POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE

APPROVED:

Floyd Stovall
Major Professor

C. A. Bridges
Minor Professor

Floyd Stovall
Director of the Department of English

L. A. Sharp
Chairman of the Graduate Council
POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Princess Martin, B. A.

Colorado City, Texas
August, 1942
100492
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. POE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD LANDSCAPE AS IT IS EXPRESSED IN SKETCHES DEARING WITH THE NATURAL SCENE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE TO ACHIEVE EFFECT IN POETRY</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE TO ACHIEVE EFFECT IN THE TALES</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. POE'S PHILOSOPHY AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON HIS USE OF LANDSCAPE</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF POE'S
USE OF LANDSCAPE

Almost a hundred years have passed since the death of Edgar Allan Poe. In that time much has been written and said about the works that occasioned only minor comments during the poet's lifetime. A single volume of poems and five volumes of tales compose his creative writings, but the ten volumes of criticisms and letters are also of great importance. It is generally conceded that without these it is impossible to make logical critical estimates of any particular field of interest or of his work as a whole.

In surveying the important phases of Poe's work which have not been exhaustively studied, I have found one, his use of landscape, that has been touched upon rarely and, it seems to me, with infrequent accuracy. Critics have dealt with this subject rather generally, asserting that nature is usually of "negligible importance,"¹ that Poe "rarely lingers in the description of scenery,"² that he

---

¹ Killis Campbell, Introduction to Poe's Short Stories (American Authors Series), p. xx.
² C. W. Kent, Introduction to Virginia Edition of Poe's Works, edited by James W. Harrison, VII, xxix. (Henceforth this edition will be referred to as Works.)
"notes only the broad and general features of the landscape,"³ and "seems but little indebted to nature,"⁴ and that "it is very near the truth to say that for him the American scene was non-existent."⁵ Such comments as have been made are concerned almost exclusively with the artificial character of the landscapes. Some critics sympathetically and intelligently perceive a purposeful and artistic use of landscape; some dubiously mention the individual treatment and attempt to show that the scenes are real, but that Poe's fascination with unusual scenes led him to describe those uncommon to the ordinary reader; some, assuming that he attempted the usual treatment, triumphantly point out the peculiar descriptions as evidences of his definite lack of ability to delineate natural scenes.

Charles W. Kent concludes brief comments on the subject by saying that "if the pictures are not clear, grant that the painter may be striving for impressiveness of whole effects rather than vividness of contributing details";⁶ but he has previously suggested that the confused

³G. E. Woodberry, Edgar Allan Poe (American Men of Letters Series), p. 34.
⁴Ibid., p. 252.
⁶C. W. Kent, op. cit., p. xxxii.
and puzzling pictures are due to the fact that "Poe was never at pains to render his fancies vivid to the general reader." This critic compliments the beauty of Poe's rich vocabulary and his free use of figures of speech, but he points out that the figures add nothing "to the concreteness and clearness of thought" and are in many cases "purely fanciful," although occasionally they "do credit to his powers of observation."  

Campbell defends the indefinite quality of the landscapes. He declares that one of Poe's favorite doctrines was that of indefinitiveness, and he holds that Poe consistently -- and with purpose -- laid his scenes in a spirit world of some sort. Campbell sees these landscapes as the fabrics of fancy. He believes that the "real landscapes" -- those apparently drawn from life -- were taken from books and the testimony of others, since Poe lacked the ability to "write with his eye on the object."  

Mary Phillips carries her idea of defending Poe into her comments on his description. In attempting to answer the charges that Poe's artificial treatment indicates a deficiency in his artistic skill, she tries to show that

---

7Ibid., p. xxix.
8Ibid., p. xxviii.
9Killis Campbell, The Mind of Poe, and Other Studies, p. 114.
10Ibid., p. 20.
even the strangest and most unreal scenes are the faithful sketches of strange but actual places. She says that "The Valley of Unrest" is "definitely located far overseas in Ayreshire, Scotland," whereas the landscapes described in "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Lake: To--" are to be found on the Isle of Arran, Scotland.

Edward Shanks believes that Poe's extraordinary treatment of landscape is indicative of deficient powers of reproduction. He cites the mixture of fact and fancy in the description in "William Wilson" as a significant example of Poe's futile attempts at accuracy. He states that "there was a world of strange landscapes in Poe's mind. He had little time or peace for painting it, and when he tried to do so the pigments he used were often faulty."

Krutch shares the opinion of Shanks. He contends that Poe "never succeeded in picturing anything visible to the people for whom he wrote," even though occasionally he included "traces here and there of bits of landscape which he observed in his lonely walks. . . ."

---

11 Mary E. Phillips, Edgar Allan Poe--The Man, I, 245.
12 Ibid., p. 304.
13 Edward Shanks, Edgar Allan Poe, p. 27.
14 Ibid., p. 102.
15 J. W. Krutch, op. cit., p. 582.
Woodberry considers the highly imaginative character of the landscapes significant of the fact that Poe "never regarded nature as anything but the crucible of his fancies."\textsuperscript{16} He speaks of the unusual conceptions as "in-subs tantial visions"\textsuperscript{17} and "fantastic imagery" resulting from a "dreaming instinct, myth-making faculty, and allegorizing power," which he exercised in a region of vague feeling and symbolic ideas.\textsuperscript{18} Somewhat reluctantly Woodberry adds that "if one presses the charge of artifice home, it must be allowed just," although it is the "excess of art."\textsuperscript{19}

Mary Phillips' contention that Poe's descriptions are realistic but strange, since he chose extraordinary landscapes to describe, has failed to receive support from the majority of critics. Most of them have agreed in an acknowledgement that the scenes are unreal. The reasons that have been offered to account for this, however, have been radically different: Poe was careless, neglecting details in striving for the impressiveness of the whole; he was adhering to his critical doctrine of indefinitiveness; he merely failed in his effort to achieve accurate reproductions; he lacked natural appreciation and was

\textsuperscript{16} G. E. Woodberry, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 21.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 349.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 252.
therefore unable to attain "true" description. None of these conjectures has been supported adequately enough to give it conclusiveness; and it is my opinion that the results of an investigation will show that Poe's use of landscape is definitely related to his literary theories and to his basic philosophy.

