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All Astir

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All Astir

I begin this “All Astir” with the sad news of the passing of P. Sterling Stuckey on August 15, 2018, at the age of 86, and of the passing of John B. (Jack) Putnam on September 9, 2018, at the age of 82. Both figures had a lasting impact on my life. As an undergraduate at Northwestern University, I took a course with Professor Stuckey and remember being blown away by his discussion of “Benito Cereno.” Later, I met Jack Putnam in the persona of Herman Melville at an event honoring the sesquicentennial of Melville’s 1841 departure from Fairhaven, Mass., when he quoted all of “Loomings” by heart.

Carolyn L. Karcher, author of *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville’s America* (1980), writes:

Melville scholars owe an incalculable debt to Sterling Stuckey for reorienting our field by illuminating the African influences on Melville’s art and demonstrating Melville’s familiarity with African culture, acquired both through wide reading of travel accounts and through direct exposure to African American music and dance while growing up in New York and Albany and interacting with his fellow sailors. Although earlier scholars had focused on Melville’s engagement with the controversy over slavery and race, it was Sterling who, in “The Death of Benito Cereno” and later in “The Tambourine in Glory” and a wealth of other essays, turned our attention to African culture and prompted us to begin examining Melville’s oeuvre from an Afrocentric perspective.

I first met Sterling in December 1984, when we both spoke on an MLA panel organized by Barbara Foley. We immediately recognized each other as intellectual kin and started exchanging work in progress and seeking opportunities to discuss our scholarly projects in person. One of these opportunities arose at a forum in Paris organized by the late Viola Sachs, where Sterling, his lovely wife Harriette, and I spent a lot of time together. Sterling had clearly influenced French Melvilleans as deeply as he had us Americans, and it was fascinating to observe them applying his insights as they reinterpreted texts they had been studying for years.

Sterling’s scholarship also helped spark a major conference in New Bedford on Melville and Frederick Douglass at which he gave the keynote. Titled “Cheer and Gloom: Douglass and Melville on Slave Dance and Music,” it appears in the volume of essays that grew out of the conference, edited by Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter.

As important as it is to Melvilleans, Sterling’s scholarship extended far beyond our domain. His monumental works *The Ideological Origins of Black*

Nationalism (1972), *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987), and *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History* (1994) made him one of the most distinguished American historians of his time. Testifying to the full scope of his achievements, “A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of P. Sterling Stuckey” was held by the University of California, Riverside, in honor of his retirement in 2004. Its subject was “Africans, Culture, and Intellectuals in North America: P. Sterling Stuckey and the Folk.” Most of the participants were former students who had won recognition for their own contributions, while others were leading scholars in their fields who paid tribute to his influence on their work. Sterling’s ethos—his generosity, his modesty, his warmth, his utter dedication to fostering appreciation of African and African American culture—radiated through the conference and fused us all into a community. That is how I will always remember Sterling.

Robert S. Levine, author of *Race, Transnationalism, and Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies* (2017), remembers Professor Stuckey’s scholarship and his generosity:

In 1995, I phoned Sterling Stuckey to ask him to contribute an essay to *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*. I did this with some trepidation. After all, he was a distinguished historian in African American studies and I was, well, an English professor. But Sterling was unfailingly gracious on the phone, as he would be unfailingly gracious on email and in person, and he quickly agreed to contribute an essay on African culture and *Moby-Dick*. That essay would eventually become part of his *African Culture and Melville’s Art* (2009), and it was certainly one of the most provocative essays in the 1998 *Companion*.

At the time that I called Sterling, he was my intellectual hero, someone to whom I was hugely indebted. His *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987) had a significant impact on my then book-in-progress on Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany. I had been trying to figure out how to talk about Douglass and Delany in relation to the burgeoning black nationalism of the antebellum period. *Slave Culture* taught me about the complexities of black nationalism, to the point where I could reject the binary of Douglass as assimilationist and Delany as black nationalist and see both men as creatively working as black nationalists. I had also been taken by Sterling’s treatment of Melville in *Going through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History* (1994). In this book, Sterling presents Melville as not just an American artist but also as an African American artist. For Sterling, black artistic identity was as much about a strong connection to African American and African diasporic traditions as race itself, and Melville, Sterling argued, was as knowledgeable about those traditions as most nineteenth-century black artists. To some extent, then, Sterling presented Melville as a black artist. Thanks to Sterling, this white

professor felt more comfortable teaching African American literature and including Melville in those courses.

