

4th International Poe and Hawthorne Conference: Dis/embodiment

Paris, France

July 1-4, 2025

CALL FOR PAPERS

Keynote Speakers

Richard Kopley, Penn State-Dubois: “Tales of a Poe Biographer”

Joel Pfister, Wesleyan University: “Why Read Hawthorne Now?”

We are pleased to invite paper and session proposals for the 4th International Poe and Hawthorne Conference on the theme Dis/embodiment. This academic event, to be held in Paris, France (July 1-4, 2025), is organized by the Poe Studies Association (PSA) and the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society (NHS) in partnership with Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Université Paris Cité, Sorbonne Université, Université Bretagne-Sud, and the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). Previous co-sponsored international conferences of the PSA and NHS have been held in Oxford, England (2006), Florence, Italy (2012), and Kyoto, Japan (2018).

In her classic study *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne* (1981), Sharon Cameron uncovered the brutality of the allegorical enterprise in its “deflection from the physical or corporeal realm” (79). Allegorical reading, because it has characters “rather embody an idea than inhabit a body” (Carton 1982), largely misses the materiality of flesh, the pleasure or displeasure of senses, and the complex entanglements of letter, body and world that is the well-known province of nineteenth-century US literature. Recovering the messiness of bodies and their materiality has been an important injunction of nineteenth-century Americanist criticism in the last decades, asking us to move beyond the ontological rift between matter and spirit, and to embrace the oxymoronic resistance to the mind/body divide—in other words, to move beyond allegory, and even hermeneutics *tout court*, and devise ways of reading that destabilize our interpretative grounds. The topic of this conference, “dis/embodiment,” is an attempt to respond to this invitation, because the writings of Poe and Hawthorne, perhaps more than others, unsettle our senses and blur the limit between life and death, the corporeal and the non-corporeal, the body and the ghost, the human and the non-/post-human. In that sense, the slash in our title is less a marker of disjunction than an invitation to find new modes of articulation between bodies and what they are not, or not quite, or not any more.

Bodies matter, as we know, and Poe and Hawthorne’s texts register their materiality at a time when bodies had anything but an equal share in the body politic of the United States. For those who were denied political participation in the life of the nation because they were deemed to suffer from an excess of embodiment, for those who were seen as encumbered by a body that was too much marked, oversexualized, deformed, diseased, disabled, only the prospect of disembodiment paradoxically figured the promise of

(necro)citizenship (Castronovo 2001). But bodies are not only sites of subjugation; they are also sites of resistance to their discursive production by institutionalized forms of knowledge and control (medicine, religion, the law). As such, they become a *locus* of self-invention and identity affirmation. Dis/embodiment is therefore conducive to forms of re-embodiments, or alternative versions of what it means to inhabit one's/a body. The slash, here again, points to forms of liminality and thresholding in texts which indeed favor the ambiguous chiaroscuro of imagination over the light that chisels the contours of bodies as things, which prefer the arabesque design over the injunction of a straight line that creates categories. In Hawthorne and in Poe, bodies often turn grotesque, monstrous, on the verge of dissolution, or disincorporation, into ghosts, specters, zombies, or untimely cyborgs—yet always grounded in the materiality of the letter, or the book. For, if bodies are discursive spaces, if “all bodies are signs[,]. . . all signs are (signifying) bodies” (Nancy 2000). Dis/embodiment then also invites us to reconsider Poe and Hawthorne's texts themselves, as well as their translations and later adaptations or afterlives, as unruly bodies, sentient pages that generate ambivalent readerly affects and, at times, “tawdry physical affrightments.”

We invite proposals for individual papers as well as full panels, roundtables, and more creative formats, on Poe, Hawthorne, or Poe and Hawthorne as they relate to the theme of dis/embodiment. While we welcome new readings of canonical *oeuvres*, we are also interested in proposals turning to texts that have received less critical attention. We also invite proposals that place the question of bodies in Poe and/or Hawthorne in conversation with other writers and literary, aesthetic, philosophical, political, and cultural traditions. We are particularly interested in proposals that seek to explore their relation to French contexts, including how French writers, critics, philosophers, artists, and filmmakers have drawn on their writings, or translated them into French. From Baudelaire and Mallarmé, to Marie Bonaparte, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, to Claude Richard, Henri Justin, and Paulin Isnard, Poe has often been on the mind of French readers. We hope that this conference will offer the opportunity to revisit the French side of Poe, as well as to recover “the French face” of Hawthorne, from his “Second Empire critics” (Anesko and Brooks) to more recent engagements. We also welcome proposals that seek to position the question of bodies in Poe and/or Hawthorne beyond a transatlantic setting and within larger historical and geographical networks and traditions.

Individual paper proposals should be no more than 250 words and include speaker affiliation and a 100-word biographical statement. Panel or round-table proposals, which may be up to 1,500 words, should include a panel rationale, organizer and speaker names, affiliations and biographical statements, as well as paper titles and abstracts.

Please submit your proposals to dis.embodiment2025@gmail.com by **15 September 2024**. Confirmations of accepted proposals will be sent out by mid-November 2024.

All participants must be members of either the Poe Studies Association or the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society prior to the conference.