rift that would lead to the Civil War. Woertendyke’s analyses of these works and the genre are compelling.

Equally as well argued are chapters 3 and 4, comprising the second section of the book. In a turn from variations on slave revolt and apocalyptic violence, this section examines the ideals and scope of manifest destiny within American romance. Here, Woertendyke looks toward Cuba as a potential extension of manifest destiny, exploring the role of romance and the Spanish Atlantic as a site where the New World will set up in opposition to the Old, all within an America beyond (but imagined within) US bounds. First, as Woertendyke posits, Washington Irving’s A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus (1828) and Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin’s The Buccaneers of America (1684) laid the groundwork for such later musings in romances about Cuba as John Lauris Blake’s Ramon, the Rover of Cuba (first published in 1829). Moreover, an imagined Cuba, a target for a boundless manifest destiny, provided plenteous potential for growth within the growing popular press. This publishing frenzy, the topic of chapter 4, is skillfully detailed through a discussion of such editors as John O’Sullivan (of La Verdad) and Maturin M. Ballou (of The Flag).
To close, the third section examines Walter Scott’s part in establishing the conventions of historical romance within the newly formed United States. These generic conventions, Woertendyke contends, helped American writers such as James Fenimore Cooper, J. H. Ingraham, and William Gilmore Simms lay down a sort of regional historical romance that stood in for both nation and “nation-empire” [131]. The study ends with a coda that argues for a broader American literary identity, one in conversation both with its regions and with nearby neighbors, an act that in turn revalues the role of gothic and historical romance in American literature.

*Hemispheric Regionalism* simultaneously zooms in on the South and zooms out to the Caribbean and Atlantic world. Woertendyke offers a paradoxical reframing of the familiar and unfamiliar, the popular and canonical, all of which provides excellent and timely new perspectives not only for specialists in American literature and culture but also for scholars of the New World. This brilliant study works to dissolve certain notions of nation and encourages the crossing of borders, literary and geographical. Woertendyke’s book invites a broad base of scholars to reimagine new-world national communities and literary heritages.

N. Christine Brookes

*Central Michigan University*
Sławomir Studniarz’s *The Time-Transcending Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe*, winner of the Adèle Mellen Prize, appears in the wake of Jerome McGann’s recently published book on Poe, and like McGann, Studniarz takes issue with critics who dismiss the poems of Poe as sonic soufflés without thematic substance. For Studniarz, sense and sound function interdependently in these texts, and to appreciate the marriage of content and form, readers must observe Poe’s artful deployment of sounds. Drawing on his deep knowledge of prosody and the work of theorists Roman Jakobson, Yuri Lotman, and Reuven Tsur, Studniarz offers detailed analyses of numerous poems, including such familiar works as “To Helen,” “The Raven,” and “Ulalume” along with such lesser known lyrics as “The Coliseum,” “The Valley of Unrest,” and “For Annie”—to name only six of the twenty-four pieces scrutinized.

