

PETER LANG

Edgar Allan Poe as Amateur Psychologist



A COMPANION ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY BRETT ZIMMERMAN

Locating Poe firmly within his *Zeitgeist* vis-à-vis the science and pseudoscience of the early nineteenth century, *Edgar Allan Poe as Amateur Psychologist: A Companion Anthology* simultaneously looks back from the 1830s and 1840s (when his literary career was at its height) to eighteenth-century theories and sources of information on mental illness, as well as forward to our own time to demonstrate how Poe's dramatizations of psychological diseases occasionally anticipate modern nosological classifications and twenty-first-century forensic research. This interdisciplinary collection is a companion to its predecessor, Zimmerman's *Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist* (Peter Lang, 2019); it gathers the most important essays by authors—Hungerford, Stauffer, Stern, Bynum, Cleman, Hester and Segir, Phillips, Shackelford, Scheckel, Lloyd-Smith, Whipple, Butler, Uba, Walker, Zimmerman—who employ historicist and history-of-ideas methodologies. Topics include Poe's use of and eventual disillusionment with phrenology; his attitude toward the controversial “moral treatment” of the insane as well as the “insanity defense” and its connection with the new theory of “moral insanity”; the possible sources of his knowledge of theories of mind, psychopathology and related therapies; his evolution as an amateur psychologist; the connection between physiological sickness and mental distress (the psychosomatic); and the ways in which the psychological profiles of his homicidal characters look forward to modern serial killers. This companion anthology represents a significant addition to Poe scholarship and will be of interest not only to Poe specialists but also to students, teachers, and any intelligent reader interested in the history of ideas and the intersection between literature and “mental philosophy.”

“Zimmerman's anthology is a rich resource for students delving into the dark mental underground of Poe's characters. Many of these close readings are based on the history of the ‘science of mind,’ supplying a reservoir of terminology from the 1730s through the 1840s. These essays are instrumental in interpreting a world as unsettling as it is unknown to twenty-first-century readers. Tapping into *modern* psychological theory, other essays demonstrate Poe's prescience as a pioneer of psychopathology.”

—David E. E. Sloane, Professor of English, University of New Haven



Brett Zimmerman received his BA from the University of Toronto and his MA and PhD from York University, from which he retired as Associate Professor. He has published *Herman Melville: Stargazer* (1998), *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and Style* (2005), and *Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist* (2019).

Edgar Allan Poe
as Amateur Psychologist

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Edgar Allan Poe as Amateur Psychologist

A Companion Anthology

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For her kind and invaluable assistance with the publication of
Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist,
this companion book is gratefully and warmly dedicated to
LYNNE PIPER SHACKELFORD

“The alarming increase of Insanity, as might naturally be expected, has incited many persons to an investigation of this disease”

“*Crazy*, we have borrowed from the French *ecrasé*, crushed, broken: we still use the same meaning, and say that such a person is crack'd. Insane, deranged, or disarranged, melancholic, out of one's wits, lunatic, phrenitic, or as we have corrupted it, frantick, require no explanation. *Beside one's self* most probably originated from the belief of possession by a devil, or evil spirit.”

“The physiology of mind, I humbly conceive to be at present in its infancy”

– John Haslam, *Observations on Madness and Melancholy*
(London 1809)

* * *

“No other disease, probably, is increasing faster in our country than insanity, and from investigations recently made in several of the northern states, there is reason to fear that it already prevails here to a greater extent than in any other country.”

– Amariah Brigham, *Observations on the Influence of Religion upon the Health and Physical Welfare of Mankind*
(Boston 1835)

* * *

“To determine exactly what mental impairment it is which is essential to insanity, metaphysicians and physiologists have long and anxiously labored with hardly the shadow of success.”

– Isaac Ray, *Treatise on the Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity* (1838)



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Acknowledgments

As a final sabbatical project to be concluded before early retirement, a companion anthology to *Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist* seemed a logical and reasonable endeavor. No one warned me, however, about the difficulties of securing permission to republish the work of other scholars, especially when those scholars published decades ago and/or are no longer in this world. For instance, an early surprise came when I sought permission from the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) to reprint I. M. Walker's "The 'Legitimate Sources' of Terror in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" which appeared originally in *The Modern Language Review*, volume 61, no. 4 (1966), pages 585–92. In an email from Cambridge dated 11 June, 2020, Gerard Lowe, Senior Publishing Manager, MHRA, replied, surprisingly, that they had "no record of assignment of copyright in this article."

Even more frustrating was my attempt to secure permission to republish pages 112–37 of "Mere Household Events: The Metaphysics of Mania," a chapter from Elizabeth Phillips' 1979 book *Edgar Allan Poe: An American Imagination* (Port Washington: Kennikat). The book had been reprinted by Associated Faculty Press Inc. I found information on neither Kennikat nor Associated Faculty Press. I did manage to get in touch with Jon Moore at AskZSR, who replied in an email (23 Feb., 2020) that he could not "find Kennikat Press listed in any directories of active publishers, which means the most likely situation here is that they've gone out of business." He also suggested that Associated Faculty Pr. "is

most likely defunct itself,” as it had not published anything in years. Mr. Moore then put me in touch with Molly Keener, who confirmed that both Kennikat and Associate Faculty Press are out of business. The author, Phillips, has passed away.