Samuel Otter and I got to know Sterling personally when he agreed to give one of the plenaries at the 2005 New Bedford Douglass-Melville conference that we codirected. Sterling gloried in a conference devoted to Douglass and Melville, gave a wonderful talk titled “Cheer and Gloom: Douglass and Melville on Slave Dance and Music,” and remained energized by the conference, arguably for the rest of his life. More polished versions of his talk appeared in the collection that emerged from the conference, *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation* (2008), and in *African Culture and Melville’s Art*. Such was Sterling’s passion for trying to better understand the influence of Douglass on Melville that he set aside a book project on Paul Robeson to continue his work on the subject, convinced that the two men had an ongoing textual conversation that could best be discerned in *Moby-Dick*. According to Tim Brent, Sterling’s editor at Oxford University Press, that’s what he was working on at the time of his death. One can only hope that a book manuscript will turn up. Sterling’s intellectual passion and generosity will be sorely missed; his publications remain an inspiration.

Eric J. Sundquist, author of *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (1992), also evokes Professor Stuckey’s warmth as well as his towering intellect:

I will remember Sterling Stuckey as a man with a gentle, warm soul and a fierce, towering intellect. His passion for standing outside rigid scholarly categories allowed him to make great contributions at once to African Studies, African American Studies, and American Studies. He thought hemispherically and globally long before it became commonplace to do so, and he brought into view the deep influences of Africa on the Americas and American literature, broadly understood, that others had misinterpreted or missed altogether. In addition to his groundbreaking interpretations of black American music, dance, language, religion, and material culture, he showed us dimensions of Melville that, without his example, we would still be waiting to discover today. I have always thought that the title of his best-known book, *Slave Culture*, beyond its overt meaning, was meant to be understood capaciously—as embracing black and non-black, the living and the dead, all of us imprinted with a legacy at once catastrophic and full of great beauty and vision, like Sterling himself.

Thank you to these colleagues for their lovely remembrances.

Jack Putnam became enamored of Melville during a course he took at Harvard University with Henry A. Murray. He wrote “Whaling and Whalecraft: A Pictorial Account” for the first Norton Critical Edition of *Moby-Dick* (1967), which was considered important enough to be included in both the second



Jack Putnam, in the persona of Herman Melville, reciting chapter 1 of *Moby-Dick*, "Loomings," aboard the 1841 whaleship *Charles W. Morgan*, July 31, 1993. Clockwise from right: Sean Stewart, Melville scholar Mary K. Bercaw Edwards holding her 4-month-old son Jesse Edwards, Guy Hermann with his 3-year-old son Zeb Hermann, Laura Speare, Jacques Brunswick, and Jack Putnam. Photo courtesy of Mary Anne Stets, Mystic Seaport Museum.

(2002) and third (2018) editions. John Bryant, past Editor of *Leviathan* and director of the Melville Electronic Library, writes of him:

Jack was a deeply engaged man, with a remarkable past in maritime life, research, and Melville. A student of Henry Murray at Harvard, he later directed the Association of American University Presses, contributed the map and other drawings in the Norton edition of *Moby-Dick*, and was best known to many of us as a rather convincing presence who dressed in period clothing could recite whole chapters from *Moby-Dick*. He was also employed at the South Street Seaport Museum and developed a Melville walking tour of Lower Manhattan. Starting in the 1990s, I asked Jack to perform his Melville recitations—for NEH seminars at Hofstra, for the Melville Centennial in 1991 at Arrowhead, and for *Moby-Dick* 2001 (only weeks after 9/11). Our last program together was the 2016 celebratory reading of Melville prose and poetry at Melville's gravesite in Woodlawn Cemetery, marking the 125th anniversary of Melville's death. I particularly remember his reading of "The House-top," which surveys the roofs of Manhattan during the time of Civil War riots, and, for Jack, it also recalled the burning time of 2001 that figured devastation at his home and workplace. Jack and I had been communicating, mostly by phone, in recent months to plan an event for the Melville Bicentennial. Though frail, his six-foot-plus frame sustained him, and his voice still flowed like water.

