ANNUAL MEETING: MLA, December 1976

The fifth annual meeting of the PSA was held in the Monte Carlo Room of the Hotel Americana in New York on December 27, 1976, from 1:00-2:30 p.m. Some eighty-five or more persons attended. The meeting opened with a business session presided over by President Eric W. Carlson. Secretary-Treasurer Richard P. Benton submitted a financial report which showed an accumulated income through December 1976 of $500.93, expenses for 1976 of $203.92, and total assets of $333.66. The financial report was accepted. An amendment to Part IV of the by-laws, required by the state of Connecticut law for tax-exemption status, was proposed and accepted: “Except for reimbursement of necessary expenses, no officer shall receive compensation or salary.”

President Carlson introduced Professor John Reilly as a member of the Executive Committee, Mr. Nolan Smith of American Books World and Mr. Frank Wutte, Jr., of the Bronx Society of Science and Letters. The other two members of the Executive Committee are Professors Joseph DeFalco and Alexander Hammond. President Carlson read a poem by the Spanish poet Ramón Jiménez. He also called attention to copies of the published lectures of the Poe Society of Baltimore and to Topic 30: A Poe Miscellany. And he announced that Professor Benjamin Franklin Fisher would deliver the Poe Society of Baltimore annual lecture on October 9, 1977.

After the business session, three papers were read: J. Gerald Kennedy’s “The Invisible Message: The Problem of Truth in Pym;” John Harmon McElroy’s “On the Coincidence of the Wet Plasters in ‘The Black Cat’;” and John C. Miller’s “John Henry Ingram: English Architect of Poe Biography.” Professor Miller’s paper was especially well received.