Around the same time that I was playing detective trying to track down the copyright owner(s) of Phillips’ monograph, I was seeking permission to republish Donald B. Stauffer’s essay “Poe as Phrenologist: The Example of Monsieur Dupin” (113–25), which was published in the 1972 collection *Papers on Poe: Essays in Honor of John Ward Ostrom*, edited by Richard P. Veler. The publisher was Chantry Music Press at Wittenberg University, in Springfield, Ohio. Online searches for Chantry got me nowhere but I was lucky enough to contact Lori Askeland, Chair, Department of English at Wittenberg. Professor Askeland very kindly copied my email to their university archivist, Suzanne Smailes, who informed me that Chantry had been subsumed under Augsburg Press. Nobody at Augsburg seemed to know what I was talking about, however, when I emailed them. I then contacted Charles Shepherdson, a professor at the Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences, University at Albany, SUNY, who put me in touch with Professor Stauffer himself, who granted permission in the absence of any clear indications from Chantry and Augsburg. In the case of permissions regarding the articles by Stauffer, Phillips, and Walker, therefore, I believe the standard statement applies: “All reasonable efforts have been made to secure permissions.”

Far easier, when it came to securing permission, were the five articles—fully a third of this edition—published originally by Duke University Press. I am happy to express my enormous sense of gratitude to Diane Grosse (Manager, Rights & Licensing) for her quick responses and guidance, as I stumbled around tripping over my naivety and inexperience in an editorial capacity. The oldest of Duke’s articles, which takes us all the way back to 1930, is Edward Hungerford’s “Poe and Phrenology,” which appeared initially in *American Literature*, volume 2, no. 1 (209–31). Madeleine B. Stern’s “The Mental Temperament for Phrenologists” first saw light in *American Literature*, volume 40, no. 2, in 1968 (155–63). Duke UP also owns the copyright to John Cleman’s 1991 essay “Irresistible Impulses: Edgar Allan Poe and the Insanity Defense,” which was published in *American Literature*, volume 63, no. 4 (623–40). David W. Butler’s “Usher’s Hypochondriasis: Mental Alienation and Romantic Idealism in Poe’s Gothic Tales” came out in the March, 1976, edition of *American Literature*, volume 48, no. 1 (1–12). Duke also published George Uba’s “Malady and Motive: Medical History and ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’” in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, volume 85, no. 1 (10–22).

Other permissions were relatively easy once the proper connections had been made. As with *Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist*, once again I am indebted to Diana L. Pesek, the Journals Manager at Penn State UP. Lynne Shackelford contacted Ms. Pesek about our desire to have reprinted in this collection her article “‘Infected by Superstitions’: *Folie à Deux* in ‘The Fall of the House of

Usher’,” first published in *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, volume 18, no. 2 (109–24), © Penn State UP, 2017. This article is used by permission of The Pennsylvania State University Press. Ms. Pesek also guided Vicki Hester, who was enquiring about the possibility of republishing an article she co-authored with Emily Segir, “‘The Black Cat’ and Current Forensic Psychology,” which appeared in the *Edgar Allan Poe Review*, volume 15, no. 2 (175–93), © Penn State UP, 2014. This article is also used by permission of The Pennsylvania State University Press. Another easy catch was Susan Scheckel’s “Home-Sickness, Nostalgia, and Therapeutic Narrative in Poe’s ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’” which was published in *Poe Studies* 50 (2017), 12–25. The copyright is owned by Johns Hopkins University Press and Washington State University and is reprinted here with permission of Johns Hopkins UP. Thanks to Hannah Wampler, the Rights & Permissions Office Assistant, for her letter granting permission.

In some cases, human contact was not always possible or easily achieved: permissions had to be granted by way of complicated online forms. Even so, I did get assistance from Sara Martínez, Rights Sales Assistant, Springer Nature, for her guidance regarding the republication of Paige Matthey Bynum’s essay “‘Observe How Healthily—How Calmly I Can Tell You the Whole Story’: Moral Insanity and Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Tell-Tale Heart.’” This article was published in *Literature and Science as Modes of Expression* (141–52), edited by Frederick Amrine. It was #115 of Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, published by Springer Nature, and is copyright © 1989, Kluwer Academic Publishers. Involving no human contact was the online challenge involving “The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe,” published by Allan Smith (hereafter cited by his final name of Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith) in the *Journal of American Studies*, volume 7, no. 3 (279–92). The essay is copyright © Cambridge University Press. Finally, not involving any intimidating online forms or defunct presses was William Whipple’s 1954 article “Poe’s Two-Edged Satiric Tale,” published in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, volume 9, no. 2 (121–33). No permissions are involved in this case because Whipple’s essay is “in the public domain,” but it should be noted that the article’s copyright is owned by the University of California Press.