In this thesis it is not my purpose to attempt proof that Poe had either the ability or desire to produce other types of landscape than the mystical, highly imaginative, and artificial ones which appear repeatedly in both the poetry and the prose. I propose to determine, through a study of the poems, tales, and criticism, the purposes and methods guiding Poe's violation of the conventional use of nature as a mere descriptive element. Poe had an aesthetic theory, applicable to prose and poetry, that in various states the mind, through a process of stimulation and association, calls forth images of natural objects in strange combination. Furthermore, he held that through the presentation of these images a reader may be brought to share the feelings of the author. My contention is that Poe consistently kept this theory foremost and that he maintained at all times the attitude of the artist who looks upon nature as a means enabling the achievement of artistic purposes.

That Poe was not indifferent to the usual appeal of nature may be seen from such fragments as these, which
occur frequently in his letters and criticisms: "the beauty I adore -- the beauty of the natural blue sky and the sun\-shiny earth";\textsuperscript{20} "the gorgeous, unaltered handiwork of Nature";\textsuperscript{21} "Life in the wilderness is a theme of intrinsic and universal interest, appealing to the heart in all phases";\textsuperscript{22} "the glorious objects of natural loveliness."\textsuperscript{23} His appreciation for the natural scene is subordinated to his theory of literary art, however. He sees nature in relation to poetry, as a means of arousing the "poetic sentiment," that is, a thirst for supernal beauty. He feels that "it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness . . . that the soul seeks realization of its dreams of beauty."\textsuperscript{24} Beholding the natural scene, man feels "a sense of the beautiful, of the sublime, of the mystical. Thence springs admiration of the fair flowers, the fairer forests, the bright valleys and rivers and mountains of the Earth -- and love for the gleaming stars and other burning glories of Heaven -- and, mingled up inextricably with this admiration of Heaven and Earth, the unconquerable

\textsuperscript{20}Poe, in a letter to the \textit{Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette}, iii, 168 (new series), quoted by G. E. Woodberry, \textit{The Life of Edgar Allan Poe}, I, 58.

\textsuperscript{21}"The Longfellow War," \textit{Works}, XII, 64.

\textsuperscript{22}"Wyandotte," \textit{Works}, XI, 205.

\textsuperscript{23}"Zinzendorff, and Other Poems," \textit{Works}, VIII, 129.

\textsuperscript{24}"Ballads and Other Poems," \textit{Works}, XI, 80.
desire -- To Know." 25 It is not surprising that, holding such an exalted conception of nature, Poe openly applied the term "imitation" to the mere "faithful depiction of what is called still-life." 26 This "imitation, however accurate, entitles no man to the sacred name of 'Artist.'" 27 Poe frequently makes charges in his reviews that certain works contain "scenic description," not poetry. He says of Bryant:

In all the rhapsodies . . . which have reference to the beauty or majesty of nature . . . is a most audible and thrilling tone of exultation. As far as he appreciates her loveliness or her augustness, no appreciation can be more ardent, more full of heart, more replete with the glowing soul of adoration. Nor . . . does he fail to perceive and designate . . . the legitimate items of the beautiful. 28

Poe explains, however, in a criticism of Longfellow, that something more is demanded:

It is not the mere appreciation of the beauty before us. It is the wild effort to reach the beauty above. It is a forethought of the loveliness to come. It is a passion to be satiated by no sub-lunary sights, or sounds, or sentiments, and the soul thus athirst strives to allay its fever in futile efforts at creation. Inspired with a prescient ecstasy of the beauty beyond the grave, it struggles by multiform novelty of combination among the things and thoughts

27 "Marginalia," Works, XVI, 164.
of Time, to anticipate some portion of that loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain solely to Eternity. 29

In the light of this theory we are able to understand why Poe stanchly declared that "mere descriptive poetry is not poetry at all." 30 To him "True Art" meant "the reproduction of what the senses perceive in Nature through the veil of the soul." 31 While description must include those objects of natural loveliness capable of arousing the thirst for supernal beauty, it must not attempt to show exact scenes by faithful copying. By the "sudden glancing at a star . . . we see it more clearly than by a direct gaze," and by "half closing the eyes in looking at a plot of grass," we are able the more fully "to appreciate the intensity of its green." 32 The more effective scene is painted "less by its features than by its effects," 33 the really poetic landscape being "superior in its 'composition,' in its arrangement of forms and colors, to any landscape actually existing." 34 Since supernal beauty is "not afforded the soul by any existing collection of earth's

30"Marginalia," Works, XVI, 102.
31Ibid., p. 164.
33"Sarah Margaret Fuller," Works, XV, 75.
34"Frances Sargent Osgood," Works, XIII, 112.
forms -- a beauty which, perhaps, no possible combinations of these forms would fully produce," the poet combines forms of physical loveliness in a pattern reflecting "the perfect balance, the proportion, the beauty, in short, the perfect unity in his divine model." This beauty is unreal -- even "inaccurate" according to the usual standards -- but it is in no respect untruthful, for it is "a revelation of infinite truth seized only by the imagination."

The reason for Poe's opposition to descriptive filler in the tale is never revealed as specifically as it is in connection with the poetry. Poe is clear in expressing his theory that landscape should be used in poetry to arouse the "poetic sentiment," the indefinite exaltation of the soul -- itself an effect. An examination of the theory of the short story discloses a logical reason for the omission of idle description in the tale also. In the short story a single, definite effect must be produced, and to achieve this singleness of impression there must be admitted no superfluous word or idea. If landscape description is used it must serve an artistic purpose in heightening the desired

35 "Ballads and Other Poems," Works, XI, 73.
36 Margaret Alterton, Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe (American Writers Series), edited by Margaret Alterton and Hardin Craig, p. lxi.
effect. In the tales Poe sometimes found occasion to create landscapes that could serve as settings for events and, at the same time, aid in the creation of a particular mental state. Purposeless landscape filler, like any superfluous idea, would divert the reader from the intended effect and, in so doing, mar the desired unity of the tale as a whole.