Those in attendance at the meeting were: Joel Asarch (NYU); Richard P., Benton (Trinity College, Hartford); Jim Springer (Rhode Island State); Larry Ruehl (Oberlin College); Mary Ellen Caldwell (U. of North Dakota); Eric W. Carlson (U. of Conn.); Thomas C. Carlson (Memphis State); Robert L. Cross (College of Charleston); J. Lasley Dameron (Memphis State); Peter Derrick (Bronza Historical Society); Rick DiMaggio (Arizona State); Benjamin Franklin Fisher (Hahnemann Medical College); Dawson Gaillard (Loyola U., New Orleans); James W. Gargano (Washington & Jefferson College); J.C. Kennedy (Louisiana State); David Kupferman (U. of Maryland); Grace Farrell Lee (Sacred Heart U., Bridgeport); Stuart Levine (U. of Kansas); Darian Lewis (Grad. Ctr., Stud., CUNY); Kent Liangquang (Bluesfield College); Dennis Loyd (David Lipscomb College); John Hamrick McClintock (U. of Arizona); John C. Miller (Old Dominion U.); Joseph Molenda (U. of Texas); Rayburn Moore (U. of Georgia); Maurice Morin (Stonehill College); Andrew Myers (Fordham U.); Elizabeth Phillips (Wake Forest U.); William J. Pope (University of some redundancy; Norman Olen, Jr. (College of Charleston); Burton Pollin (Bronza Community College, ret.); Elmer Pry, Jr., (De Paul U.); John E. Reilly (Holy Cross College); Lance Ropee (Post College, Waterbury); Jerome Rosenberg (Miami U.); Barton L. St. Arminger (Bronza U.); Charles J. Savio (Sweet Briar); James B. Scott (U. of Bridgeport); Betty Shores (Norfolk, Va.); David Shores (Old Dominion U.); Gerald Siegel (York College of Pa.); Dale W. Simpson (North Texas State); Nolan Smith (Am. World’s Bks.); Gern.” “Edgar Allan Poe” is the long biographical and critical introduction to the selections from Poe in the 1962 textbook anthology, Major Writers in America, ed. Perry Miller (Harcourt Brace). The next essay, “The Poe Mystery Case,” from the New York Review of Books, July 13, 1967, is reprinted “because it is more encompassing than reviews generally are, covering—however cursorily—the whole ground. Poe criticizes also because it presumes by the way to expose one of Poe’s deepest-laid plots.” Beginning with a comment on four new Poe editions, two of them (Carlson and Ragan) selections of critical essays on Poe, Wilbur selectively survey and summarizes the nineteenth-century views: Poe seen as a genius both analytical and imaginative, and Poe seen as the immortal author of wicked, decadent verse and fiction. Wilbur then lists and illustrates four devices of instruction that reveal the text: participle to uncover the undercurrent of meanings: symbolic constants, allegorical hints and nudges, allusions to psychological and cosmic dimensions of meaning, repeated plot and structural motifs, as in the Necronomicon vision of “the soul’s conflicts, trials, and cosmic destiny.” Special attention is given to “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” as having an allegorical substratum. Dupin’s intuition or mind-reading procedure gives him more than a sheer analysis. His two voices, one high and one low, provide the narrator with a clue that the “other persons” are to be taken allegorically as elements of one person, whereof Dupin is the presiding faculty.” Similarly, the three readings become one, signifying the recombination and exorcising of the base force within (the raccoon) that would destroy the redemptive principle. Wilbur uses this extended illustration to underscore Patrick Quinn’s reminder that the first task of the literary critic is to determine what is there. The work is there. Yet after Poe’s constancy or “contests” have been discovered, the validity of the reader’s interpretation will depend on his knowledge of the psychological, artistic, and philosophic aspects of the text. The importance of knowing Poe’s perspective is not only stressed in Wilbur’s 1962 essay but implicit in the questions here proposed for further study: how organic are Poe’s voice or styles as expressions of “this or that faculty of ‘eternity’? To what extent should Poe’s characters be regarded as real people and as symbols of the psyche? Are the symbols personal, traditional, or both? Is the symbolism ob- ornamental? Is Poe’s ‘fundamental drama of the soul’s struggle... always the essential one?” Since 1967, when these guiding questions were raised, Poe criticism has made notable progress in defining what is there through close readings of the significant details, as in Wilbur’s own and Hallibuton’s studies, and of the style or language, as in Jacob’s and Stauffer’s. Wilbur, Jacobs, Carlson, Pechter, and Benton (cf. his symposium, Poe as Literary Cosmologist in Eureka), among others, have pointed to the central importance of Eureka as a clue to Poe’s perspective, ignorance of which leaves new hypotheses suspended in mid-air. Also, ignorance of Wilbur’s 1973 essay on Pym, in print for three and a half years, and “noticed” in this Newsletter at the time, has now become inexcusable. Reprinted here from the David Godine edition of Eryc, it deserves recognition as the best Pym essay in ten years. It sets Pym as a gothic soul questing for and, through a series of deaths and rebirths, returning to its true self. Pym, among other Poe heroes, achieves his destiny by “re-membering the lost harmony of things and re-creating God through the combinative power of visionary thought. In Poe’s
essentail myth, as in aonistic belief, the soul in restoring Py
restores God. Thus, in the context of the Py myth, Wilbur's interpretation of the
coherent allegory throughout—"a
powerful rison which is Poe's and nobody else's." Within
this context, Wilbur's interpretation deelves deeply into Poe's source
for names and character detail: the Bibli
cite from December 1973, was
unavailable to David Halliburton while at work on his Counts
beauty of Poe (1973), in which we find a striking
similarity: Py
viewed as an "epistemic being" who through "deeper, more
principal areas of experience" achieves an ontological deliverance, a
change in being," or "a pure transcendent"
attitude of knowledge to know and seriously
contemplate these discussions before leaving aside their type
writers to turn out more essays on
Pym.
Eric W. Carlson, University of Connecticut
The Illustrated Edgar Allan Poe. Illustrated by Wilfrid Satt
This is a misnomer, since it implies a "complete" edition of Poe's works, with illustrations, whereas
includes are only twelve tales and two poems. Works by Poe
Illustrator would have been more accurate, since the
book is a kind of hoax, in that Satt's has constructed or
assembled the illustrations without fundamentally creating them. His technique is photographically to merge