While seeking copyright holders and permissions, I have had the good fortune of coming in contact with several of the authors—thanks entirely to the willingness of their colleagues to reach out to them on my behalf when I failed to track down the necessary email addresses. I could not have enjoyed the long-distance company of John Cleman, for example, were it not for the assistance of Dr. Linda Greenberg, Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of English at the California State University, Los Angeles. Kathleen Maloney, the Chair of the Department of English Literature and Language at St. Mary’s University, assisted me in contacting Vicki Hester. Thanks as well to Charles Shepherdson, Professor at the Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences,

University at Albany, SUNY, for his invaluable help in putting me in touch with Donald Stauffer; and to Corban Davis, in the Department of American Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who helped me when I was attempting to contact Paige Bynum. I am both profoundly grateful and *deeply touched* by the kindness and willingness to help shown by my American cousins south of the Canadian border. I should not forget to thank Professor David E. E. Sloane, who agreed to provide an endorsement for this book's back cover. My association with Dave goes back to the early 1990s when, as editor of *Essays in Arts and Sciences*, he oversaw the publication of several of my early essays on Melville.

As with the companion book to the current monograph, the good people at Peter Lang guided me once again with timely responses and expertise. Meagan Simpson began the adventure with an enthusiastic response to my initial email enquiry—essentially, a very informal proposal. After months of wise advice from Meagan vis-à-vis the struggle to obtain permissions, I had the contract in hand just as Meagan was stepping down as Acquisitions Editor—to be replaced by the very talented Philip Dunshea.

Closer to home, I have been grateful for the several avenues available at York University, Toronto, for scholars seeking financial assistance in the productions of their projects, including Human Resources and the Professional Expense Reimbursement program (PER), not to mention the Minor Research Grant competition. As for this latter, several capable people were involved in helping me seek funding for this project. Specifically, for their invaluable guidance—without which I was little more than a blithering idiot overwhelmed and intimidated by the logistics of grant application—I would like to express my gratitude to David Cuff, Director of Strategic Research & Partnerships, Office the Dean, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies (LA&PS); Ives Polking, Administrative Assistant, Research, Office of the Dean (LA&PS); and Paminderjit Sunner (Pam), Secretary, Committee on Research Policy and Planning (LA&PS).

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Darlene Munro, a graphics designer who applied her considerable talents in digitally tracing the phrenology illustration (Figure 1.1) in order to improve its quality and make it “camera-ready” for publication. Ms. Munro also replaced the (sometimes barely legible) words and numbers on the diagram with modern fonts to improve readability.



Introduction

“If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul—that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results.” (1: 151)¹

“He was an adventurer into vaults and cellars and horrible underground passages of the human soul.” (D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* 87–88)

“One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—/ One need not be a House—
/ The Brain has Corridors—surpassing/ Material Place—” (Emily Dickinson, *Final Harvest* #670)

“El sueño de la razón produce monstruos.” (“The sleep of reason breeds monsters”) (Francisco de Goya, *Los Caprichos*)

* * *

While certainly able to stand on its own as a contribution to Poe scholarship, this collection of articles was conceived as a companion to my earlier book *Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist*—which is, as far as I know, the first book-length exploration of what Poe knew about psychopathology and how he employed that knowledge in his tales. Contrary to the old myth according to which an alcoholic, drug-addicted, tormented artist wrote to exorcise or document his own

pathologies, less sensationally, Poe simply *did his homework*.² Of course, he had access to medical books; additionally, he was a member of the magazine industry in the 1830s and 40s and the journals and magazines within his reach were replete with information on physical and mental illnesses. He read voraciously, drawing upon mainstream psychology, its rival system phrenology, and the psychotherapeutic theory and practices of both, to render his mentally disturbed characters vividly true to life according to late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century medical texts. We can deduce from these remarks that *EAP: Amateur Psychologist* employs a historicist methodology, which frequently slides into a history-of-ideas methodology in drawing upon late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century medical texts—most notably recent editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (the *DSM*)—to demonstrate the continuity between Poe’s sources, when the science of mind was in its infancy, and our modern pronouncements 200 years later about the fragilities of the human mind (noting, for instance, the uncanny resemblance between certain conclusions reached by the phrenologists and discoveries made by brain-scan research in our own time). *EAP: Amateur Psychologist* also showcases the interrelatedness of the psychopathologies Poe dramatizes and other knowledge frames important to him, including the occult, symbology, chromatography, the “cult of sensibility,” Neoplatonism, and Transcendentalist epistemology.

I shall not pretend, though, that the subject matter and the methodologies of *EAP: Amateur Psychologist* are entirely ground-breaking: the footprints of many scholars were on this path long before mine and their voices tell the rest of the story (as it has been written so far). The subject of Edgar Allan Poe and psychopathology really began to take hold not long after his death when, in fact, he was becoming a legend. Certainly, as Madeleine B. Stern shows, the phrenologists in the second half of the nineteenth century were writing about Poe’s remarkable cranium and trying to explain his behavior, and the Freudians were publishing their remarks about him in the early decades of the last century. But we are not here to apply the methodology of psychoanalysis; as in *EAP: Amateur Psychologist*, the main critical approach practiced here, the historicist, was employed nearly a century ago by Edward Hungerford in his pioneering article “Poe and Phrenology.” This critical methodology is carried on most recently by Vicki Hester and Emily Segir, by Lynne Piper Shackelford, and by Susan Scheckel—and by the ten other scholars in this edition who published between 1930 and 2017: William Whipple, I. M. Walker, Madeleine B. Stern, Donald B. Stauffer, Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith, David W. Butler, Elizabeth C. Phillips, George R. Uba, Paige Matthey Bynum, John Cleman. These scholars and the publication dates of their articles demonstrate that psychopathology in his tales has been an ongoing concern in the Poe community for nearly a century, influencing generation upon generation of readers and academics.³ Despite the explosion of hermeneutical

approaches to Poe's prose, poetry, and nonfiction, and the myriad thematic directions in which they have taken us, interest in his dramatization of psychological aberrations never seems to have gone out of fashion.⁴