Each poem receives a close reading in which Studniarz identifies not only metrical characteristics and familiar rhymic elements—especially irregularities in these features—but also sonic qualities outside the realm of conventional prosody. Of special interest are what Studniarz calls “paronomastic chains.” According to Jakobson, these chains consist of proximate “phonemic sequences” through which “words similar in sound are drawn together in meaning” [quoted in Studniarz, 26]. Studniarz points out several such sound patterns, repeatedly demonstrating that these groupings have purpose. In particular, they intensify meaning, for such sensory “phenomena as a rule play a significant role in poetic texts, enhancing their semantic potential” [19]. Studniarz also examines “the mapping of sense onto the material shape of a poem,” a feature termed “iconicity” [24]. All of these devices are, as he argues, vital to Poe’s creative response to “the tragic dimension of the human condition” and “the sought-for cancellation of the confines of mortality and temporality” [302, 303], themes that figure prominently in such essays as “The Philosophy of Composition” and “The Poetic Principle.” Linking manner and matter in several Poe poems, Studniarz makes a compelling case for deeming them “artistically designed texts,” the works of a master poet [301].
The formalist approach employed in *The Time-Transcending Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe* has its merits. Convinced that one should, for analytic purposes, “approach the poems as autonomous creations” [40], Studniarz adopts a useful critical methodology, isolating sonic elements in poem after poem and identifying aural relationships between words within each text. Previous commentators simply have not investigated this incredible array of sounds as comprehensively as Studniarz does. An example of his painstaking analysis is the “Ulalume” chapter, which fills more than thirty pages. Such close reading helps readers appreciate the textual complexities of Poe’s poetry, a body of work in which surface simplicities often mask the poet’s virtuosity. Furthermore, Studniarz reveals this technical brilliance without falling into the trap of neglecting content: he insists that a “fundamental interrelatedness” binds most of Poe’s poems, and to illustrate that connection, he groups them into thematic clusters marking different stages in “the spiritual quest” to escape death and decay [7, 305]. Readers wary of reductions of Poe’s expressive diversity might dispute Studniarz’s claim that interpreting the poetry requires “a systematic approach” [7]. Furthermore, his approach involves some peculiar omissions. For example, Studniarz declares “the main body of [Poe’s] poetic creation” the object of his study [7], yet this group of texts includes “Al Aaraaf” but not “Tamerlane,” a poem that Poe revisited throughout his career. Despite that and other exclusions, reading Poe with Studniarz is rewarding, even revelatory, for those interested in Poe’s verse-making and its aural effects.

For all its virtues, Studniarz’s approach imposes some unnecessary interpretive limits, supererogatory checks that prevent the author from shoring up his argument with extratextual support. Operating within a formalist vacuum, a critic ignores the contexts, literary and social, from which texts emerge, and Studniarz leaves virtually unexamined the ways in which Poe embraces and/or reacts to nineteenth-century literary conventions and antebellum marketplace realities. To appreciate his aesthetic achievements and innovations, such contextualization is important. Identifying the ways in which Poe’s creative expression differs from that of writers like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a popular poet whom Poe deemed imitative and unimaginative, would strengthen Studniarz’s case that Poe’s work is significant and singular. Another problem is that Studniarz does not adequately explore Poe’s revising habit, a practice that certainly supports the idea that Poe was a meticulous writer keen on perfecting his work. To be fair, Studniarz does comment on some textual variants in versions of “Annabel Lee,” but he provides only minimal commentary of that sort elsewhere in *The Time-Transcending Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe*. Thus some readers of the book might conclude that the poet’s texts are more stable than they actually are, and by overlooking the revisions, Studniarz misses opportunities to
show how Poe modified the sonic effects of his works in order to better achieve the union of sense and sound that characterizes his best poetry.

Some words on editorial matters are in order. Aware that many readers are unfamiliar with prosody and with critical argot, Studniarz offers brief definitions of key terms, and that explanatory material enhances the clarity of a work that might otherwise seem jargon-laden. Yet excessive passive constructions work against such clarity. In addition, typographical errors mar the text. For example, the British aesthete Ernest Dowson receives the name “Edmund” [159], and “It as if time” appears sans verb [164]. Even a subject/verb agreement error on page 199 (“Eddings suggest”) seems to have escaped editorial eyes. The word “eponymous” also appears with wearying regularity. In short, some careful proofreading would have improved the book.

These blots do not, however, cover the real achievements of the study, an intriguing examination of the impressive artistry displayed in Poe’s poetry. Recognizing that ingenuity, readers of Studniarz’s book will find it difficult to accept Emerson’s notion that this body of verse is the work of a quackish “jingle man.” As Richard Kopley asserts in the forward to The Time-Transcending Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, the Emersonian response to Poe is unsatisfactory: “We need not the dismissive, but the discerning” [i]. With the help of Studniarz, readers can cultivate that discernment.

