Finding Aid for the G.V. Hamilton, M.D., Poems, undated

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Descriptive Summary
Title: G.V. Hamilton, M.D., Poems,
Date (inclusive): undated
Collection number: 442
Creator: Hamilton, G.V. (Gilbert Van Tassel) 1877-1943
Extent: 1 box (0.5 linear ft.)
Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library. Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences Los Angeles, California 90095-1490
Abstract: Poems written by G.V. Hamilton, M.D., a psychiatrist who studied animal behavior mainly in primates, then became interested in human sexual behavior, especially that of married couples, and spent approximately the last fifteen years of his life as a clinical psychoanalyst. Dr. Hamilton published his research findings in books and articles, but also published one novel and composed the unpublished poems that make up this collection. Included are approximately 30 short poems which look back upon various life stages, and one long narrative poem titled "Limbo", a Dante-like guided journey of a poet seeking the meaning of life and death.
Physical location: Biomed History and Special Collections Cage Manuscripts
Language of Material: Collection materials in English
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], G.V. Hamilton, M.D. poems (Manuscript collection 442). Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles.
Acquisition Information
The Hamilton poems were donated to UCLA Neuroscience History Archives in 1982 by Mr. Philip R. Sisson of Hope Valley, Rhode Island. Dr. Hamilton's mother's maiden name was Mary Sisson, but Philip's relationship to her has not been determined. The UCLA Neuroscience History Archives subsequently transferred the collection to the UCLA Biomedical Library.
Biography
G. V. Hamilton (Gilbert Van Tassel) was born in Ohio in 1877. He graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1898 and received his M.D. from Jefferson Medical College in 1901. Interested in the relationship between psychology and mental diseases, he became a resident medical officer at McLean Hospital in Waltham, MA from 1905 to 1907, and concurrently studied at Harvard University Graduate School. At McLean, Hamilton collaborated with the chief psychologist, Shepherd Ivory Franz, who had done studies on the effects of brain lesions on learned behavior; together they published a study on exercise and depression. At Harvard, he met R. M. Yerkes, who steered him to a comparative approach in the study of behavior, and who remained a valued colleague.
A resident patient at McLean under Dr. Hamilton's care was Stanley McCormick, son of Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the automatic reaper. Mrs. S. McCormick trusted Dr. Hamilton's treatment approach but wanted her husband out of the hospital and moved to the McCormick estate in Montecito (near Santa Barbara, CA) named Riven Rock, with Dr. Hamilton to attend him there as his personal physician/psychiatrist. Hamilton was interested but wished to continue his research in primate behavior, so Mrs. McCormick agreed to fund the establishment of a small primate colony on the estate and to support him as an independent investigator. In 1915 Hamilton invited Dr. Yerkes for a six-months stay to work with the colony primates; there Yerkes began the series of anthropoid studies which occupied the rest of his career, and for a time there were hopes that he and Hamilton might create a Primate Research Center in Montecito. This plan encountered difficulties and delays and ended completely in 1917, when Hamilton left Riven Rock because of a disagreement about Mr. McCormick's treatment. The American novelist, T. C. Boyle, has written a fictionalized account of Stanley McCormick, his family, and life at Riven Rock, which includes chapters on each of the three psychiatrists who provided his major care over the years, starting with Dr. G.V. Hamilton. ["Riven Rock", N.Y.: Viking, 1998]. After military service in World War I Dr. Hamilton returned to the Midwest to practice psychiatry, and started writing "An Introduction to Objective Psychopathology" (published 1925).
Then he moved to New York to head a National Research Council-supported survey of marital sexual problems and
adjustments; the results were published in "A Research of Marriage" [N.Y., Boni, 1929]. He was Director of the Division of
Psychobiological Research, New York Bureau of Social Hygiene, from 1924 to 1928.