To develop the idea of my thesis -- that Poe consistently used landscape in accordance with his critical theory -- I have divided my discussion into four parts, each of which will be discussed in a separate chapter. The first will include a study of the works dealing with nature itself; the second and third discussions will deal with the use of landscape in the poetry and prose respectively; and the fourth will point out Poe's basic philosophical beliefs and their influence upon his use of landscape.
CHAPTER II

POE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD LANDSCAPE AS IT IS EXPRESSED IN
SKETCHES DEALING WITH THE NATURAL SCENE

Six works dealing primarily with nature appeared be-
tween the years 1839 and 1849: "The Landscape Garden," "The Domain of Arnheim," "Landor's Cottage," "The Elk," "The Journal of Julius Rodman," and "The Island of the Fay." It is significant that Poe's interest was sustained over a long period and that the same basic ideas were con-
sistently maintained. That Poe considered the subject of
nature and the landscape a worthy one is shown by the
variety and character of the contemplations, by the method-
ical and painstaking manner of presentation, and by the
fact that Poe wrote the following about a representative
selection from this group: "This contains more of myself
and my inherent tastes and habit of thought than anything
I have written."¹ The notation was made on the original
manuscript of "The Domain of Arnheim."

In line with the purpose of my thesis -- to show that
Poe used landscape as a means of exemplifying his literary
theories -- this chapter has two purposes: first, to point

¹Caroline Ticknor, Poe's Helen, p. 273.
out the underlying ideas which appear repeatedly in the
studies dealing with landscape garden and the natural scene;
and second, to show that much of the critical doctrine may
be explained by the attitudes and beliefs that he held con-
cerning the natural scene itself. Three major ideas are
involved in each of the landscape studies: (1) an apprecia-
tion for nature as a means of arousing the imagination and
exciting the soul, that is, evoking the "poetic sentiment";
(2) a conception of beauty in nature as an effect, as unity
produced through harmony and contrast; and (3) an affinity
for strange, isolated, little-heralded wonders of the physi-
cal world. In several of the studies may be found four
other major ideas: (1) landscaping as a true art; (2) the
superiority of the "unaltered" original scene; (3) the theory
of sentience; and (4) the symbolism in nature.

It is difficult to classify the works strictly. "The
Domain of Arnheim," which is an amplification of the earlier
"Landscape Garden," "Landor's Cottage," and "The Elk" are
essay-like sketches. "The Journal of Julius Rodman," clas-
sified by Poe as a narrative, is also essay-like in style,
having little narrative interest. "The Island of the Fay"
may be considered properly as a tale. To facilitate dis-
cussion, I have divided the works into two groups. The
first, which includes "The Domain of Arnheim" and "Landor's
Cottage," is concerned with the landscape garden as a means
of gratifying the "poetic sentiment." The second group, composed of the remaining studies, emphasizes the appeal of the unaltered scene. An individual analysis will be made of each selection.

In "The Domain of Arnheim" Poe speaks in the hero, Ellison, who was "in the widest and noblest sense a poet," comprehending "the true character, the august aims, the supreme majesty and dignity of the poetic sentiment."² Feeling that the "most advantageous . . . field for the poetic exercise" lay "in the creation of novel moods of purely physical loveliness," Ellison saw in the landscape garden the most magnificent opportunities for this type of creation.³ "In the multiform and multicolor of the flowers and trees" Ellison recognized "the most direct and energetic efforts of Nature at physical loveliness"; and he believed that he would be fulfilling "the august purposes for which the Deity had implanted the poetic sentiment in man" in the adaptation of objects of natural beauty "to the eyes which were to behold it on earth."⁴ He explained his belief that "no such combination of scenery exists in nature as the painter of genius may produce" by the fact that "in the most enchanting of natural scenes there will always be found a defect or an excess"; and "while the component parts may

³Ibid., pp. 180-181. ⁴Ibid., p. 182.
defy, individually, the highest skill of the artist, the arrangement of these parts will always be susceptible of improvement," at least as regards the human point of view. It is true, however, that the alterations may effect a blemish in the "wide landscape-gardens of the hemispheres" set in array by God. That beauty is conceived as order produced through proportion and arrangement of carefully selected individual items points to the doctrine of unity. The landscape artist demonstrates the same creative process as the literary artist.

Two methods of landscape gardening are introduced, the natural and the artificial. The natural method seeks "to recall the original beauty" of the country -- the beauty which a student of nature finds revealed everywhere in the nice relation of size, proportion, and color. No attempt is made to create special wonders: beauty is achieved through a restoration of original harmony and order. The artificial method adds an exhibition of art to the garden scene.

A poet might . . . while retaining the necessary idea of art, and culture . . . or interest, so imbue his designs at once with extent and novelty of beauty, as to convey the sentiment of spiritual interference. . . . Let us imagine for example, a landscape whose combined vastness and definitiveness -- whose united

\[5^\text{Ibid.}\]  \[6^\text{Ibid., p. 185.}\]  \[7^\text{Ibid.}\]
beauty, magnificence, and strangeness shall convey the idea of care, or culture, or superintendence, on the part of beings superior, yet akin to humanity -- then the sentiment of interest is preserved, while the art interwoven is made to assume the air of an intermediate or secondary nature -- a nature which is not God, nor an emanation from God, but which still is nature in the sense of the handiwork of the angels that hover between man and God. 8

The artificial method of landscaping goes further than the natural method, which attempts to achieve a beauty that is simple harmony and order. Beauty is heightened by a quality of strangeness when the natural handiwork of God bears the imprint of man's imaginative powers.