* * *

I place each essay in this collection under one of three headings, or categories: (1) Phrenology, (2) Mainstream Psychology, (3) The Psychosomatic.⁵ Now considered a nonsensical pseudo-science but taken seriously by many medical men in the nineteenth century, phrenology is the practice of analyzing the bumps and indentations on a subject's head to determine his or her character, inclinations, strengths, and deficiencies. We begin with that subject in order to recognize the oldest essay in this collection, Hungerford's. He begins by acknowledging Poe's review of Mrs. L. Miles's 1835 book on the subject then demonstrates how Poe soon after began to sprinkle his literary criticism (on both poetry and prose), as well as his book reviews, with the pseudo-science's terminology. Hungerford also discusses several of the short stories that draw upon phrenology, either with a passing reference (as in "The Business Man") or with more drawn out and serious philosophical considerations (as in "The Imp of the Perverse"). Quite understandably, he devotes more space to "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "Ligeia" where he provides quite probably the first literary analysis of Poe characters from a phrenological perspective. Poe, Hungerford makes clear, was very precise and careful in applying the principles of the study, so much so that contemporary readers of "Ligeia," for example, "would recognize at once that Poe knew what he was about. This was a person [Ligeia] who was true to life, scientifically true according to phrenology" (20). To facilitate our understanding of the phrenological faculties and their placement, I have reproduced an illustration from *EAP: Amateur Psychologist* (see Figure 1.1, here); I have also added an illustration of the front cover of the magazine *Phrenology and Physiognomy*, published in the middle of the 1860s by the notable phrenologist Samuel Roberts Wells (see Figure 3.1).⁶

Thirty-eight years after Hungerford's seminal study, Madeleine B. Stern began her lively essay "Poe: 'The Mental Temperament' for Phrenologists" by referring to his interest in the pseudo-science as "well documented" (155)—the passive voice is an allusion to Hungerford only but is testimony to the depth and breadth of his analysis. Unlike her predecessor, however, Stern is not concerned with the literary analysis of Poe's prose tales; rather, she takes us as in a time machine to the middle and latter half of the nineteenth century in America to submerge us in the spirit of the time and place, informing us that several East Coast phrenologists were fascinated with Poe just as Poe was fascinated with phrenology (155). She tells us much about some of the most famous and influential practitioners in America, the Fowler brothers Orson Squire and Lorenzo

Niles, their sister Charlotte and her husband Samuel Roberts Wells, noting that they had an especial interest in literary figures, especially poets, and that in Philadelphia and New York these prominent phrenologists and Poe had opportunities to meet. In fact, she goes on to say, Poe *did* have his head examined and two years after Poe's death Lorenzo published a "pre-Freudian analysis" of him; other such analyses would appear in print until the end of the century. It may be that Poe was inspired to give his characters a sound phrenological basis by Lorenzo's 1838 article "Application of Phrenology to Criticism, and the Analysis of Character" in the *American Phrenological Journal*. Stern also introduces into her discussion the sister science, physiognomy, as well as mesmerism (animal magnetism); she also considers additional pursuits that Poe and the phrenologists in question had in common, such as graphology (the analysis of handwriting as an index to character). Nevertheless, her main theme is expressed chiasmatically: "phrenology was as deeply interested in Poe as Poe was in phrenology."⁷

Four years after Stern, in "Poe as Phrenologist: The Example of Monsieur Dupin," Donald B. Stauffer returned readers to Poe's texts with a detailed and patient examination of the hero of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Stauffer sets the foundation of his literary analysis with a short history of phrenology and its European founders and disciples (Gall, Spurzheim, Combe), as well as with explanations of several cranial faculties identified by these practitioners as they relate most significantly to Poe's literary criticism and, more narrowly, to Dupin himself. Stauffer demonstrates that early during the period of Poe's infatuation with phrenology, he was already seeking to refine its cranial classifications, the better to explain such a mind as that of his literary detective (and, no doubt, Poe's own mind as well). Stauffer also notes, significantly, that in his final revision of "Rue Morgue" Poe *omitted* his lengthy discussion of phrenology as his narrator applied it in his analysis of Dupin's extraordinary mind. Stauffer's purpose is not to explore why Poe seems to have become impatient with Gall's "system of mental philosophy," however, and I take up the question in Chapter Two of *EAP: Amateur Psychologist*. Stauffer concludes his study of Poe's use of phrenology by advancing the connection Edward H. Davidson has made between Dupin and Poe's cosmogonic theories of unification in his treatise *Eureka*.

