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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 fifty-eight 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 Worlds Books and Mr. Frank Wuttge, 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 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 Borch (Louisiana State); Larry Buell (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 (Bronx Historical Society); Rick DiMaggio (Arizona State); Benjamin Franklin Fisher (Hahnemann Medical College); Dawson Gaillard (Loyola U, New Orleans); James W. Gargano (Washington & Jefferson); J.G. Kennedy (Louisiana State); David Kuperman (U of Md.); Grace Farrell Lee (Sacred Heart U, Bupersport); Stuart Levine (U of Kansas); Darian Lewis (Grad. Ctr., Stud., CUNY); Kent Ljunquist (Bluefield College); Dennis Loyd (David Lipscomb College); John Harmon McElroy (U of Arizona); John C. Miller (Old Dominion U); Joseph Moldenhauer (U of Texas); Rayburn Moore (U of Georgia); Maurice Morin (Stonehill College); Andrew Myers (Fordham U); Elizabeth Phillips (Wake Forest U); Akio Namekata (U of Tokyo); Norman Olsen, Jr. (College of Charleston); Burton R. Pollin (Bronx Community College, ret.); Elmer Pry, Jr., (De Paul U); John E. Reilly (Holy Cross College); Lance Roepe (Post College, Waterbury); Jerome Rosenberg (Miami U); Barton L. St. Armand (Brown U); John E. Savarese (Sweet Briar); James B. Scott (U of Dominion U); Betty Shores (Norfolk, Va.); David Shostet (Old Dominion U); Gerald Siegel (York College of Pa.); Dale W. Simpson (North Texas State); Nolan Smith (Am. Worlds Bks.); George H. Soule, Jr. (U of New Mexico); Donald B. Stauffer (SUNY at Albany); Elsie Stempinski (West Hartford, CT.); Donald Tanasoca (William Patterson College); Dwight Thomas (U of Pa.); G.R. Thompson (Purdue U); Lucille Travis (Susquehanna U, N.Y.); Arlin Turner (Duke U); Elizabeth Wiley (Susquehanna U); Victor J. Vitanza (Eastern Illinois U); Charles N. Watson, Jr. (Syracuse U); Bruce Weiner (U of Pa.); Monica Weis (Nazareth College, Rochester); Maurita Willett (U of Illinois); Thomas Woodson (Ohio SU); Frank Wuttge, Jr. (Bronx Society of Sciences and Letters).

NEW POE PUBLICATIONS

Richard Wilbur, *Responses: Prose Pieces 1953-1976* (Harvest Book HB 349). New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. 238 pp., \$3.95.

Poe students will be delighted to know that among these sixteen essays are three of the heretofore least available of Wilbur's essays on Poe, "pruned of some redundancies." All three are included "at the risk of disproportion, because I regard my decodings of Poe with a frank satisfaction. They seem to me original and true, and the best excuse for this collection." Wilbur also traces his interest in Poe to the years 1947-1950, when as a Junior Fellow at Harvard, he gave a seminar on Poe, and "discarded an all-but-finished book on his work because I had not yet discovered a stable and adequate vocabulary in which to discuss him." "Edgar Allan Poe" is the long biographical and critical introduction to the selection 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 of Poe criticism; 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 Regan) selections of critical essays on Poe, Wilbur selectively surveys and summarizes the nineteenth-century views: Poe seen as a genius both analytical and imaginative, and Poe seen as the immoral author of wicked, decadent verse and fiction. Wilbur then lists and illustrates four devices of indirection that require the reader participatively to discover the undercurrent of meanings: symbolic constants, allegorical hints and nudges, allusions to psychological and cosmic dimensions of meanings, repeated plot structures suggestive of Poe's Neo-Platonic 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 power makes him more a seer than analyst. 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 buildings become one, signifying the identification and exorcising of the base force within (the orangutan) 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*. Agreed. Yet after Poe's constants or "least details" have been discovered, the validity of the reader's interpretation will depend on his knowledge of the psychological, artistic, and philosophic aspects of Poe's perspective. 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 *'état d'ame'*"? 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 obscurantist? 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 and Halliburton's studies, and of the style or language, as in Jacobs's and Stauffer's. Wilbur, Jacobs, Carlson, Pitcher, and Benton (cf. his symposium, *Poe as Literary Cosmologist in Eureka*), among others, have recognized the central importance of *Eureka* as a clue to Poe's perspective, ignorance of which leaves some 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 of publication, now becomes inexcusable. Reprinted here from the David Godine edition of *Pym*, it deserves recognition as the best *Pym* essay in ten years. It sees *Pym* as a gnostic 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 "remembering the lost harmony of things and re-creating God through the combinative power of visionary thought. In Poe's