The selection of a site for Ellison's project, which was carried out to demonstrate his theory, was made with extreme care. In his explanation of the rejection of a scene that had "excess of glory," 9 we find ideas that account for one of the most prominent characteristics of Poe's landscapes -- seclusion:

Grandeur in any of its moods, but especially in that of extent, startles, excites -- and then fatigues, depresses. . . . It is at war with the sense of seclusion. . . . In looking from the summit of a mountain we cannot help feeling abroad in the world. 10

The isolated Arnheim was reached by a narrow river, the banks of which were "precipitous and clothed in . . . profuse and . . . sombre foliage." 11 The water was transparent, and plume-like moss and foliage overhead gave the

8 Ibid., pp. 187-188. 9 Ibid., p. 189.
10 Ibid., pp. 189-190. 11 Ibid., p. 190.
chasm a funereal gloom. "An exquisite sense of the strange" was aroused by the modified character of nature:

... There was a weird symmetry, a thrilling uniformity, a wizard propriety in these her works. Not a dead branch -- not a withered leaf -- not a stray pebble -- not a patch of brown earth was anywhere visible. The crystal water welled up against the clean granite, or the unblemished moss, with a sharpness of outline that delighted while it bewildered the eye.13

The gorge opened into a great basin surrounded by high hills "clothed ... in a drapery of the most gorgeous flower-blossoms. ... ".14

The impressions wrought on the observer were those of richness, warmth, color, quietude, uniformity, softness, delicacy, daintiness, voluptuousness, and a miraculous extremeness of culture that suggested dreams of a new race of fairies ... but as the eye traced upward the myriad-tinted slope, from its sharp junction with the water to a vague termination amid the fold of overhanging cloud, it became, indeed, difficult not to fancy a panoramic catalephant of rubies, sapphires, opals, and golden onyxes rolling silently out of the sky.15

As the rocky gate of the vista was approached, the scene became more artificial in character; the banks of brilliant emerald grass, "resembling nothing so much as velvet,"16 sloped gently to a stone wall overhung with flowering vines. Gigantic trees, which dipped their limbs into the water,

12 Ibid., p. 191.  
13 Ibid., pp. 191-192.  
14 Ibid., p. 192.  
15 Ibid., pp. 192-193.  
16 Ibid., p. 194.
relieved the uniformity of the lines. Purple mountains enclosed the magnificent palace of the "paradise of Arnheim." 17

In "The Domain of Arnheim" Poe expresses clearly his belief in the power of natural objects to arouse the "poetic sentiment." He believes that this yearning for beauty felt but never visioned in earthly scenes is implanted in man by the Deity for the purpose of stimulating man's creative efforts. In other words, the beauty man sees in nature has been placed there to excite his imagination to visions of higher beauty; it has not been given him for his blind admiration. To the artist -- to the person who comprehends the true meaning of the "poetic sentiment" -- the landscape garden offers opportunities for the gratification of a desire to create novel forms of beauty. To illustrate his theory Poe describes a scene in which unity is the result of artful contrast and blending of carefully-selected elements of beauty. The appeal of the individual items is subordinated to the effect of strangeness produced by the whole -- a whole free of defect and incongruity, pervaded by a quality of mysticism. The scene bears the imprint of creative effort on the part of both God and man. The carefully-drawn landscape of this sketch may be used as a standard by which we may judge the subsequent landscape

17 Ibid., p. 196.
descriptions, for it contains the separate objects of beauty that Poe considered suitable and shows how these objects may be used most effectively in the attainment of unity.

In "Landor's Cottage" Poe is making a second demonstration of his theory of landscape gardening; however, in this sketch he proceeds at once into the presentation of the scene, and the reader is forced to deduce the theory from the work itself. As in "The Domain of Arnheim," the description begins with the approach to the scene. The road was covered with luxuriant green grass, "like Genoese velvet." Stones marking the boundaries had been arranged to give a half-precise, half-negligent air. The site was naturally suitable, and a true artist had made of the landscape a "composition," preserving "a due medium between the neat and graceful and the pittoresque. . . ." The rays of the setting sun, as if by magic, made a monstrosity of color as the orange and purple light reflected the vivid green of the grass. The valley was encompassed by sloping hills, and on one side there was a precipitous ledge of granite leading "like a natural causeway, into the recesses of unexplored mountains and forests." Magnificent trees on the heights of the precipice became less lofty

18 "Landor's Cottage," Works, VI, 256.
19 Ibid., p. 257.
20 Ibid., p. 259.
as they approached the valley, succeeding first to the "gentle elm," sassafras, and locust, then to the linden, red-bud, and catalpa, and finally to "wild shrubbery and an occasional silver willow and white poplar." In the valley there were three trees, graded in quality as the forest trees had been in type: a fine elm, an even finer hickory, and a most magnificent triple-stemmed tulip tree, unsurpassed in beauty of form and color, with profuse blossoms that filled the valley with exotic perfumes. A rivulet, "which came, gently murmuring and slightly foaming," into the vale, meandered about and finally became lost in a small lake of such crystal clarity that the image of its sloping banks was hardly discernible from its real banks. An arching primitive bridge of tulip wood had been erected to "a small island fairly laughing with flowers in full bloom." A continuation of the rivulet issued from the southern extreme and tumbled from a high precipice as it "made its devious and unnoticed way." On the velvet lawn, relieved by occasional shrubs and gorgeously blossoming geraniums, a large dog quietly watched a flock of sheep, three deer, "and a vast number of brilliantly-plumed ducks."
On a peninsula formed by the source of the brook was a simple, unpretentious cottage, "its marvellous effect" lying "in its artistic arrangement as a picture." By the main door was a fantastic pear tree with huge cages of birds hanging from its limbs. "The pillars of the piazza were enwreathed in jasmine and sweet honeysuckle," and clambering to the roof was "a grapevine of unexcelled luxuriance." The Dutch shingles, of which the house was constructed, were painted a dull gray, the neutral tint happily melting into the vivid colors surrounding it.