Other scholars echoed John's praise of Jack Putnam. Robert K. Wallace, author of *Melville and Turner: Spheres of Love and Fright* (1992) and *Douglass and Melville: Anchored Together in Neighborly Style* (2005), notes, "Anyone who knew Jack will never forget him," then adds:

I first got to know Jack when I curated an exhibition of Frank Stella's *Moby-Dick* prints at South Street Seaport in the early 1990s. Beyond looking the part of Melville, he seemed to embody his spirit, whether looking at art works, strolling the pier, or leading his incomparable Melville tour in lower Manhattan. He had a rare ability to be entirely present in any current situation while also seeming to have his inner eye on some distant horizon. My next memory of Jack was far from the salt water, on the land at Arrowhead, reciting the "Loomings" chapter from memory as if he had just now drafted it in that room facing the mountain up on the second floor. My last keen memory of Jack came when Michelle Cruey, one of my students in *Moby-Dick* and the Arts at Northern Kentucky University, was planning a trip to New York at mid-semester and thought it would be neat to drop in on the museum and boats at South Street Seaport. I suggested that she contact Jack. He invited her for a tour of the museum along with a customized Melville tour, which resulted in a wonderful photographic suite she presented to the class at the end of the semester. His spirit will always be with me. What a blessing to have known him.

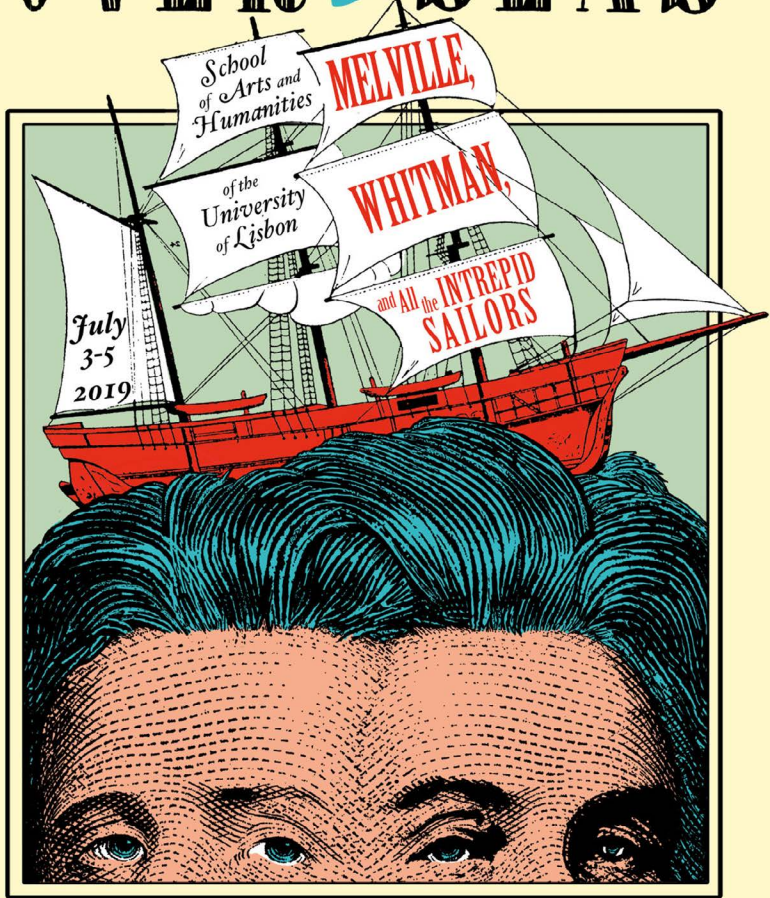
Christopher Sten, author of *The Weaver-God, He Weaves: Melville and the Poetics of the Novel* (1996), also remembers Jack's impersonation of Melville: "I met Jack for the first time in the late 80s at a Melville Society gathering at South Street Seaport when he suddenly appeared dressed in black and led the group on a tour. He was a wonderfully engaging presence who loved to share his mastery of Melville's life and writings." Andrew Delbanco, whose biography *Melville: His World and Work* (2005) investigates Melville as a New Yorker, writes of his fellow New Yorker: "I only met Jack once—but for long enough to know that he was, indeed, a charming, warm, and generous man." It is sad for me to contemplate taking students to lower Manhattan without the possibility of meeting Jack.