Phrenology in the nineteenth century was an alternative science of mind to what I have termed "mainstream psychology." Some early psychologists were phrenologists; others dismissed the pursuit as mere charlatanism; others attempted more measured and solid refutations of Gall's system of cranial classification. In 1837, for example, in *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Diseases Affecting the Mind*, the American psychologist James Cowles Prichard provided a lengthy and careful discussion of phrenology with the purpose of repudiating the claims of its adherents (see pages 62–64 of *EAP: Amateur Psychologist*). Whether or not Poe was finally worn down by the attacks on phrenology—and Prichard's close

logical reasoning, and his exposure of the rhetorical fallacies committed by its practitioners and defenders, are devastating—he seems eventually to have become disillusioned with that controversial theory of mind. He always had mainstream psychology to fall back on, however; and by “mainstream psychology” I refer to the theories and practices of that army of early “philosophers of mind” who were not disciples of Gall and whose pioneering work both in Europe and in America would become the foundation of modern psychological science and psychotherapeutic techniques, and which would result ultimately in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and the ICD (International Classification of Diseases) of the World Health Organization (WHO). The essays republished here, as well as the chapters and appendices of *EAP: Amateur Psychologist*, are replete with the names of mainstream psychologists and psychiatrists contemporary with Poe. As we read their books, magazine and journal articles, we can see these early scientists grappling with the classification of mental diseases, disagreeing on nomenclature, appalled and horrified as they encounter and document case study after case study of the numerous psychopathologies with which our species has been cursed. But it is *their* work, not that of the phrenologists, that Poe draws upon for such famous tales as “Berenice,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Black Cat,” “The Premature Burial,” “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether,” and “Thou Art the Man.”⁸

* * *

So we come to the second category of essays in this project, leading off with William Whipple’s article on one of the less studied Poe allegories, “Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether.” “Poe’s Two-Edged Satiric Tale” is divided into two sections: the first is a brief history of what Poe refers to in the story as the “soothing system,” known in psychiatric circles as the “moral treatment” of the insane. Through the application of this (albeit controversial) approach to the handling of the mentally ill, practitioners revolutionized asylums in Europe as well as America; the French physician Philippe Pinel is credited as the founder of the moral system but the reform-minded English Quaker-physician William Tuke must be acknowledged for implementing it in his own country. Whipple also references Americans who adopted it, including an acquaintance of Poe, Dr. Pliny Earle, but while he provides a short but informative discussion of the moral treatment, Whipple’s task in this essay is not so much to provide a critical exegesis of “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” but to determine whom Poe means to satirize through his naïve narrator.⁹ I quote from the closing paragraph:

it is not surprising to find in Poe’s tale two levels of satire: the satire of the moral treatment which was a matter of contention at the time, and the more covert satire upon Dickens who had, Poe thought, attacked him in a review. Finally, even if we disregard

the satire of “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether,” we cannot escape the probability that Poe used [Dickens’s] *American Notes* as a source for his story. (133)

As suggested by the final line, the second half of the essay turns into a source study: Whipple quotes extensively from *American Notes* and thus takes us away from our main thematic concerns in this study. I have therefore omitted the final seven or eight pages.

The second article in Category 2 is Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith’s “The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe,” wherein he provides interpretations of “The Black Cat,” “Berenice,” and the Dupin tales, ending with a discussion of what he believes was Poe’s final “scheme of the mind.” Lloyd-Smith looks to Poe’s scientific contemporaries and their predecessors as possible sources of inspiration: he mentions Erasmus Darwin’s *Zoonomia* (1796), Benjamin Rush’s *Sixteen Lectures* (1811), John Abercrombie’s *Inquiry Into the Intellectual Powers* (1832), Thomas C. Upham’s *Elements of Mental Philosophy* (1837), and Frederick Rauch’s *Psychology; or A View of the Human Soul* (1840), for example. When it comes to the issue of Poe’s sources, all the scholars in this edition have the same challenge that I did in *EAP: Amateur Psychologist*—that of pinning down authoritatively and indisputably the specific scientific studies behind Poe’s tales of mental illness. Like Robert Jacobs in *Poe: Journalist and Critic* (19–34), Lloyd-Smith admits that it is not necessary to insist that Poe read any specific text or texts but that, rather, it is enough to know that “he was an intellectually aware member of his community and through magazine work and his interest in scientific and medical matters would be aware of many of the contemporary theories of the mind, as we are ourselves” (279 n2). Seven years after the publication of “The Psychological Context of Three Tales by Poe,” Lloyd-Smith expanded the discussion in Chapter Two of his book *The Analysis of Motives: Early American Psychology and Fiction*, wherein he brings other Poe stories and *Eureka* into his exegetical arena and provides, as well, a discussion of mesmerism and phrenology. (I should note, here, that for this collection I have reprinted Lloyd-Smith’s 1973 essay rather than the somewhat revised version in the 1980 book: discussions of mesmerism and Poe’s cosmogony in *Eureka* take us farther from the principle concerns in this anthology than I care to go.)