the texts with "pictures," less so to illustrate "characteristics" and emotions (but rarely) drawing in small details. It was developed by Max Ernst,
who is not mentioned by Satt's in his acknowledgments, or by the publisher in the jacket blurb, or by his friend Thomas
J. Albright, art critic. The Introduction. Ernst, however, added
his own distinctive and often satiric drawn elements to these works, which did not illustrate a text. The eighty pictures of the
tales show a style midway between Poe's intent and Satt's, more or less sequential within a single tale and used "found"
print-sections from ill-matched sources; e.g., the "Venetian
setting of the "Assignation" includes Venetian canals, a Floren
tine building, an English country house, a Florentine facade, a
"Metzengerstein" includes a Bosch grotesque, French eighteenth
century courtoisie, a man in Renaissance dress, and medieval
castles. The order of the tales is altered in some cases.
"The "Roe Murga" bears too many traces of the celebrated illustrations endlessly reproduced from the 1884
Quarin illustrated Paris edition, while "Lander's Cottage" settles for a series of anachronistically placed prints;
the rest are reproduced by offset printing, and alternate between framed, sometimes arbitrarily geometrical
outlined shapes and single or double page prints bleeding off the edge. Sativity, trained in East German
industrial design before settling in San Francisco, initiated his illustra
tive "method" in The Annotated Dracula (of 1975) before "constructing" his Poe. There is little reason to hope for more
contrived interpretations of other tales on another board.
Burton R. Pollin, Professor Emeritus
Brox Community College of the City University of New York
Topic: 30, A Journal of the Liberal Arts (Washington and Jefferson
College), volume XVI (1976), 80 pp.
This Poe miscellany contains six articles, edited by James W.
Gargano. In Poe and Daniel Defoe: A Significant Relationship
Burton R. Pollin scrutinizes Poe's January 1836 review of a
pirated Harper edition of Robinson Crusoe. Analysis of Poe's heavy
borrowings, some erroneous, from the "Biographical Sketch" shows that the review leads to the conclusion that except for
Pym "Poe adopts Defoe's method of verisimilitude, but not his
material." Poe's subsequent references to Defoe include the
letch with which Poe uses the word "verisimilitude" as meaning to deceive rather than, as in Defoe's novel, to
please or excite. Poe insisted on unity and controlling point of
view as well as authenticity of detail. James J. Anderson, in "Dickens and Poe: A Comic Executive," considers five of the
tales of comics examples of "the innumerable ways in which
man gulls and misleads himself." In "The Spectacles," "The Sphinx," and "The Angel of the Odd" the comic strip has a
liberal allegorical narrative function, and the entreated imagination
becomes aware of the mysterious, the varied, the odd. In
"The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether" and in "The Devil
in the Belfry," however, the narrators are carrying us blind to
their well-intended world. Below the comic surface of each tale the theme of perception establishes a serious connection with the tales of terror. The article by this reviewer (E.W.C.) treats "William William" with subjects of psycho
comedy, and more generally with the relatively slight but the label "tale of conscience" usually implies. As a Double, Wilson II personifies the
primal, essential Self that looms out of the subliminal dark
ness into Wilson's memory-consciousness. This story is related
in Poe's wider perspective and to recent studies of the divided self.
Except for slight changes in the final three paragraphs, Gerald
Kennedy's "The Infernal Terrors" in American Literature
is identical with "The Invisible Message. The Problem of Truth in
Pym," his paper at the annual meeting of the Poe Studies Associa
tion in New York, December 1976. From Poe's play on double
ness Kennedy derives the notion that Pym is Poe's most ambi
tious hoax, the assumption being that he is finding audiences of
the "unawashed readers." The key to
"the esoteric underside of Pym" is found in wordplay, parody,
meaningless details, and intellectual games. The Preface is not a
mocking, the hypothesis as ironic in tone as an idle detail as
mocking, the hypotethical, the personal note as editors as
normally misleading, the editorial note as unreliable, etc., until the entire message of the novel
becomes "invisible." The conclusion reached is that for Poe
experience is "contradictory, illogical, absurd, making
it impossible to know."
No effort is made to test this interpretation by reference to Poe's philosophic perspective (Eureka,
"Mesmeric Revelation," etc.) or to compare it with Halliburton's
introduction to the David Godine
Pym, neither of which is mentioned in the list of earlier essays on
Pym.
Using Auden, Tate, and Wilbur as points of reference, Joseph
M. DeFalco, in "Literature and Meaning in Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym" (read at PSAs meeting, December 1975),
finds this novel to be organized by the metaphor of the enigmatic
white figure at the conclusion. More recently Wilson has discussed Poe's
discrimination as the source of authority rejected and rationality abandoned in favor of
willfulness, of a recognition (in Peters) of "man's primal state," and
apologies for the primal "state of matter," reflects Pym's dualism of spirit and
matter. In his journey into self, Poe achieves 'a new being'
through total derradication and through progression, a recognition.
In the corresponding similarities, this study also lacks reference to Wilbur's and Halliburton's prior
essays on Pym.
In The Limits of Flute: Poe and The Poetic Principle" Dwayne Thorespev attempts a correction of the common view that Poe
was a visionary Romantic eclectic searching for the Platonic
Ideal of Beauty. On the contrary, holds Thore, Poe was "the
masterful analyst" of "secrets" of unconscious processes that
within the
man is bound to the rock of time; any attempted flight from
time to eternity is doomed to result in "a handful of ashes." As
an argument in Poe's The Poetic Principle is defined that principle as precisely this "immortal instinct
deep within the spirit of man," as the power by which the imagina
could glimmer "the Beauty above" and explain the "birth of
the image, or -- "the birth of a vision- ary" (as in "The Stylus
(Ualume)"
the poem necessarily offers a realized reality or truth, does it not?
Eric W. Carlson, University of Connecticut