Even as we honor the memories of those who have died, we also have a chance to celebrate the work that is currently emerging in the field. The Melville Society's Hennig Cohen Prize committee is very pleased to announce that this year's Hennig Cohen Prize for the best article, book chapter, or essay on Herman Melville goes to Spencer Tricker for "'Five Dusky Phantoms': Gothic Form and Cosmopolitan Shipwreck in Melville's *Moby-Dick*," *Studies in American Fiction* 44.1 (Spring 2017): 1–26. The committee writes in praise of Tricker's article:

Tricker's compelling analysis of the figure of the Malay in *Moby-Dick* richly complicates the continuing inquiry into Melville's literary engagement with racialization and imperialism. Combining biopolitical theory with archival research, Tricker surveys portrayals of the composite, fictive "Malay"—alternatively, "Lascar" or "Manilla-man"—in antebellum print culture. Itself "a product of scientific racism," the term "Malay" came to refer to different groups of maritime contract laborers from South Asia and the Asian Pacific. Much as the menacing Fedallah supplants the amiable Queequeg in *Moby-Dick*, Tricker suggests, Melville's gothic figuration of the former disrupts the promising global community represented by the latter. "Rather than symptomatically expressing the racial anxieties of America's collective unconscious," Tricker writes, "Melville's Gothic itself constructs Malays as symbols of irreclaimable communitarian exception who pose a unique threat to projections of cosmopolitan futurity." Culminating in a brilliant reading of Manilla rope in "The Line," Tricker's fascinating, ambitious essay recontextualizes race across the Pacific. His analysis of how Melville's Pacific Gothic "vision of contested global futurity registers the vanishing point at which humanist desires and racial antagonisms dissonantly converge" initiates a radical reassessment of race in Melville's fiction.

Thanks to the prize committee—Jeannine Marie DeLombard (chair), Hsuan Hsu, and Paul Hurh—for their time and effort on behalf of the Hennig Cohen Prize.

OVER SEAS



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FLUL LETRAS LISBOA



Poster for the “Over_Seas: Melville, Whitman, and all the Intrepid Sailors” conference to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, July 3–5, 2019. Photo courtesy of the Center for English Studies of the University of Lisbon.

Melville's bicentennial year—2019—will be celebrated around the world. The Twelfth International Melville Society Conference, “Melville's Origins,” will be held in New York, the city of Melville's birth, June 17–20. Rodrigo Lazo (University of California, Irvine) and Wyn Kelley (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) will be the keynote speakers. There will be special events and Melville-related excursions around New York City, with an optional trip to Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut on June 21 to tour the 1841 whaleship *Charles W. Morgan* and, for those interested, the opportunity to row a whale-boat. For more information, please see the official conference website: <<https://melville2019.weebly.com/>>.

Northwestern University Press recently completed a 50-year collaboration with the Newberry Library for the publication of the 15 volumes of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition of *The Writings of Herman Melville*. To honor the completion of the edition as well as Melville's bicentennial, the Newberry Library has mounted “Melville: Finding America at Sea; The Life, Writings, and Influence of Herman Melville, Author of *Moby-Dick*,” which opened January 18 and will run until April 6. The exhibit draws on the Newberry's large collection of Melville's works and invites viewers “to explore Melville's interests in democracy, spirituality, Indigeneity, morality, sexuality, labor, nature, and human consciousness.” It contextualizes Melville's works “as the product of a period of spectacular growth, rapid change, horrifying trauma, and grave injustice in the United States and also demonstrates the ways his work continues to resonate for artists and writers today.” The exhibit is bracketed by a pair of special events, beginning with a 36-hour *Moby-Dick* public read-a-thon and ending with a scholarly symposium, “Making Melville Legible: A Symposium Celebrating Completion of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition,” which will take place on Saturday, April 6, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. John Bryant, Alma A. MacDougall, James Noel, and G. Thomas Tanselle will speak at this event. In addition, the Newberry is partnering with the Chicago Opera Theater for a production of the Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer opera “*Moby-Dick*” at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance on April 25 and 28.

