

Twayne's United States Authors Series (TUSAS), (Hardback Editions)

EDGAR ALLEN POE. By Vincent Buranelli. New York: Twayne Publishers. 1961. \$3.50.

Generally, those writers with the best feeling for Poe's biography are the worst critics. Poe scholars are deeply in debt to Arthur Hobson Quinn for Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography (1941), monumental, revolutionary and sane as a biography, unbelievably naive and inept as criticism. T. O. Mabbott, the charming and learned man who knows more about Poe than anyone, perhaps even Poe himself, ever has, will not, I hope, be offended if I say that he is no critic. Now comes Mr. Buranelli to write a brief survey of all of Poe, and the results are mixed. There are some exceptions, but for the most part, his biographical portions rest on the best biographical work done on Poe, and his critical portions on the worse. Sound: "If Poe's normal traits are being stressed too much today, it is an error on the right side." (19) "If he did not read comprehensively or exhaustively in the giants of literary criticism, he read enough in them or about them to locate the concepts he needed." (111) Sound too is Buranelli's feeling for the over-rated Arthur Gordon Pym. On the other hand, because generations of straight-faced scholars have labored to show that Poe often tried to be funny, Buranelli thinks he is a fine humorist: "The time is past when anyone has to take Henry Seidel Canby seriously when he says that Poe lacked a sense of humor." (130) Equally off-target is this statement: "Why . . . the French . . . adopted Poe . . . is [a] question [for which] a satisfying answer . . . will be a long time in coming." (131) (Patrick Quinn provided the answer in The French Face of Edgar Poe [1957]). Finally and most foolishly, "[Poe] has a strong claim to the titles of our best poet, our best short story writer and our best critic." (129) "[Poe is] America's greatest writer, and the American writer of greatest significance in world literature." (133)

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ROBINSON JEFFERS. By Frederic I. Carpenter. New York: Twayne Publishers. 1962. \$3.50.

This affords a valuable outline and summary of Jeffers' career and sketches in recent material in order to bring Jeffers scholarship up to date. It reminds us that Jeffers is poet, not philosopher; it draws together the major influences upon his work; it outlines the 'plots' of his major works and places each in its proper relationship to the others.