The landscape theory introduced in "The Domain of Arnheim" prompted Poe to present a scene in which the imagination of a true artist had "perfected" a scene of natural loveliness. A comparison of the landscape descriptions in "The Domain of Arnheim" and "Landor's Cottage" shows an existence of definite similarities. Beauty is achieved in both through uniformity, through contrast of curve and color. The same individual objects of beauty are arranged according to a theory of "each for all and all for one." The proper balance between natural and artificial beauty imbues the scenes with spirituality. Direct contrast may be seen, however, between the effect of spectacular, almost Oriental beauty in "The Domain of Arnheim" and the

\[26\text{ Ibid., p. 264.}\]
\[27\text{ Ibid., p. 267.}\]
pastoral simplicity of "Landor's Cottage." Poe makes this contrast to demonstrate the flexibility of the theory of unity and to show how varying novel effects are the result of artistic combination and arrangement.

In "The Domain of Arnheim" and "Landor's Cottage" Poe has been concerned with the artificial method of landscaping, that is, the application of man's imagination to the natural scene as a creative achievement. Nevertheless he endorses the natural method which "seeks to recall the original beauty of the country." It is praise of the unaltered landscapes that we find in the second group of studies, composed of "The Elk," "The Journal of Julius Rodman," and "The Island of the Fay." In the final chapter it will be pointed out that Poe's appreciation for such scenes may have been based on a philosophical concept that is introduced in several poems -- that in nature there may be seen the manifestation of God's law. In this phase of the study, however, we are concerned merely with the fact that Poe had a sincere esteem for "the gorgeous, unaltered handiwork of God" and an inherent opposition to the degradation of the natural scene by the utilitarian.

"The Elk" is an appreciation for little-heralded American landscapes and a protest against America's growing

---

29 "The Longfellow War," Works, XII, 64.
tide of industrialism. Poe's preference for the unexploited scene dominates the lengthy comparison of New and Old World scenery. Poe finds the coastal country far inferior to the "gorgeous interior scenery . . . of the vast valley of Louisiana, for example, -- a realization of the wildest dreams of paradise."30 The "innumerable, quiet, obscure, and scarcely explored nooks" will be preferred "by the true artist, the cultivated lover of the grand and beautiful amid the works of God."31 The features that he praises in "the most voluptuous natural scenery upon earth"32 include "gentle undulations of soil, interwreathed with fantastic crystalline streams, banked by flowery slopes, and backed by forest vegetation, gigantic, glossy, multicolored, sparkling with gay birds and burthened with perfume."33 These items immediately bring to mind the previous descriptions, and it is not surprising that Poe felt that "the most gorgeous imagination might derive suggestions" from them.34

Particular consideration is given a seldom-viewed brook in Philadelphia, the Wissahiccon. Its "pellucid waters" flow gently through precipitous banks "clothed with noble shrubbery near the water, and crowned . . .

with magnificent forest trees. . . ."35 The immediate
shores are of moss-covered granite, and the windings of
the stream are so abrupt as to convey the impression of
"an endless succession of infinitely varied small lakes,
or, more properly speaking, tarns."36 The height of the
hills and the density of the foliage produce an "absolute
dreariness,"37 so that for an effect of mere beauty the
contrasting brightness of noonday light is necessary.

While the narrator is revelling in the pure loveli-
ness of the scene, he sees what he considers an apparition
-- an elk -- conjured by his imagination as fitting to the
primitive scene. He fancies the elk "deploring the altera-
tions for the worse" that have been so generally wrought
upon nature by the "stern hand of the utilitarian."38 The
musing are interrupted by the discovery that the animal is
a pet of some summer vacationists in the vicinity.

In "The Elk" Poe voices his belief that natural objects
of beauty excite the imagination; he evidences an apprecia-
tion for the original beauty of nature; and he shows how the
natural scene produces an effect of beauty through "nice
relations of size, proportion, and color."39

35Ibid., p. 160. 36Ibid.
37Ibid. 38Ibid., p. 162.
"The Journal of Julius Rodman," a long unfinished account of journeyings into an unexplored region of the United States, was probably meant to be a tale of adventure. However, since it is unfinished and, as it stands, is of descriptive rather than narrative interest, it is as a landscape study that I wish to consider it.

The narrator, Julius Rodman, is introduced as a devotee of nature:

He was possessed with a burning love of nature; and he worshipped her, perhaps, more in her dreary and savage aspects, than in her manifestations of placidity and joy. He stalked through that immense and often terrible wilderness with an evident rapture at his heart which we envy him.... He was, indeed, the man to journey amid all that solemn desolation which he, plainly, so loved to depict. His was the proper spirit to perceive; his the true ability to feel. 40

In short, Julius Rodman comprehended the true nature of the "poetic sentiment." He filled his Journal with accounts of minor events, appreciative mentions of the weather, descriptions of the scenery, and his reactions to the landscapes. He experienced "an excitement of soul" never felt before as he viewed the immensity of a territory "as yet altogether unknown.... and perhaps abounding in the magnificent works of God." 41 The scenes that he described are strangely free of defect, and their beauty

41 Ibid., p. 34.
exceeds "anything told in the tales of the Arabian nights": 42

On the edges of the creeks there was a wild mass of flowers which looked more like Art than Nature, so profusely and fantastically were their vivid colors blended together. Their rich odor was almost oppressive. Every now and then we came to a kind of green island of trees, placed amid an ocean of purple, blue, orange, and crimson blossoms, all waving to and fro on the wind. These islands consisted of the most majestic forest oaks, and, beneath them, the grass resembled a robe of the softest green velvet, while up their huge stems there clambered . . . a profusion of grapevines, laden with their delicious ripe fruit. 43

A similar "fairy-looking situation" filled his mind "with the most delightful and novel emotions," for it resembled a dream more than actuality. 44

The banks sloped down very gradually to the water, and were carpeted with a short soft grass of a brilliant green hue, which was visible under the surface of the stream from the shore. . . . In every direction were myriads of the most brilliant flowers, in full bloom -- blue, pure white, bright yellow, purple, crimson, gaudy scarlet, and some with streaked leaves like tulips. . . . Nearly in the centre, was a spring of sweet and clear water, which bubbled up from among a cluster of steep rocks, covered . . . with moss and flowering vines. The whole bore a wonderful resemblance to an artificial flower garden, but was infinitely more beautiful -- looking rather like some of those old scenes of enchantment which we read of in old books. 45

Another extraordinary scene produced an effect on Rodman's imagination that he would never forget: it was a series

42 Ibid., p. 42.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. 43.
45 Ibid., p. 44.
of alternating black rock and white limestone cliffs towering above the ordinary cliffs "with a very regular artificial character." He pointed out two other contrasting landscapes -- "a clayey country of peculiar character, and nearly destitute of vegetation," and "a bleak low land, with rank herbage, and without trees."