essential myth, as in gnostic belief, the soul in restoring itself restores God." Thus, in the context of Poe's cosmic myth, Wilbur finds Pym to be a coherent allegory throughout—"a powerful vision which is Poe's and nobody else's." Within this context, Wilbur's interpretation delves deeply into Poe's sources for names and other significant details: *Symzonia*, *Astoria*, the Bible, Stephens' Petra, Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon*, and autobiographical elements. This essay, dated February 1973, was unavailable to David Halliburton while at work on his *Edgar Allan Poe* (Princeton, 1973), in which we find a significant similarity: Pym viewed as an "epistemic being" who through "deeper, more primal areas of experience" achieves an ontological deliverance, a change in being, a "pure transcendence." Since 1973, Poe scholars have been under obligation to know and seriously contemplate these discussions before leaping astride their type-writers to turn out more essays on Pym.

Eric W. Carlson, University of Connecticut

The Illustrated Edgar Allan Poe. Illustrated by Wilfried Sätty. New York: Clarkson N. Potter (distributed by Crown Publishers), 1976. 246 pp., \$15.00.

In many ways, this title is a misnomer, since it implies a "complete" edition of Poe's works, with illustrations, whereas included are only twelve tales and two poems. *Works of Poe, Illustrated* would have been more accurate, yet still misleading, for the book is a kind of hoax, in that Sätty has constructed or assembled the illustrations without fundamentally creating them. His technique is photographically to merge portions of prints, cleverly concealing the "seams" and perhaps occasionally (but rarely) drawing in small details. It was developed by Max Ernst—who is not mentioned by Sätty in his acknowledgments, or by the publisher in the jacket blurb, or by his friend Thomas Albright, art critic, in 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 this book show a frequent disdain for consistency of figures or of setting when sequential within a single tale and use "found" print-sections from ill-matched sources; e.g., the "Venetian" setting of "The Assignment" includes Venetian canals, a Florentine building, an English Victorian bower, and a Gothic facade. "Metzengerstein" includes a Bosch grotesque, French eighteenth-century courtesans, a man in Renaissance dress, and medieval castles. The order of the tales is entirely arbitrary, not chronological, topical, or logical. "The Rue Morgue" bears too many traces of the celebrated illustrations endlessly reproduced from the 1884 Quantin illustrated Paris edition, while "Landor's Cottage" settles for a series of almost unmodified, tame wood-cut pastorals. All the pictures are reproduced by offset printing, and alternate between framed, sometimes arbitrarily geometrical outlined shapes and single or double page prints bleeding off the edge. Sätty, trained in West Germany in engineering and industrial design before settling in San Francisco, initiated his illustrative "method" in *The Annotated Dracula* (of 1975) before "constructing" his *Poe*. There is little reason to hope for more contrived interpretations of other tales from his designing board.

Burton R. Pollin, Professor Emeritus

Bronx 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., \$1.00.

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" in this Harper edition 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 letter to Duyckinck of March 8, 1849, which emphasizes verisimilitude as meaning to deceive rather than, as in Defoe's point, to please or excite. Poe insisted on unity and controlling novel of view as well as authenticity of detail. James Gargano's "The Distorted Perception of Poe's Comic Narrators" considers five of the comic tales as 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 spirit has a liberating effect on the rational narrator, whose energized 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 caricatured as blind to the reality intruding into their well-ordered 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 Wilson" as a tale of psychic conflict with more depth and subtlety than the label "tale of conscience" usually implies. As a Double, Wilson II personifies the primal, essential Self that looms out of the subliminal darkness into Wilson I's memory-consciousness. This story is related to 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 Twoness" in *Arthur Gordon Pym* is identical with "The Invisible Message: The Problem of Truth in