The American Studies Group of the Center for English Studies of the University of Lisbon will host an international conference entitled “Over_Seas: Melville, Whitman, and all the Intrepid Sailors” in Lisbon, July 3–5. Keynote speakers will include Dana Luciano (Rutgers University), Maria Irene Ramalho (University of Coimbra and University of Wisconsin, Madison), Mário Avelar (Universidade Aberta, Lisbon), and Mary K. Bercaw Edwards (University of Connecticut). The conference organizers write: “Herman Melville (1819–1891), sailor and writer, plowed the ocean as a tablet to be read, gazing at the white

page where unfathomable characters surface to the eyes of the puzzled reader. ‘Captain’ Walt Whitman (1819–1892), on the other hand, writing ‘in cabin’d ships at sea,’ broke open and passed the divide between in- and out-of-doors, as he urged his book to ‘speed on.’ Both were born 200 years ago. . . . We aim to foreground the international afterlife of both authors and their contribution to the interconnectedness between the arts, sciences, human philosophy and history, with a special focus on the imagination and memory of the oceans.”

The Université de Lille and the Université Paris-Diderot will also host an international conference on Melville, “Melville’s Measures,” October 17–18. Branka Arsić (Columbia University) and Cody Marrs (University of Georgia) will be keynote speakers. The aim of this conference, the organizers note, is “to take measure of Melville’s grappling with the measureless by surveying the various sets of gauging, computing, measuring instruments designed to circumscribe and contain it. In the end, we may wonder whether Melville’s works amount to an irregular system of sorts or whether measures are bound to anagrammatically ‘erase sums.’ In what sense do they unsettle and even subvert ‘the art of measuring’ advocated by Newton in his Preface to *Principia Mathematica*? To what extent are they doomed to be appropriated as canonical criteria by academe? If measures re-assume (yet another anagram) the part once played by a unique lost paradigm, what will result from their multiplication? Or, in Melville’s own words, ‘If Luther’s day expand to Darwin’s year / Shall that exclude the hope—foreclose the fear?’ (*Clarel*).”

There will be two Melville sessions at the American Literature Association conference in Boston, May 23–26. Nathan Wolff (Tufts University) will chair a session entitled “Unsettling Feeling: Melville’s Emotions” and Wyn Kelley (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) will chair a session entitled “Melville and Women, Revisited.”

The San Francisco marathon reading of *Moby-Dick* on October 13–14, 2018, was a resounding success. Please see Colin Dewey’s report immediately following “All Astir” for more on the marathon, including photographs. New Bedford held its 23rd annual *Moby-Dick* Marathon on January 4–6, beginning with a Friday night lecture by Jennifer Baker, “Gender and the Man’s World of *Moby-Dick*.” And Mystic Seaport Museum will hold its 34th annual *Moby-Dick* Marathon, July 31-August 1.

The Rosenbach, a museum and special collections library affiliated with the Free Library of Philadelphia, will mount a Melville-related exhibit next fall entitled “Wrestling with Angels.” Noted artifacts slated for gallery display include a copy of the first British edition of *The Whale* inscribed by Melville to his father-in-law Lemuel Shaw, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s personal

copy of *Moby-Dick*, letters Melville wrote to his London publisher Richard Bentley in 1851 and 1852, and a bookcase that once resided at Arrowhead. Alex L. Ames, who curated the exhibit, writes that the exhibition and an array of events will place *Moby-Dick* in the context of Melville's other publications, encouraging visitors "to read Melville's works and consider what this iconic author had to say about complex issues of his own time that continue to shape American society."