Early in Chapter Three of *Edgar Allan Poe: An American Imagination*, Elizabeth Phillips wonders, “What did Poe know about himself, mental illness, and psychological disturbances—‘the metaphysics of mania,’ a recurrent, if not obsessive subject in the stories?” (100). She begins by placing the question within the context of Poe’s self-knowledge (especially as a young man beginning his career) and his history of drinking, and the next twelve pages provide a short history of his struggles with alcohol—a subject, despite its relation to “The Black Cat,” that takes us in a direction not wholly connected to the present collection of

essays, so I have omitted those pages. Even there, however, she does mention certain tales including “Ligeia” and “Tarr and Fether” that “indicate a familiarity with medical texts” (108). In Section 3 of the chapter—with which we begin our representation of Phillips—she makes her methodology clear in citing medical men well known in Poe’s time (particularly Benjamin Rush and Isaac Ray) who published their views on alcoholism and its relation to the question of mental health. She notes that the language, the terminology, they employ in connection with “dipsomania” is adopted by Poe himself in his letters about his own struggles, and in his tales. Phillips then moves into a patient consideration of several of those fictions, beginning with “Berenice.” She commences with a summary of the tale from Marie Bonaparte but repudiates the Freudians’ psychoanalytical methodology: “Poe’s story, however, belongs to a nineteenth-century context”; she insists on parallels “with studies of the pathology and symptoms of mania in Poe’s period” (116). In subsequent patient readings, she makes the same case with “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Man of the Crowd,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and especially “The Black Cat.” She draws particular attention to Poe’s apparent reliance on Isaac Ray concluding, ultimately, that in the earliest tale of mental derangement, “Berenice,” Poe’s reliance on medical theory “was apparently a kind of trial and apprenticeship” but by the time he penned “Usher” he had a fairly impressive command of medical theory and with his later tales, such as “The Tell-Tale Heart,” he made less of a show of his erudition through the use of psychiatric terminology while still relying on the medical literature for his case studies in derangement (126–27). Phillips completes her insightful chapter by placing her theme of alcoholism and its connection to insanity within the context of Poe’s own biographical details, suggesting that personal experience sometimes supplemented the use of the medical texts at his disposal.

Paige Matthey Bynum, like Phillips, depends heavily in her approach to Poe on Ray and Rush (the “father of American psychiatry”) but concentrates on a single tale in “‘Observe How Healthily—How Calmly I Can Tell You the Whole Story’: Moral Insanity and Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Tell-Tale Heart.’” She begins with a discussion of Rush’s new theory of insanity, his faculty psychology, which posits nine mental “capacities” in three categories; the two most significant for this discussion are the intellectual and the moral categories, or “faculties.” The established belief had been that insanity affected the intellectual faculties, as in the case of someone suffering a psychotic breakdown, but Rush argued that the intellect could remain relatively sound while the *moral* faculty could be diseased (think of Thomas Harris’s brilliant homicidal maniac Hannibal Lecter, for example). Prichard in *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* employs the term “moral insanity,” opposing it to “intellectual insanity.” (Bynum is precise in noting that the concept of moral insanity predates but leads to our contemporary understanding of what we call the psychopathic personality.)

She provides a short history of what was a very controversial subject in Poe's day not only in the psychiatric but also in the legal profession; as well, moral insanity "became the topic of political, social, and theological debate both at home and abroad" (143). Then, bringing us to "The Tell-Tale Heart," she demonstrates how the rhetorical crux of the narrator's argument is based on the established, the older, view of insanity (according to which he thinks of himself as enjoying perfectly sound mental health) but that, ironically, Poe's readership would have recognized him as a case study in moral insanity, especially in conjunction with certain traits and behaviors supposedly illustrating the condition and as attested to (again, ironically) by the protagonist himself.

Two years after the publication of Bynum's essay, John Cleman explored more fully the jurisprudence of insanity, the discourses on mental illness in the context of forensic rhetoric, in "Irresistible Impulses: Edgar Allan Poe and the Insanity Defense." Citing several scholars, Cleman begins with a complaint about "the general tendency to view Poe's fiction as largely divorced from the social and historical context in which he wrote" (624).¹⁰ Therefore, before commencing his analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," and "The Imp of the Perverse," the narrators in which tales all suffer from various forms of insanity as it was defined in the first half of the nineteenth century, Cleman sets the context by describing what the "insanity defense" was and the fierce controversy surrounding its use in medical and legal arenas in both England and the United States. Opponents of this courtroom tactic believed that it undermined the civil order and enabled criminals literally to get away with murder. To those conservatives who believed in the harsh treatment of mentally ill criminals, the insanity defense was one with the equally controversial and revolutionary "moral treatment"—the humane and compassionate handling of the mentally ill in the asylums (the system Poe satirizes in "Tarr and Fether"). Additionally, the insanity defense, depending as it did on the testimony in court of psychiatric specialists, "presented a strongly deterministic view of human nature" (625) and thus moved away from the traditional theological views of human depravity and free will. Cleman then moves us toward Poe, noting that "his awareness of the issues of the insanity-defense controversy can be linked to two specific cases in which the defense was employed" (626), both in the Philadelphia area where Poe lived between 1838 and 1844 and both involving the attorney Peter A. Browne, who would publish his opening remarks in the March 31, 1843, issue of a local newspaper. Those remarks, Cleman continues, "provide a window on the public consciousness of the insanity defense ... during the time in which 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' 'The Black Cat,' and 'The Imp of the Perverse' were written and published" (627). And with that introduction, Cleman begins his analysis of the stories.