"The Journal of Julius Rodman" differs from the other studies in that it is an account of a created character. Poe is freed somewhat of limitations restricting the personal essayist, and he gives Rodman certain attitudes that he, as an artist, did not maintain. For example, in "The Island of the Fay," Poe asserts that he loves to view the natural scene alone. Contrarily Julius Rodman felt the keen need of a friend with whom he could converse freely "without danger of being misunderstood." Rodman's spirits "appeared to seek relief in a contemplation of the wild scenes of nature, and these scenes and the reflections which they encouraged . . . could not . . . be thoroughly enjoyed without the society of some one person of reciprocal sentiments." The apparent inconsistency may be accounted for by the fact that the more normal extrovert does desire companionship, and, since Rodman is the delineation of a normal person, he quite naturally exhibits this desire.

---

46 Ibid., p. 90.  
47 Ibid., p. 96.  
48 Ibid., p. 59.  
49 Ibid., p. 34.  
50 Ibid.
Poe's basic beliefs are clearly borne out in this study. There is a repetition of the praise of isolated regions -- magnificent scenery far from human settlements. Too close proximity to the settlements marred Rodman's "burning love for Nature and the Unknown," and he became uncomfortably aware of the fact that "civilized steps, though few," had preceded him and in a measure degraded the scene. 51 The belief that natural loveliness stirs the imagination is expressed frequently. When Rodman first saw the peculiar black walls rising above the cliffs, his mind received "an impression of novelty -- of singularity" 52 that could not be effaced. The same scene by moonlight had an effect on his imagination that he would never forget. 53 As the journey continued, he became "less and less interested in the main business of the expedition" and more and more willing to lose himself in "that deep and intense excitement" of surveying "the wonders and majestic beauties of the wilderness." 54 The scenes that are especially stirring to Rodman are those exhibiting such unity -- such harmony and proportion -- that they seem strangely "more like Art than Nature." 55

---

51 Ibid., p. 77.  
52 Ibid., p. 92.  
53 Ibid., p. 91.  
54 Ibid., p. 77.  
55 Ibid., p. 42.
"The Island of the Fay," the last of the landscape studies, has been classified as a tale. It is called by Quinn a prose poem -- "a study of natural beauty touched with the supernatural that results from the stimulation which loneliness brings to the poet."\(^{56}\) At any rate the story has a quality of fantasy which differentiates it from the essays and sketches. It is made up of two parts. The first is concerned with the pleasure experienced in the contemplation of natural scenery and the reflections that arise from the stimulation of solitude. The second part describes a landscape strangely colored by the imagination.

Seclusion is necessary for the spiritual enjoyment of the natural scene, for "the man who would behold aright the glory of God upon earth must in solitude behold that glory"; otherwise the "genius of the scene" -- the effect -- is marred.\(^{57}\) The presence of "any other form of life than the green things that grow and are voiceless" is "a stain upon the landscape."\(^{58}\) The narrator loves to regard the valleys, rocks, forests, and mountains as "the colossal members of one vast and animate whole -- a whole whose form (that of the sphere) is the most perfect and inclusive of


\(^{57}\) "The Island of the Fay," *Works*, IV, 194.

\(^{58}\) *Ibid.*
all..."59 Poe admits that his "fancies" have always given his "meditations among the mountains, and the forests, by the rivers and the ocean, a tinge of what the everyday world would not fail to term the fantastic."60 The conception of the universe as it is presented in this tale is the germ of the later "Eureka." The theory of sentience, introduced two years before in "The Fall of the House of Usher," is also given a more or less scientific explanation. The speculative nature of the accounts suggests, however, that Poe professed a belief in the theory of sentience because it seemed a logical outgrowth of his evolving conception of unity.

The descriptive portion of the tale deals with a solitary journey of the narrator into an unknown region. He came upon a rivulet and an island in a "far-distant region of mountain locked within mountain, and sad rivers and melancholy tarns writhing and sleeping within all."61 The island exhibited two contrasting landscapes -- one imbued with life, luxuriantly beautiful, and emanating an air of vitality, whereas the other -- lacking in vitality -- was wrapped in gloom and pervaded with an atmosphere of mortal sorrow and death. The sentience of the first scene

59Ibid., p. 194. 60Ibid., p. 195. 61Ibid., p. 196.
was demonstrated by the apparent motion of everything; the
sentience of the second, by the gradual casting off of the
shadows that separated themselves from the trees to entomb
themselves in the stream. The narrator saw the trees,
reluctantly rendering up shadow after shadow, as symbolic
of man, who wastes away and renders up his existence to
God, little by little. The circuit of the Pay from light
and joy to the gloom and sorrow foreshadowing death in-
dicated additional symbolism.

Acknowledging that the story was meant to be a fantasy
and that Poe went to extremes in his musings, we still find
value in the ideas that the tale contains. Poe means to
show the power of the natural scene to stimulate the imagi-
nation and arouse novel thoughts; at the same time he urges
man to become receptive to the symbolism in nature. He ex-
pressed a belief that seclusion -- even solitude -- is nec-
essary to the spiritual enjoyment of nature. As he has done
in the preceding studies, he draws scenes in which beauty
is achieved through wholeness of effect.