Pym," his paper at the annual meeting of the Poe Studies Association in New York, December 1976. From Poe's play on double-ness Kennedy derives the notion that Pym is Poe's most ambitious hoax, the assumption being that Poe was disgusted with a reading audience of "unrefined, unwashed readers." The key to "the esoteric underside of Pym" is found in wordplay, parody, misleading details, and intellectual games. The Preface is regarded as mocking, the hyperbole as ironic, the inconsistent detail as intentionally misleading, the editorial Note as devious, the narrator (Pym) as unreliable, etc., until the entire message of the novel becomes "invisible." The conclusion reached is that for Poe experience is inscrutable, contradictory, and absurd, making knowledge impossible. 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 view or Richard Wilbur's 1973 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 "Metaphor and Meaning in Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*" (read at PSA meeting, December 1975), finds this novel to be organized by the metaphor of the enigmatic white figure at the conclusion. Regarding Pym as an American melancholiac, DeFalco sees Pym's diseased imagination as the source of authority rejected and rationality abandoned in favor of willfulness, of a recognition (in Peters) of "man's primal state," and of further deracination (cannibalism, etc.). Tsalal, the "primal zone of matter," reflects Pym's dualism of spirit and matter. In his journey into self, Pym achieves 'a new being' through total deracination and through surrender to the final vision, a reconciliation with spirit. Despite interesting similarities, this study also lacks reference to Wilbur's and Halliburton's prior essays on *Pym*.

In "The Limits of Flight: Poe and 'The Poetic Principle'" Wayne Thorpe attempts a correction of the common view that Poe was a visionary Romantic escapist searching for the Platonic ideal of Beauty. On the contrary, holds Thorpe, Poe was "the masterful analyst" of such "escapist hysteria, not its victim." Like Melville and Hawthorne, Poe realized the dualism of life: 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 the argument is based on "The Poetic Principle," one might ask why Poe defined that principle as precisely this "immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man," as the power by which the imagination could glimpse "the Beauty above" and experience that Beauty "through the poem, or through the music"? Allowing a half hour as the utmost for a sustained "elevating excitement of the soul," a concentrated aesthetic experience, did not Poe imply more than a fleeting futile flight or vision? If symbolic or visionary (as in "The City in the Sea" or in "Ulalume") the poem nevertheless 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., \$20. The first publication of 86 letters, mostly 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 *Eureka* published to date, a segment from his 186-page master's thesis on the prose poem at the U of Western Ontario under Professor Geoffrey Rans in 1968. Another excellent and little-known article by Pitcher is "The Arnheim Trilogy: Cosmic Landscapes in the Shadow of Poe's *Eureka*," *The Canadian Review of American Studies*, VI, no. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 27-35. These were not included in Benton's recent bibliography of *Eureka* criticism. The award for the "least impressive" or "most incredible" piece of criticism goes to "Gold in the Bug" by Jean Ricardou, trans. Frank Towne, *Poe Studies*, December 1976. If this is an example of French linguistic phenomenology, we say, "That's quite enough, thank you."

MISCELLANEOUS

Henry Golembo, 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. McNutt. Foreword by Devendra Varma and Maurice Lévy. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1975. xxii + 330 pp.

The cost (\$30.00) will drive off the casual; the contents will lure the devoted ever so often, and McNutt's aim is toward the specialist. In 13 sections all aspects related to Gothicism are treated: "Bibliographies 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, Reeve, Smith, Radcliffe, Lewis, Beckford. An appendix selectively covers foreign-language items. The index is useful. Not merely 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 disclaimers 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 Brontë'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 [*NEQ*(1949)]. A more general bibliographical screed, Benton's "The Problems of Literary Gothicism" [*ESQ*(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 Philipps on "Usher"; Schroeter and Griffith on "Ligeia"; Thompson on "The Oval Portrait"; Fisher on "Metzengerstein"; Campbell on "Cask"; all are left out in the cold. And where, by the way, are Lionel Stevenson, *JEGP* (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 clutches!) and idiosyncracies, as noted above stand out because of their janglings in this great, usually harmonious whole.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher, Hahnemann Medical College

Neal Frank Doubleday. *Variety of Attempt: British and American Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976. 218 pp.

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. Stressing 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 now nearly forgotten names such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick, William Austin (whose "Peter Rugg: The Missing Man" lives chiefly because of Hawthorne's "A Virtuoso'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 remarking 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

Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories, ed. Charles E. Robinson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. 400 pp., \$15.

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, bibliographical, and textual notes on each selection. Nine 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 novella, 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 subordinated to a study in character. Like Poe she avoided explicit moralizing and insisted that fiction "must never divest itself of a certain idealism, which forms its chief beauty."

E.W. Carlson, 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,

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