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Mihai Stroe

University of Bucharest

THE TITANIC ATOM: EDGAR ALLAN POE'S ROMANTIC COSMOLOGY IN EUREKA

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Abstract*: In the present study we explore the romantic elements in Edgar Allan Poe's cosmology as elaborated in* Eureka*, a major work which is representative for Poe's thought system. The major point made here is that the primordial material particle – postulated by Poe as being the first germinal manifestation of the the physical Universe – can be seen as being the "Titanic Atom" of Titanic atoms, since the American poet-cosmologist uses the term "Titanic atom" in Eureka in the plural to designate planetary systems like ours (he also calls these "collossal atoms" or "system-atoms") which are evolving just as the Universe in its entirety is evolving. The most recent criticism (see Alberto Cappi's important article published in 1994) called Poe's cosmological hypothesis a Newtonian model of the Universe. We wish to hereby show that this model is romantic in nature essentially by its assumption of a reality which is "interfinite" in nature, i.e. simultaneously finite (as matter) and infinite (as space and as spirit); and that it anticipates fascinating developments in Western thought such as, among others, Georges Lemaître's model of the "primitive atom" which became the foundation for what we now know as the Big Bang theory.*