Quoting from Cleman and employing some of his insights is an essay published twenty-three years later, "'The Black Cat' and Current Forensic Oratory,"

by Vicki Hester and Emily Segir. The article, however, while placing its discussion within the context of the legal debates concerning the insanity defense, for the most part brings us into our own time and exemplifies the history-of-ideas methodology more than the historicist. Hester and Segir provide a patient demonstration of the narrator in the tale as suffering from what we call the psychopathic personality and what Poe's contemporaries would have called "moral insanity." Drawing especially upon the "Psychopathy Checklist" in Robert D. Hare's *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of Psychopaths Among Us*, the authors show that every character trait of the pathological type in question is illustrated in the "Black Cat" narrator. He is self-centered, cruel, and lacks guilt, conscience, and the ability to empathize with others, whom he does not treat as thinking, feeling human beings. He is glib, grandiose, deceitful, manipulative, impulsive, and emotionally shallow. He has poor behavior controls, displays adult antisocial behavior, insists upon immediate gratification, and refuses to take responsibility for his egregious actions: such people often see *themselves* as victims rather than the (often weak and vulnerable) people and animals whom they have hurt. Although, like psychologically healthy human beings, he wishes to be loved and cared for, his severe personality disorders ensure that the establishment of warm relationships with other people will be a goal impossible to attain or at least to maintain. Still, whether or not we believe the "Black Cat" protagonist in *every* aspect of his narration, we can believe him when he insists that he is not mad—and he is not mad in a modern clinical sense: he is not psychotic like the "Tell-Tale Heart" narrator, and his thoughts are not a jumble of jarring collocations often displayed by victims of schizophrenia. The unfortunate victim of the psychopathic disorder can reason but he reasons without the inhibiting restraints of *emotion*. After their persuasive diagnosis, Hester and Segir return to and end with historicism: John Cleman's discussion of the insanity defense. The difficulty for Poe's contemporaries when dealing in the courts with the likes of his uxoricidal narrator—many jurors would have concluded that the narrator *is* mad despite his protestations to the contrary—is that a determination of "not guilty by reason of insanity" would be applied to a psychological condition that is not treatable. And, as Poe realized, such a criminal would become what we term today a "repeat offender."¹¹

Rather interesting is the backstory to the next article in this collection, Lynne Piper Shackelford's elegantly written and lucid "'Infected by Superstitions': *Folie à Deux* in 'The Fall of the House of Usher.'" One semester, she noticed that a colleague in psychology was offering a special topics course on personality disorders based on the work of American psychologist Theodore Millon. Already having become interested in the intersections between literature and psychology, Professor Shackelford decided to audit the course. Once she read about the schizotypal personality disorder, she immediately thought of Roderick Usher. The course also introduced her to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*

(*DSM*), which became a valuable source for linking nineteenth-century medical knowledge with current terminology. Her method in the resulting essay is therefore two-fold: she looks backward to the nineteenth century for early medical literature on the *folie à deux* (“shared psychotic disorder”) but also looks to our own time—as late as the most recent editions of the *DSM*—to demonstrate the continuity between early and contemporary observations regarding the malady. She thus practices both a historicist and a history-of-ideas approach to what many Poe scholars likely believe is his most exegetically challenging tale (and one rather over-represented in this collection). Unlike other authors in this edition, however, she does not go back as far as Poe’s contemporaneous psychiatric specialists for case studies because research into the psychic phenomenon did not enter medical literature, apparently, until 1860. Shackelford at any rate provides a short but fascinating history of psychological discourse pertaining to *folie à deux*, bringing us up to date with the *DSM-V*. For this unusual psychological phenomenon to occur, a “primary” or “active” agent must be delusional; this “inducer” exerts a powerful influence on a “secondary” or “passive” recipient, who then shares the psychosis. The theory having been explained, Shackelford then suggests how Roderick Usher, the primary agent, can be placed “on the schizophrenia spectrum” (114). With Roderick’s delusions and hallucinations laid out, she then needs to show how the narrator, a man of sensibility and therefore profoundly impressionable, plays the role of the passive recipient. He is “psychologically vulnerable” (120)—he is a passive recipient from the moment he first sets eyes on the House of Usher—and he eventually begins to share Roderick’s warped view of reality. Having taught and written about this complex tale for decades, I have never, until Shackelford’s reading, been able to explain how the narrator can *see* what surely must be his friend’s hallucination: “there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher.” Writing the tale more than two decades before the first published report of *folie à deux*, “Poe establishes himself as a trailblazer in exploring mental illness,” Shackelford concludes.

Also concerned with the narrator’s failure as a psychotherapist is Susan Scheckel. Where we have a therapist, we must have a patient. But what exactly ails Roderick Usher? As we have seen, Shackelford recommends illnesses on the schizophrenia spectrum; I. M. Walker (see below) and David Sloane suggest “nervous fever” due to exposure to miasma; David Butler prefers the diagnosis of hypochondriasis (below); George Uba goes even further, introducing the additional ailment *hysteria* (below). In “Home-Sickness, Nostalgia, and Therapeutic Narrative in Poe’s ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’” Scheckel acknowledges several of the authors represented herein but finds fault specifically with Butler’s diagnosis of hypochondriasis: citing the work of Benjamin Rush, she insists that *nostalgia* (home-sickness) is the *underlying cause* of Usher’s hypochondriasis. It was known since the end of the seventeenth century as a “dangerous, even deadly,