OTHER NOTEWORTHY PUBLICATIONS ON POE
John Carl Miller, Building Poe Biography, Baton Rouge: Louisiana
University Press, 1977, 297 pp. A selection of 56 letters from the Ingram Collection, documenting
(with Miller's accompanying commentary) the "building of
Ingram's 1880 biography of Poe. (To be reviewed in November 1977 Newsletter).
Honorable mention goes to Edward W. Pitcher, "Poe's Eureka as a
Prose Poem," The American Transcendental Quarterly, Issue 29
(Winter 1975), 61-71, as the best analysis of Poe as an American
intellectual. For the "Poe's Theological Sketch" in his dissertation, a master's thesis on the proce
poem of the U of Western Ontario under Professor Frank Rans in 1968. Another excellent and little-known article by Pitcher is "The Archaic Mythology of the Comic Essay" in "Eureka: The Canadian Review of American Studies, VI,
n. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 27-25. These were not included in
Benton's recent bibliography of Poe's criticism. The award for the least "least" highlighted in this 1976 collection goes to "The Gold in the Bug" by Jean Ricardou, trans. Frank Towne, Poe Studies, December 1976. If this is an example of French linguist
ic phenomenology, we say, "That's quite enough, thank you."

MISCELLANEOUS
Henry Golemba, managing editor, Criticism, English Department,
Wayne State University (Detroit, Michigan 48202), writes that he
"welcomes articles on Poe...we try to report on an article
within a month's time."
The Eighteenth-Century Gothic Novel: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism and Selected Texts, ed. Dan J. McCullough
and Subby Devendra Varma and Maurice Levy. New
The cost ($30.00) will drive off the casual; the contents will
bore the devoted ever so often, and McNutt's aim is toward
the specialist. In 13 sections all aspects related to Gothicism are
covered: a "Defining Terms and Research Guides," "Aesthetic
Background," "Literary Background," "Psychological, Social,
and Scientific Background," "Eighteenth-Century Gothic," and
beyond ("The Gothic Legacy"), with materials, primary and secondary, about six specific novelists: Walpole, Rowe, Smith, Radcliffe, Lewis, Beckford. An appendix selectively covers foreign-language items. The index is useful. Not nearly literary, but equally valuable, other art currents—such as architectural and visual—are itemized, and from here all sorts of projects can march forth. Despite McNutt’s disinclinations in his preface, certain inconsistencies are insufficiently Emersonian in substance to go unnoticed. Where, for instance, is Burra’s essay on Baroque and Gothic Sentimentalism in the 1930 Farrago? Or Eric Maple, The Dark World of Witches (1962, 1964)? The placement of Robert Heilman’s "Charlotte Bronte’s 'New' Gothic" on p. 117 is bizarre, as may be true of others nearby; are they "general" influences? The section on influence upon American Literature is also so wanting that it will raise hackles. Melville and the Gothic novel is the subject of a book-length study in German, not cited here, nor is the original appearance of Arvin’s essay on that subject [NRF(1949)]. A more general bibliographic search, Benton’s The Problems of Literary Gothicism ("RSQ(1972)) also is omitted. The citing of Hawthorne’s preface to The Marble Faun is quirky: why from Pearson’s anthology? Coad’s essay on the plays of Samuel Woodworth and their British antecedents would be a proper companion for his essay on wider reaching American Gothic. Finally, where, oh where is our Poe! Hartley and Whitt are but two among a vast number who address the subject of Poe’s debt to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothicism. Bailey, Kendall, Abel, Spitzer, and Phillips on ‘'Other"; Schroeter and Griffith on 'Ligelia"; Thompson on "The Oval Portrait"; Fisher on "Metzenstein"; Campbell on "Cask"; all are left out in the cold. And where, by the way, are Lionel Stevenson, "AEG (1957) and an anonymous reviewer, Saturday Review (1884) of Wilkie Collins on that worthy and Radcliffean tactics? McNutt marshals much useful material and information, and for this we are grateful. Although no bibliography is complete, much less perfect, the omissions (those devilish contemporaneous reviews, all of which never get into the compiler’s clutchets) and idiosyncrasies, as noted above stand out because of their janglings in this great, usually harmonious whole.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher, Hahnemann Medical College