Our website <<http://melvillesociety.org>> continues to feature news about the latest Society-related events, calls-for-papers, and announcements for upcoming conferences. We have redesigned portions of the site to make it easier for interested visitors to join the Society, subscribe to its journal *Leviathan*, contribute to Society projects, and connect with others on the Society's Facebook page. A new menu item (listed under "Conferences") links to a page announcing the new Melville Society Travel Award program. Through the efforts of its officers, especially Meredith Farmer, the Melville Society has established this program, which is intended to help presenters with limited funds to be able to afford the travel, lodging, and other expenses associated with their participation in Society-related conferences. Grant recipients will receive \$300 stipends and have their conference registration fees waived. The first award winners will attend the June 2019 conference in New York. A "Fundly" page has been set up for anyone interested in contributing to the Melville Society Travel Fund: <<https://fundly.com/melville-society-travel-awards>>.

Betsy Sherman, the Interim Director of the Berkshire County Historical Society, which supervises Melville's home Arrowhead in Pittsfield, Mass., writes: "It is with great reluctance that we announce the departure of Will Garrison, our intrepid Director for the past several years. Will has led Arrowhead through a challenging period of restoration and improvements to the home and grounds with wonderful patience and wit. The Board of Directors has begun the process of finding a new director. One of Will's last efforts was to explore funding options for the restoration of the barn; the siding, roof, and drainage all need substantial work. The Board and staff will continue to pursue grants and donations to that end." She then adds: "We will, of course, join all Melvilleans in celebrating the 200th anniversary of Mr. Melville's birth. A winter *Moby-Dick* Film Festival at the Berkshire Athenaeum, followed in early August by his birthday, the recreation of the Monument Mountain hike, and the third *Moby-Dick* Marathon will highlight our celebration."

Last year was equally busy at Arrowhead. On August 1, 2018, Melville's birthday, "Sailing Towards My Father," a dramatic poem on the life of Melville written and staged by Carl A. Rossi, was performed. A reading of *Moby-Dick* that stretched over four days, August 2–5, was held in the home where the



The Melville Bookcase at The Rosenbach. Many of the rare volumes stored in this bookcase will figure in The Rosenbach's upcoming Melville exhibition. Photo courtesy of Alex L. Ames.

book was written. And on August 5, Gordon Hyatt led his 31st hike up Monument Mountain in honor of the 1850 hike that included Melville and Hawthorne. Visit <<https://www.mobydick.org/>> to find out about upcoming events.

The Melville Society book donation program sent a collection of books to Al-Quds University, a Palestinian university in Jerusalem, last August. Two to four books were placed in each of 57 padded envelopes and sent via “M” bag. This delivery joins past donations of books to Russia, India (two institutions), China (two institutions), the Ukraine, Algeria, Iran, and Argentina (eight countries on four continents!). As the person who has collected, packaged, and posted all the books that have been sent overseas, I can say that it is always interesting to learn the rules of each country to which books are sent. Perhaps the most worthy of note was when I had to write the labels in both English and Farsi for the books sent to Iran. Please visit <<http://melvillesociety.org/programs/book-donation-program>> for further information about the book donation program.

Melville’s influence is not always straightforward; tendrils can reach out and encircle writers in myriad ways. Howard Butcher’s *Jonah: A Novel of Men and the Sea* (2018) is set in the offshore oil fields of the Gulf of Mexico and concerns an apprentice oil field diver and an Angolan parolee, but it was inspired by *Moby-Dick*. Butcher writes: “Melville’s world poured into my own like an ocean swell” (*National Review*, April 7, 2018). He sees analogies between nineteenth-century whaling and commercial oil field diving in terms of the violence, the extended period of time at sea, and the search for oil. Another tale of violence, Roseanne Montillo’s *The Wilderness of Ruin: A Tale of Madness, Fire, and the Hunt for America’s Youngest Serial Killer* (2015), also includes Melville, but this time more directly. Montillo imagines Melville enthralled by this true-life story and enlisting Oliver Wendell Holmes to see if the pathology of the child serial killer might illuminate his questioning of his own mental health.

This issue of *Extracts* includes Colin Dewey’s report on the San Francisco *Moby-Dick* Marathon and Ross Martin’s short piece, “Lemuel Shaw, Lost and Found,” which details the identification of the Shaw portrait that was mentioned in the previous issue’s “All Astir” under “The Case of the Mystery Portrait.”

—Mary K. Bercau Edwards
University of Connecticut