Travis Montgomery

Oklahoma Christian University
The perennial equivocation that has dogged the history of Poe scholarship most consistently also serves as fulcrum for the book under review. Emron Esplin’s *Borges’s Poe: The Influence and Reinvention of Edgar Allan Poe in Spanish America* pivots on the counterpoint of Poe the tragic romantic poet versus Poe the master algebrist of prose as instrument of ratiocination. Poe anticipated and sought to diffuse that dichotomy: “The highest order of the imaginative intellect is always preeminently mathematical; and the converse” (“Griswold’s American Poetry,” https://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bm42gr01.htm [218]). The best of Poe’s readers—Charles Baudelaire, Stephane Mallarmé, Rubén Darío, Bernard Shaw, Paul Valéry, William Carlos Williams, Julio Cortázar—have heeded Poe’s admonition and productively subsumed its wisdom in their own work. Jorge Luis Borges certainly figures in this company of Poe readers tuned in to Poe’s advertence. Esplin, however, grinds the argument and justification of his book on the old equivocal millstone by diligently trying to disambiguate the poetic and mathematical synergy in Poe and in the complexity of Borges’s reception of Poe’s legacy. He does so by rendering the Argentine poet and short-story writer a partisan and advocate of Poe the mathematical calculator of narrative prose. Fully aware of the primacy accorded to a moralistic bent over a (self-)critical ratiocinative calculus in the American context in which he was writing, Poe endeavored to preempt such reductionism: by discursion in his critical essays and by demonstration in his Dupin stories, most notably in “The Purloined Letter,” through characters that embody the combined imaginative and mathematical intellect. All that notwithstanding, there continues to be a strain of reading with an incorrigible attachment to binary thought.

The relationship of Borges to Poe has engendered a considerable critical corpus animated by the Argentine author, as amply documented in the volume under review. The most trenchant and most informed undertaking in this regard is *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story* by John T. Irwin [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994]. Unlike Irwin’s, Esplin’s...
study trains its focus on a “solution” rather than exploring the nature of the “mystery,” and as a result, it assiduously pursues traces and lines of influence, seeking to document flows of affect and impact in both directions—from Poe to Borges and, retroactively, from Borges to Poe. Borges’s essay “Kafka and His Precursors” invariably serves as Esplin’s lever in this meticulous excavation of prospective and retrospective determinacies, which in turn define his reading of both Poe and Borges [see “Kafka y sus precursores,” La Nación, 15 August 1951, in Obras completas (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2007), 2:107–9]. The protocols of reading and of deciphering influence in this study, however, end by being neither those premonitorily limned by Poe nor those illustrated by Poe’s reader Borges. Rather, the dominant critical discourse on influence that informs Esplin’s project and that of his generation of scholars in the United States of America is the legacy of Harold Bloom and his definitive work, The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973]. Esplin labors mightily to differentiate his study of influence from Bloom’s, even as he notes the commonplace—namely, that the calculus of “revisionary ratios” through which, according to Bloom, later authors deal with their precursors has its genesis in good measure in Borges’s 1951 essay “Kafka and His Precursors.” While Bloom’s psychoanalytic enterprise owes much to Borges and his significance for literary historiography, Esplin’s invocation of Bloom yields mixed results for understanding Poe and, by extension, Poe’s Borges. Bloom’s shadow skews the adumbration of Poe and his legacy by narrowing the focus on poetry at the expense of prose, especially the short story, whose primacy in Esplin’s self-declared goal is paramount. Just as significantly, that ideological distortion, by eliding the formal and critical reasoning, gives salience to the moralistic vein of Poe criticism that begins with Poe’s nemesis and fateful executor, the Right Reverend Rufus Wilmot Griswold, runs through Ralph Waldo Emerson, and percolates down to Bloom.