Mellow authority characterizes this book by an experienced scholar, as its pages unfold a wealth of information concerning vast ranges of fiction and periodical reading. Strengthening the American dependence upon British models, as well as the earnest desire to create an original American fiction, Doubleday provides provocative readings of Edgeworth, Austen, Scott, Cooper, and Hawthorne, not neglecting nearly forgotten names such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick, William Austin (whose "Peter Rugge: The Missing Man" lives chiefly because of Hawthorne’s "A Visitant's Collection"), and William Leete Stone (even deeper into oblivion than the others, but deservedly meriting a rescue). Implicit throughout the sections on minor American writers is the need for additional examination of critical theory of fiction during this time, particularly of American fiction. Poe’s name occurs fleetingly, although Doubleday hints as much as he asserts about Gothic elements in "Usher." Modestly reminding that other writers might have been included, Doubleday is open to chiding for omitting James Kirke Paulding from among those significant in creating the "varieties" analyzed.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, Hahnemann Medical College


Superseding the incomplete and imperfect 1891 edition, this handsomely printed volume contains 25 stories, 18 original engravings, an informative introduction, and a set of explanatory, bibliographic, and textual notes on each selection. None of the tales are here collected for the first time. The text is that of the first printing rather than the manuscript. Known chiefly as the author of Frankenstein Mary Shelley also had published five other novels, one novelta, more than a dozen essays and reviews, several travel books, two dramas, and five writers’ lives for Lardner’s Cyclopedia. Most of these tales were published in The Keepsake, a popular Annual (1828-57). As the life span (1797-1851) of Mary Shelley makes her more or less contemporary with Poe, so her tales resemble Poe’s in their Gothic-Romantic materials. Romantic devices include metempsychosis and settings remote in time and place; the science-fiction element is subordinating to a study in character. Like Poe she avoids explicit moralizing and insisted that fiction “must never divest itself of a certain idealism, which forms its chief beauty.”

E. W. Carson, University of Connecticut

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 1977

Our appeal for payment of 1976 dues met with a good response. Membership is by the calendar year. Prompt payment of 1977 dues from a larger number will enable us to keep the fee at $3, which is only half of what many other societies charge. It is your dues that largely make possible the printing and mailing of 1200 copies of this letter twice a year to scholars in Canada, Europe, Japan, USSR, as well as in the U.S. Please mail your check to our secretary-treasurer,

Prof. Richard P. Benton, 14 Rockwell Place, W. Hartford, CT 06107

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