disease” and it is “conspicuous in Poe’s writings even as it goes undiagnosed” (13). Scheckel begins with a short history of the illness and notes that it entered American medical discourse via Benjamin Rush; furthermore, the symptoms Rush describes “share certain commonalities with mental states that Poe investigates at length in his stories” (15). Home-sickness, a malady originally believed to have been caused—in sailors and soldiers, for instance—by geographical displacement, arises in Roderick instead through his distress at contemplating the lost grandeur of his mansion; thus, the disease of home-sickness switches from the sense of physical distancing to *emotional alienation*. Usher’s excessive attachment to home, his refusal to leave his “material locale,” is in itself psychologically unhealthy; but his sense that his mansion is literally crumbling brings about full-blown “nostalgia.” Anxious to relieve Usher’s psychological (not to mention his attendant physiological) distress, the narrator practices Philippe Pinel’s therapy of “sympathetic conversation” (an aspect of Pinel’s famous “moral treatment” of the insane). We all know how *that* works out. As in “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether,” so in “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Poe’s skepticism vis-à-vis contemporary psychotherapeutic techniques is clear: “Poe calls attention to the unstable, provisional, and constructed status of the human sciences and the dangers of probing the mind and soul of another, even with the best of therapeutic intentions” (21). (We may recall in this connection Hawthorne’s understanding of the “unpardonable sin.”)

My own contribution to this collection is an extension of Appendix Six in *Edgar Allan Poe: Amateur Psychologist*: “Charley Goodfellow as Psychopathic Personality in ‘Thou Art the Man.’” Rather than make the argument, there, in full essay form, I suspect I chose to summarize the case in a chart—with the symptoms of the psychopathic personality listed on the left side, and quotations from the tale corresponding to, *illustrating*, those symptoms on the right side—due to fatigue and the concern that by the time they read through to the appendices, readers might be tiring of the methodologies that had already been practiced in the ten previous chapters. Still, I am pleased to have the opportunity to flesh out the insights from the chart into proper essay form as well as to provide fresh perceptions. Consulting the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (fifth edition), and employing insights from Hester and Segir’s excellent article, as well as some exciting observations from an essay by Karen J. Renner on Poe and the contemporary serial killer narrative, I identify in the con-artist Charley Goodfellow several key symptoms often found in those people (men, most frequently) with psychopathic personality disorder, including egocentricity; a complete lack of empathy; aggression toward people and animals; charisma put in the employ of manipulation and deception; substance abuse (a tendency toward excessive drinking that the scheming narrator exploits to expose Charley’s crimes); an aimless lifestyle cursed by poverty resulting from, presumably, an inability to

maintain employment; and talkativeness often exhibiting a facility for persuasive speaking. I devote several pages to this last point: engaging in a brief stylistic analysis of his suasive techniques, I demonstrate that Goodfellow joins the narrators of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Black Cat,” and “The Imp of the Perverse” in Poe’s brotherhood of powerful though mentally disturbed rhetoricians. I close the chapter by considering the disturbing characteristics displayed by the *narrator* that he shares with Charley Goodfellow: cold-bloodedness as well as a willingness to employ deception and manipulation—these latter two exploited not only at the expense of the psychopathic culprit whom he seeks to entrap but also at the *readers’* expense, as shown especially in the numerous ways he attempts to misdirect us through the use of narrative red herrings. He in his own way is as much of a conman as Goodfellow is. We see, as well, a dark side to Poe’s other detective-hero C. August Dupin, whose *barely existent* sense of morality seems to be the only thing distinguishing him from his Moriarty figure, the Minister D—. Renner suggests that this notion of morally ambiguous criminal profilers sharing characteristics of the murdering monsters they pursue is a modern literary (and cinematic) motif but that Poe *invented it* in his Dupin trilogy. She might have included “Thou Art the Man,” which followed the Dupin trilogy and therefore further extends the *motif*.

* * *

As for the third category of this collection, I am employing the term *psychosomatic* broadly. That is, while the term is typically taken to refer to bodily ailments that have their origins in the mind, here I use the word to refer as well to mental ailments that have their origin in the physical. In the stricter use of *psychosomatic*, we move in one direction: the mental affects the physical. For the purposes of this study, we can move in both directions. The authors in this category all argue that something *exterior* to Poe’s characters is having a deleterious effect on their mental states. Famously, Roderick Usher appears to hint at the concept of the psychosomatic: he has written to his friend, the narrator, an urgent letter in which Usher seems, indeed, to make a *connection between the mind and body*: he “spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him” (3: 274).

In his early article, published in 1966, “The ‘Legitimate Sources’ of Terror in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’” I. M. Walker explores the mind-body connection in offering the theory of miasmatic poisoning to account for the bizarre behavior not only of Roderick but also, ultimately, of the narrator. Referring to the black and lurid tarn surrounding the Usher mansion, and the noxious atmosphere arising from the stagnant water and rotting trees around it, Walker asserts that “It was accepted as a scientific fact at the time that odours and gases arising out of foul water or decayed matter were the causes of physical and mental illnesses” (587). After even the narrator claims to see “a pestilent and mystic vapour”