From the investigation of works dealing primarily with
landscape, we have found a basic principle of unity under-
lying Poe's natural conceptions -- a concern for effect.
There is expressed a genuine appreciation for natural
scenes, the creative effects of God, which have the power
to stir the imagination and arouse sublime feelings in man.
In various types of scenes the same objects recur, but they appear in novel form and arrangement. It is but a step further from the landscapes in these studies to those created to produce specific effects. This latter group, we shall find, present images called to mind by particular mental states; but each scene is characterized by the beauty that is found in "original" scenes of nature -- a prevailing order. In the next two chapters the mature literary theories will be discussed and analyses will be made of the works wherein Poe exemplified his doctrines in the use of landscape.
CHAPTER III

POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE TO ACHIEVE EFFECT IN POETRY

In the introductory chapter emphasis was laid on the fact that Poe never used landscape as descriptive filler. It was pointed out that this practice was due to his belief that landscape was not an end in itself, but a means to be used in the achievement of his artistic purposes. In the preceding chapter the works dealing with nature were analyzed to determine how Poe's conceptions and attitudes were responsible for the formation of his critical doctrine. It was found that Poe saw in the natural scene a beauty inseparable from unity, a wholeness resulting from proper arrangement of individual parts. He believed that this unity conveyed an effect or impression. The purpose of this chapter is to examine Poe's theory of poetry, to determine the relation of this theory to the use of landscape, and to analyze the individual works wherein he exemplified his theory through the use of landscape.

Poe first stated his literary theories in the "Letter to B--", which was a preface to the 1831 collection of poems. This brief essay contains the framework of a critical doctrine that was to remain basically intact throughout
his life. The early ideas are amplified in "The Philosophy of Composition," "The Rationale of Verse," "The Poetic Principle," "Marginalia," and numerous critical reviews. To avoid the repetition that would result from summaries of these individual works, I shall merely point out Poe's mature theory of poetry.

Poe considered the poem the highest form of literary art, and therefore the most effective medium for the expression of genius. He held the immediate object of the poem to be pleasure, since the end of our existence is happiness. He regarded Beauty as the "sole legitimate province of the poem," because he believed that the purest and most absorbing pleasure experienced by man is in the contemplation of beauty. Beauty appeals to man's sense of harmony and arouses the creative desire implanted in man by the Deity. The poet is especially sensitive to beauty, and when his soul is elevated to glimpses of supernal loveliness, he is stimulated to reach the beauty of the unknown by recombining the elements perceived through an imaginative process. He wishes to arouse the "poetic sentiment" in others through a medium of words. Poe felt that true poetry

---

results from the "poetic sentiment" and arouses it in others. This pleasurable effect, which the poet hopes to achieve, must necessarily be indefinite; and since the "comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception," the images should be embodied in music.\(^5\) A poem, then, may be properly defined as the "rhythmical creation of beauty."\(^6\)

In order to attain the purposes of the poem, the following specific requirements are necessary: (1) a poem must be brief if it is to maintain "that vital requisite in all works of Art, Unity";\(^7\) (2) it should have a melancholy tone, since sadness is the tone of the highest manifestation of beauty;\(^8\) (3) the theme should be universal\(^9\) and, of course, allied with beauty, in which case death is the most poetic topic;\(^10\) (4) the artistic effects should diversify and heighten the effect or impression to be created;\(^11\) (5) the treatment should be original; that is, the poet should "limit his endeavours to the creation of novel forms of beauty, in form, in color, in sound, in sentiment";\(^12\) (6) there should be an undercurrent of

\(^5\)"Letter to B--," Works, VII, 282.


\(^7\)Ibid., p. 267.

\(^8\)"The Philosophy of Composition," Works, XIV, 178.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 197.

\(^10\)Ibid., p. 201.

\(^11\)Ibid., p. 198.

\(^12\)"Ballads and Other Poems," Works, XI, 76.
suggested meaning, but no excess; for when the suggestiveness becomes definitive, the primary aim of the poem is not accomplished and the work becomes prose.13

The numerous requisites set forth for the poem all become part of a concise literary theory. Poe believed that the poem should have one basic aim -- to create a pleasurable and indefinite effect. The poem should deal with beauty in order to produce vague and pleasurable feelings, and it should be characterized by unity in order to create a single impression. The length of the poem, the theme, the tone, and the artistic devices should all be looked upon as means for the attainment of the desired effect.

Poe's concern for the indefinite effect led him to make use of certain powers that he saw exhibited in nature. A particular type of scene produced a certain feeling in him, and he realized that the arrangement of the whole, as well as the individual elements, was responsible for that feeling or effect. The separate objects of individual loveliness aroused in him the "poetic sentiment," a yearning for supernal loveliness. His stimulated creative desire prompted him to recombine the individual items as his heightened imagination viewed them -- in novel combinations, beautiful in unity and harmony. He felt that the reader

who viewed the novel and artful arrangements would in turn receive indefinite and pleasurable feelings. Since the aim of the poem is to produce an indefinite and pleasurable effect, Poe saw in landscape a means that could be shaped to his artistic purposes. He conceived effects as states of mind, and he knew that certain states of mind were associated with particular images and arrangements of natural objects. By the depiction of images and arrangements called forth by the appropriate mental state, he could produce that state in his reader, thereby creating the desired effect. Not only must he select meaningful individual objects; the words describing them must be rich in sound, color, connotation, and association. By a novel blending of idea, images, and words, the proper tone could be maintained, the theme forwarded, and an indefinite, pleasurable effect created through the harmonious beauty of the scene.

In the analysis of works exemplifying Poe's use of landscape to produce an indefinite effect, I have found it most feasible to group the works according to the type of effect desired. Two divisions result: first, those producing an effect of melancholy, of which there are two types -- pleasurable melancholy and melancholy deepened to despair; and, second, those producing an effect of happiness or joy. The first group includes the tale "Eleanora,"
which may be classified as a poem because of its music, and
"The City in the Sea," "The Sleeper," "The Valley of Un-
rest," "Dream-Land," "Spirits of the Dead," "The Lake:
To--," and "Ulalume." The second group, illustrative of
the effect of joy, includes "Al Aaraaf," "Fairy-Land,
"To the River," "Stanzas," and isolated passages from
miscellaneous poems. A survey of the general method used
to produce each type of effect will precede the individual
analyses.