Characteristically egregious in his categorical judgments, Bloom presents an opportune occasion to explore the complexity of Poe’s inheritance to America’s critical discourse. But, even though Esplin cites one of Bloom’s peremptory pronouncements on Poe in a footnote [170n17], he misses the opportunity to deepen his discussion of retrospective and revisionary transformation, what he terms “reciprocal influence,” a phrase that serves as the title of the introduction to his book. In his own “introduction” to Bloom’s Modern Critical Views: Edgar Allan Poe, Bloom famously notes: “Emerson fathered pragmatism; Poe fathered precisely nothing, which is the way he would have wanted it. . . . Emerson, for better and for worse, was and is the mind of America, but Poe was and is our hysteria, our uncanny unanimity in our repressions” [(New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006), i]. For Borges, and for most of the world, including
Latin America, Poe is as interesting as Emerson precisely because, whether he would have wanted to or not, Poe “fathered” the more intricate genealogical line Bloom calls “our hysteria, our uncanny unanimity in our repressions”—of which Bloom and his psychoanalytics themselves are an exemplary symptom. The analytical method and limning ratiocination that Poe engendered and cultivated through the genre of the detective story and through his own critical discourse are what make possible the formalist method of the High Anglo-American Modernists and their “fallacies” (q.v. Poe’s “didactic fallacy”), against which Bloom develops his psychoanalytics and anxious revisionary ratios of literary influence. Borges was fully cognizant of the ironies entailed in what Bloom belatedly diagnosed as “our hysteria, our uncanny unanimity in our repressions,” and he anticipated their cultural symptoms through a critical equanimity that valued Poe’s reasoning intellect no less than Emerson’s poetics of anxious New World belatedness, as Bloom himself might have it.

As the title of Esplin’s book declares, the object of his study is Borges’s Poe. The subtitle, however, shades into an inflationary slippage of continental proportions: The Influence and Reinvention of Edgar Allan Poe in Spanish America. Borges is certainly in and of Spanish America, but he is not tantamount to it, as Esplin’s subtitle implies. The reception of Poe on the Latin American continent has a longer history and a more complex one that cannot be reduced to its instantiation in Borges, a historical fact that the present study elides in its enthusiasm for giving primacy to the significance of Borges’s role in Poe studies—especially as cast in the over-determinative context of cardinal geographies, in this case the “New Southern Studies” with which Esplin seems to align his project. The entwined legacies of Poe and Borges exceed such explanation. Esplin does survey, albeit sketchily, some of this history, which dates from the first Spanish translations of Poe stories during his lifetime—for example, the anonymous translations that appeared in the Lima newspaper El instructor peruano in 1847. The apogee of this translation history is arguably the 1956 edition of Poe’s complete stories by Borges’s compatriot and one-time protégé, the novelist Julio Cortázar—Cuentos completos: Edición comentada [reissued, Madrid: Páginas de Espuma, 2008, ed. Fernando Iwasaki and Jorge Volpi]. The historical record indicates clearly that this is a history of reception as much as, if not more than, a history of influence, as the second part of the conjunctive binomial (Influence and Reinvention) in Esplin’s subtitle duly implies. And the author conscientiously pursues this record through the textual testament of Borges. It is an admirable endeavor, but one that would have benefited from greater critical and historiographic nuance, especially in tracking the fortunes of Poe through the Spanish American Modernistas, against whom Esplin counterposes Borges’s assessment of Poe the analytical intellect vis-à-vis the
star-crossed romantic poet. The *Modernistas* were certainly not a homogenous group; nor were they any less neo-romantic than they were Parnassian and Symbolist through their French inheritance, where many of them encountered Poe as both mathematical intellect and romantic. And Poe, of course, as his premonitory caution would have it, was not easily reducible to either. Borges certainly appreciated this ambiguity, and any attempt at disambiguation proves less than fortunate for Poe, and no less so for Borges. With this caveat in mind, Esplin’s is a worthwhile book that keeps the critical conversation on Poe percolating for a new generation of readers.

