

**CONFERENCE "EDGAR A. POE: TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER" –
ALBACETE, SPAIN, 3-6 FEBRUARY 2009**

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The International Conference EDGAR A. POE: TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER (DOSCIENTOS AÑOS DESPUÉS) was held from 3 to 6 February 2009, as part of the international celebrations surrounding the bicentennial of the American author's birth. The event was hosted by the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain) on its campus in the city of Albacete (two hours' train journey from Madrid), and attracted Poe scholars from numerous Spanish universities and elsewhere in Europe, as well as eminent experts from the US. The languages of the plenary lectures and the papers were Spanish and English.

The official conference site is at: <http://www.uclm.es/ab/humanidades/0809/poe.asp>, and a report may be found on the site of the local newspaper LA VERDAD: <http://www.laverdad.es/albacete/20090204/cultura/alla-cuervo-20090204.html> (Marcos Tévar, 'Poe, más allá del cuervo' ['Poe, beyond the raven'], 4 February 2009, p. 40). The principal organisers from the host university were Beatriz González Moreno and Margarita Rigal Aragón, both of them scholars specialised in Poe and related fields.

As the author of this note, I was present at the conference myself, giving a paper entitled 'THE "CHARACTER OF PHANTASM": POE'S "THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER" AND BORGES' "TLÖN, UQBAR, ORBIS TERTIUS"', and also being quoted in the above-mentioned press report. It is, however, not my intention to offer these brief comments as a substitute for the official programme (to which those interested are referred), but, rather, to share a series of impressions of a more personal and, I readily admit, incomplete nature.

The inaugural lecture, by Dr José Antonio Gurpegui Palacios (University of Alcalá), took as its subject 'Poe en el laberinto' ('Poe in the labyrinth'), and offered an excellent introduction to the troubled and tragic life of the author of 'The Raven'. It was followed by 'Poe and Pain', delivered by Dr Scott Peeples (Associate Professor of English, College of Charleston, South Carolina, and editor of POE STUDIES), who spoke eloquently on the presence in Poe's writing of situations of suffering, with particular reference to 'The Pit and the Pendulum', the only one of his works to be located in Spain - and, indeed, in the dungeons of the Inquisition in Toledo, and therefore in Castilla-La Mancha

Continuing with the plenary lectures, 'Poe y Dickens: una historia de encuentros y desencuentros' (approximate translation: 'Poe and Dickens: to meet or not to meet'), by Dr Fernando Galván (Head of the Modern Languages Department, University of Alcalá, and current President of the European Society for the Study of English) provided a full and inclusive overview of the fascinating subject of the complex literary and personal relationship between two of the most important English-language writers of the nineteenth century; Dra Barbara Cantalupo (Associate Professor of English, Pennsylvania State University, Philadelphia, and editor of the EDGAR ALLAN POE REVIEW) illuminated various aspects of 'Poe and the Visual Arts', notably in connection with the New York of Poe's day; and, finally, the closing lecture, by Dr Antonio Ballesteros González (Open University, Madrid), examined the theme: 'Un cierto sentido de la irrealidad: Poe y sus dobles' ('A certain sense of unreality: Poe and his doubles'), elucidating, with erudition and passion, multiple facets of this crucial dimension of the author's work, with particular stress on 'William Wilson', Poe's canonic contribution to the literature of the double.

A round table was also held, bringing together Dr Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan (University of Valladolid - in the chair), José Ramón Ibáñez (University of Almería) and Emilio Cañadas (University "Alfonso X El Sabio", Madrid), on the subject: 'La larga sombra de Edgar Allan Poe en España en el siglo XX' ('The long shadow of Edgar Allan Poe in twentieth-century Spain'), and consisting of a lively debate on the (very considerable) presence of the American master in the modern peninsular literature.

The 20-minute paper sessions covered a wide range of aspects, textual, intertextual and theoretical, of the work of Poe. Given the impossibility of attending all the papers by reason of their organisation in parallel sessions, this report will mention only some of them, with, of course, no intention of undervaluing the others in any way. I thus draw attention in particular to the following papers, with a (non-exclusive) stress on the comparative dimension: 'The Assigination': cita entre lo clásico y lo gótico' ('The Assigination': classical meets Gothic' - Ana González-Rivas Fernández, Complutense University of Madrid); 'A Book that Does Not Permit Itself to Be Read': Poe's 'Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket' and the Problem of Epistemology' (Jennifer Cook, Bentley University, Massachusetts); 'Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Baudelaire: the Artist as the Elite Victim' (Sonya Isaak - USA, affiliated to the University of Heidelberg); and, from the viewpoint of Poe's presence in Spanish-language literatures, 'La influencia de Poe en las "Leyendas" de Bécquer' ('The influence of Poe in the "Legends" of [the Spanish writer] Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer' - Ricardo Marín Ruiz, University of Castilla-La Mancha), and, finally, my own contribution, as mentioned above, on Poe and Borges.

The academic proceedings were enlivened by two performance events: a dramatic representation based on 'The Tell-Tale Heart', and a brief recital of texts by Poe, by Patrick Donohue from Ireland.

The four days of the event were characterised by the generation of an atmosphere of enthusiasm and intellectual camaraderie among the participants, and when it came to an end it was eminently clear that this conference has marked a key moment in the development of the dialogue among Poe specialists inside and outside Spain. Building on this, I am pleased to inform readers that very soon, from 21 to 23 May 2009, the University of Alcalá de Henares, in the Madrid region, will host, under the title 'POE PRESENTE EN EL SIGLO DE LA ANSIEDAD' ('POE, PRESENT IN THE CENTURY OF ANXIETY'), a second conference dedicated to Edgar Allan Poe's bicentennial. Data are at:

http://www.iuien-uah.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1595&Itemid=793.

This coming event will certainly constitute another major step forward in the deepening and widening, within the Spanish-language arena, of the study of the remarkable work of the author of 'The Cask of Amontillado'.