Louisiana Scholar Talks Poe This Weekend

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Even Edgar Allan Poe’s most adoring Kodiak fans couldn’t hold candle to Dr. Jerry Kennedy. Kennedy, who is a Boyd professor at Louisiana State University, has published seven books about Poe, and has an interest in the gothic writer that spans back decades.

“Back in graduate school for sure. And then wrote a dissertation. And have been working basically for the last 40 years, not exclusively on Poe. I work on 19th century American literature, and also 20th. I’ve done quite a bit of work on Hemingway and the American writers in Paris. But my work on Poe is probably the best known and sort of the center of my long time interest because there’s something about Poe that I just keep coming back to and discovering new things in Poe.”

Kennedy will be in Kodiak this weekend and hold two lectures related to Poe. The lectures are part of the Big Read Kodiak, a multiple month celebration to promote literacy. Kennedy said his presentation on Friday will take a slightly counterintuitive approach to Poe.

“We think of Poe in connection with gothic tales and I’m actually going to talk about Edgar Allan Poe as a manager of terror. Someone who has, I think, a tremendous amount to tell us about what it means to live in an age of terror.”

On Saturday Kennedy will speak at the Baranov Museum, and he said that will be an entirely different Poe-related topic.

“And I’m going to talk about the one novel that Poe published, “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,” and then the one western novel that he started but never finished, “Journal of Julius Rodman.” That novel was actually projected to take the protagonist all the way to Alaska. And this was at a time when very few people in the East were even thinking about Alaska and it certainly wasn’t a part of the United States then.”

Friday’s lecture will be at the Kodiak College library at 7 p.m. Kennedy will present at the Baranov Museum on Saturday at 1 p.m.

This will be Kennedy’s first trip to Alaska, and he said he’s delighted to spend some time in Kodiak and share the provocative and interesting life of Edgar Allan Poe.