Djelal Kadir

*Pennsylvania State University*
Material Poe


Edgar Allan Poe in 20 Objects is a rare treat for scholars and Poe enthusiasts alike, an outgrowth of the exhibition mounted at Johns Hopkins’s George Peabody Library, 4 October 2016 to 5 February 2017, from Susan Jaffe Tane’s famed collection of Poe materials and manuscripts. Happily conceived and deftly executed by editors Gabrielle Dean and Richard Kopley, the book pairs photographs of twenty objects from the exhibit with short (five- to six-page) but notably rich essays penned by a refreshing combination of literary scholars and art historians/curators connected with the show. Thus, while it holds and communicates something of the magic of an exhibit (one can dwell as long as one wishes on the pictured object), it also delivers good, sound scholarship in highly digestible portions; indeed, several essays can easily be read at a single sitting, a quality that Poe himself admired. The editors’ decision that the featured essays should encompass both “a catalog’s attention to an individual item and an article’s attention to an aspect of a writer’s life” [xiii] contributes to the book’s distinctive quality and to much of its allure, for this reader. One feels, upon completing it, that one has simultaneously made a trip to the museum and taken in the erudition of a scholarly tome. Edgar Allan Poe in 20 Objects is thus a book to take with you to the beach and a book that will live, equally comfortably, in your office. It is a book that delights and instructs.

A foreword by Winston Tabb, Sheridan Dean of University Libraries and Museums at Johns Hopkins University, a preface by Susan Tane, and an introduction by Richard Kopley announce the volume’s intent to “tell Poe’s story through twenty objects” [xiii], which include, as the reader soon sees, a golden engagement ring with the inscription “Edgar”; a crystal decanter set; the so-called Players Club daguerreotype of Poe, one of the best-known images of the author; an 1808 newspaper notice from the Boston Theatre, which features Mr. and Mrs. Poe, and an intriguing Mr. and Mrs. Usher, as actors; a manuscript letter by and photograph of Poe’s little-known sister, Rosalie (darkened, and almost obscured, like her life); magazines and first editions of book-length collections in which Poe was published; and, of course, the newspaper death
notice of E. A. Poe. Many of these objects exert their own particular and mysterious power even at one further remove (photographic representation) from the reader; such is the ability of the material object to conjure the presence of its possessor, its subject, or its time. Others cast their spells as we take in their import (the first page of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in the 1841 *Graham’s Magazine*) or learn what they have to disclose (a detail from “MS. Found in a Bottle,” published in the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter*, with an evocative epigraph deleted in subsequent printings of the tale: “A wet sheet and a flowing sea”).

The volume’s editors effectively group these twenty objects and articles into three sections; authors of the essays include both highly distinguished scholars and newcomers on the scene. Part 1, “People in Poe’s Life,” contains seven essays and will be of high interest to those with a historical or biographical bent. Part 2 comprises nine articles on “themes in Poe’s work”: ambition, mystery, terror, ratiocination, memory, beauty, cosmology, judgment, and love. Part 3, titled “Mortality and Immortality,” usefully takes us to the end of Poe’s life (the *New-York Daily Tribune* obituary) and beyond, with a consideration of the writer’s “world-wide fame” and of the French writer Baudelaire’s role in that fame, through his translations of Poe.

