**PUBLICATION DETAILS**Journal: Southern Literary Messenger  
Issue: January 1837 (Vol. 3, No. 1)   
Editor(s): The owner of the *Messenger*, Thomas Willis White, dismissed his assistant, Edgar A. Poe on January 3, after Poe had written most of the reviews for the January issue and had provisionally arranged the contents. White was, however, still discussing with Poe on January 17 how much of his “Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym” could be included in the January issue (*Poe Log* 239). In assuming Poe’s duties, White was thus obliged to work directly with the printer to manage page layout and spacing--which may have contributed to the delay. The March issue of 1837 was the first to identify White officially as editor and proprietor.

Approximate publication date: After January 26, 1837.[[1]](#footnote-0) The issue thus appeared over a month late.[[2]](#footnote-1)

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**COMMENTARY**

The January 1837 issue of the *Southern Literary Messenger* is significant because it contains the first magazine installment of what would become *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, and it was the last issue which Poe had a hand in editing. In his letters, Thomas White claims to have dismissed Poe for irregular behavior (probably intoxication). However, White also faced a cash shortage in the aftermath of Andrew Jackson’s Specie Circular—a topic that James Kirke Paulding takes up in this issue’s “A Visit to My Native Village After an Absence of Thirty Years.” The contents of the January 1837 *Messenger* indeed reflect a range of antebellum issues. Scott’s “Rights of Authors” broaches the copyright issue that would a few years later obsess Poe. Nationalist pride figures in Thomas Jefferson’s letter affirming the superiority of American republican government to British monarchy. But we also see hints of sectional mistrust in Abel Parker Upshur’s review of Nathaniel Beverley Tucker’s *The Partisan Leader*, an 1836 novel that prefigures a civil war between North and South. Poe’s “Pym” initiates a tale of adventure at sea but also resonates with his own review of J.N. Reynolds’s call for a US “South-Sea Expedition.” Lauding the proposal by Reynolds, Poe underscores the potential scientific and commercial benefits to the nation. Elsewhere, Horatio King’s “The Indian Captive as Related by a First Settler” tells of a white boy captured in a border attack, preserved by a loyal Indian, and at last restored to his family. Other contents similarly appeal to sentimentalism or to religious piety.

1. Poe Log: <http://www.eapoe.org/papers/misc1921/tplgc04b.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. *SLM* usually strove to put out issues “on or very near the 20th of each month preceding the one for which it was dated” (Minor 62). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)