The New York years (ca. 1925-1928) were filled not only with intense immersion in the world of psychiatry and
psychoanalysis, but also close contact with the city's literary coterie, including the dramatist Eugene O'Neill. In a
presentation to the American Academy of Psychoanalysis titled "American psychoanalysts who influenced Eugene O'Neill's
'Long Day's Journey Into Night'", Ann-Louise S. Silver, M.D., states: "Eugene O'Neill's finest play ... owes enormously to the
direct and personal influence of two American psychoanalysts, Smith Ely Jelliffe and Gilbert VanTassel Hamilton." She
explains that they steered O'Neill and his friends to psychoanalytic theory and its important writers, and discussed this new
material with them. Hamilton, "... this pioneering analytically informed couples' therapist and researcher, ... acted as a
powerful catalyst for constructive change in O'Neill, who credits Hamilton with curing his alcohol addiction." Also, Silver
quotes from Lesley Scheaffer, O'Neill's biographer, "... his [O'Neill's] consultations afterward with Hamilton (which he
incorrectly used to call his "analysis") launched O'Neill on a journey into the past that led to his drawing up two papers in
which he summarized his early years and the familial forces that had shaped him....Taken as a unit, the two papers can be
considered his first step toward writing, some fifteen years later, "Long Day's Journey Into Night" [Silver, Ann-Louise S. "J.

From 1928 until his death in 1943 Hamilton lived and worked in Santa Barbara as a clinical psychiatrist and psychoanalyst,
although he was actually never formally credentialed as an analyst. Silver quotes him as writing "...some experience as an
analysand in 1925 made it emotionally possible for me to begin what has become a final shift from psychiatric behaviorism
to psychoanalysis".

In addition to his scientific publications Hamilton produced a popularized version of his "Research in Marriage" volume, and
one novel "The adversary in Tomika", N.Y., Sears Pub. Co.1930, which may be rooted in stories from his childhood. Nothing
written by or about him indicates that he also wrote poetry, and no such output seems to have been published. Yet the
content of this small collection proves that Hamilton was, indeed a poet of considerable skill.

Scope and Content
The collection's donor, who may be a member of G.V. Hamilton's wife's family, refers in a letter to the contents as "The
Diary" and "The Poem".

The former is actually not a diary, but rather a number of free verse remembrances and musings about the author at
various stages of his life, written, most probably, in his later years. The tone is serious, though sometimes wryly so, and
deeply introspective - a man who is both a scientist and a poet, non-religious, looking for meaning and understanding. The
poems are easily readable, pleasant, evoke the natural surroundings of Santa Barbara, and muse about the boy that was
and the man that is.

"The Poem" is an 134-page narrative poem titled "Limbo" written in both free and blank verse, divided into nine Books,
each with an introductory short prose "Argument". The "Argument" for Book One: "A prophet in quest of final adventure
discovers a never-ending one". The prophet turns out to be the author. The Revelator, who will guide the prophet, is Jesus
Christ, and the journey will take them through Limbo. On the journey the author prophet encounters other prophets, saints,
saviors, messiahs, and philosophers from ancient or not-so ancient days and from many lands. Again, the tone is serious,
pleasant, not without humor, philosophical, introspective, and always seeking for a reconciliation of reason and faith, or,
perhaps, biological psychiatry and psychoanalysis?

Related Material
Additional important Hamilton material is available in the UCLA Neuroscience History Archives: Hamilton-Robert Yerkes
 correspondence, 1907-1944; 2 essay manuscripts; Hamilton article reprints and photocopies. Contact UCLA Biomedical
 Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences Department for access information.

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Box 1, Folder 1 Communications between Philip R. Sisson, donor, and Dr. Horace Magoun, recipient of
the gift to the UCLA Brain Research Institute's Neuroscience History Archives.
Box 1, Folder 2 ca. 30 poems typed on 110 5x8" pages.
Box 1, Folder 3 "Limbo: a narrative poem", typed on 134 8.5x11" pages.