Absorbing material appears throughout. This reader, for instance, was particularly captivated by information in Harry Lee Poe’s essay on Edgar’s parents Eliza and David Poe (and Eliza’s own mother, Elizabeth Arnold, herself an actor on the London stage). Scott Peeples sheds light on Rosalie Poe, one of the few women in Poe’s world who seems not, strangely enough, to have impacted his fiction or his life in any measurable way, but whose end (and perhaps life) was as tragical as the end of any of his fictional heroines. Richard Kopley poignantly interprets *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* as “an embodiment of Poe’s infinite memory” of the death of his brother Henry [16], who fell victim not only to the family curse of alcoholism but also to tuberculosis and was nursed, during his final illness, by Edgar. Jana Argersinger meditates on Poe’s marriage to Virginia Clemm and its relation to “Eleonora: A Fable”; Stephen Rachman urges us to consider “The Raven” as “the first great poem of the mechanical age” [72]. Robert J. Scholnik elucidates *Eureka* as Poe’s “response to deep scientific questions” [86] and contemporaneous debate, noting that in this text Poe may have been the first to solve “a long-standing scientific problem, ‘Olber’s Paradox,’ which asked why, given a seemingly infinite number of stars all emitting light, the night sky is dark, and not, as one would expect, bright” [84]. And Gabrielle Dean’s treatment of the Players Club daguerrotype is a tour de force, including her reading of the iconic portrait and her history of its “tumultuous history of loss, damage, and custodial mediation”
[111]—that is, its apparent theft and disappearance, between 1981 and 2003, and the deployment of the FBI’s Stolen Art Division in its recovery.

More delights await those who choose to plumb the contents of *Edgar Allan Poe in 20 Objects* in its entirety. A deeply satisfying read, it could also be highly useful for those teaching Poe and his works. It may certainly be said that, like many of the objects it presents, the book is “an extraordinarily characteristic and evocative monument to its subject” [112].

Julie E. Hall

*Sam Houston State University*
Notes on Contributors

N. Christine Brookes, Professor of French at Central Michigan University, is a specialist in nineteenth-century French cultural studies and transnational cultural relations. She cowrote the book *The French Face of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Monsieur de l'Aubépine & His Second Empire Critics* with Michael W. Anesko (Penn State).

J. Michelle Coghlán is Lecturer in American Literature at the University of Manchester, UK. She is the author of *Sensational Internationalism: The Paris Commune and the Remapping of American Memory in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2016), which won the 2017 Arthur Miller Centre First Book Prize in American Studies, as well as essays published in *Arizona Quarterly*, the *Henry James Review*, and *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*. In 2014, she served as guest editor of the “Tasting Modernism” special issue of *Resilience*.

Julie E. Hall is Professor of English at Sam Houston State University and editor of the *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*. She is coeditor, with Monika Elbert and Katharine Rodier, of *Reinventing the Peabody Sisters* (2006) and author of numerous articles on Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne, published in *Symbiosis*, *Legacy*, and the *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, among other journals and collections.

Djelal Kadir is the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of books in comparative cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and world literature, as well as editor or coeditor of a number of literary histories, anthologies of world literature, and special issues of scholarly journals on literary theory and on authors from around the world. He is the founding president of the International American Studies Association, a founding board member of Synopsis: The European School of Comparative Studies, a senior fellow and executive board member of The Stockholm Collegium of World Literary History, and a member of the founding board of the Institute for World Literature.

Travis Montgomery is Associate Professor of English at Oklahoma Christian University. He is an officer of the Poe Studies Association, and he recently wrote an essay about gothic poetry that will appear in *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic*, a collection of essays edited by Jeffrey Weinstock.
Marcia D. Nichols is Assistant Professor in the Center for Learning Innovation at the University of Minnesota Rochester, where she teaches literature and medical humanities and engages in learning research. In addition to her work on pedagogy, she has published on Charles Brockden Brown, early modern erotica, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medicine and midwifery. Her current book project analyzes the constructions of gender, sexuality, and masculine identity in midwifery manuals and other medical texts in the long eighteenth century.

Gretchen J. Woertendyke is Associate Professor of English at the University of South Carolina. Her first book, Hemispheric Regionalism: Romance and the Geography of Genre, was published by Oxford University Press in 2016. She has written on secret histories, slave narratives, and Charles Brockden Brown, among other topics. Her book-in-progress is currently titled “A History of Secrecy in the United States.”