Poe considered melancholy the "most legitimate of all
poetic tones," since "Beauty of whatever kind, in its
supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul
to tears."\(^{14}\) To maintain a tone of sadness, the theme must
also be melancholy. The most melancholy topic, "according
to the universal understanding of mankind," is obviously
death; and death is most poetical when allied with beauty.\(^{15}\)
Guided by these beliefs, Poe proceeded to create landscapes
that would excite the soul through the beauty of novel and
harmonious arrangement and at the same time maintain a tone
of melancholy and the theme of death. Certain universal
emotions are aroused in man in contemplations of death:
sorrow, mystery, strangeness, loneliness, and terror. These
feelings call forth images suggestive of tears or the sound

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 198. \(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 201.
of weeping, decay, silence, shadows, darkness, dankness, oppression, restlessness, isolation, unnatural movement, or unnatural quiet. To create the effect of melancholy, the landscape must make use of arrangements that suggest these feelings.

In the works illustrative of the effect of pleasurable melancholy, the quality of strangeness is kept prominent. There is a harmonious blending of the beautiful and the sad to arouse a pleasurable feeling that is not wholly devoid of hope. Melancholy is so skillfully subordinated to beauty that sadness assumes a soothing quality. Ideas, arrangements, images, and words suggest that death is a mysterious sleep.

"Eleanora" is one of Poe's finest exemplifications of the theory of poetry as it is applied to the use of landscape. Classified as a tale, the work is actually a poem according to Poe's standards. At all times there is an atmosphere of beauty; the tone is melancholy; the theme is the death of a beautiful woman, "the most poetical topic in the world";16 furthermore, "Eleanora" is characterized by poetic language, poetic figures of speech, and a refrain. Landscape is used in this work as the outstanding means of procuring an effect of indefinite and pleasurable melancholy.

16 Ibid.
Through three scenes, each paralleling an emotional state, an experience involving love and death is portrayed.

The first scene, which arouses feelings of pleasurable normality, is symbolic of the emotional state of childhood. The images of natural loveliness that a happy state of mind calls forth are blended into a whole of peaceful and unmarred beauty. The Valley of the Many-Colored Grass is encircled by giant hills; a quiet river lies in "motionless content . . . shining on gloriously forever";\(^{17}\) the grass is neither too dark nor too brilliant; the predominating flowers are "the yellow buttercup, the white daisy . . . the purple violet" and the asphodel; the fantastic trees are like "wildernesses of dream."\(^{18}\) The individual objects suggest contented happiness, simplicity, and childhood fancy. The second scene describes the same landscape after it has undergone a remarkable change. Now the images are those evoked by an emotional state of delirious joy, symbolic of the heart stirred to passionate love. Brilliant ruby-red blossoms replace the simple white flowers; the foliage deepens; "gay glowing birds" flaunt their bright plumage;\(^{19}\) gold and silver fish dart about in the river that now flows with a love-song; finally, a great cloud

\(^{17}\)"Eleanora," \textit{Works}, IV, 238.

\(^{18}\)Ibid.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 239.
comes to rest upon the mountain, enclosing the valley with its magnificent light. The brilliant colors suggest intensity of feeling; the melody of the river suggests man's most pleasurable and "indefinite conception," music; the cloud enclosing the valley "within a magic prison-house of grandeur and glory" suggests the exclusion of all feelings except those of love and beauty. The final scene shows the same landscape through images evoked by a third emotional state -- the sorrow caused by death.

The star-shaped flowers shrank into the stems of the trees, and appeared no more. The tints of the green carpet faded; and, one by one, the ruby-red asphodels withered away; and there sprang up, in place of them, ten by ten, dark eye-like violets that writhed uneasily and were ever encumbered with dew. And Life departed from our paths; for the tall flamingo flew sadly from the vale into the hills, with all the gay glowing birds that had arrived in his company. And the golden and silver fish swam down through the gorge and bedecked the sweet river never again. And the lulling melody died little by little away until the stream returned utterly, into the solemnity of its original silence. And . . . the voluminous cloud uprose, and, abandoning the tops of the mountains to the dimness of old . . . took away all its golden and gorgeous glories from the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass.

The colors suggesting intense feeling are gone. The writhing violets, "ever encumbered with dew," are immediately associated with agony of spirit, mourning, and tears. The

---

20 "Letter to B--," Works, VII, xliii.
21 "Eleanora," Works, IV, 239.
animation is gone, and what was once peaceful silence is now solemnity. The illumination disappears, and the magnificent light is dimmed. The landscape is now pervaded with a haunting, melancholy atmosphere that is in contrast with the contentment of the original scene. Through the pictured landscape we clearly view an emotional state: the strange and pleasurable melancholy of the heart unable to return to contentment because of grief for beauty that is gone. The three individual scenes, each achieving its effect through unity, blend into a totality producing an indefinite impression.

"The City in the Sea," "The Sleeper," and "The Valley of Unrest" may be considered together, for an effect of pleasurable melancholy is created in each by the use of similar methods. The three poems have the same novel theme -- the sorrow of the dead who are forgotten on earth. The first landscape in each poem is composed of images suggestive of unbroken sleep, signifying the melancholy peace of the dead who are remembered. In "The City in the Sea" Poe uses the method of negation to depict strangeness. Death's city resembles "nothing that is ours." No normal rays of light shine upon the scene. A supernatural "light from out the lurid sea" gleams upon the "time-eaten

towers," which blend with shadow so that "all seem pendulous in air."

. . . no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass --
No swellings hint that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea --
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.

This scene is not a happy one, and the strange light suggests some unknown terror. The quiet is supernatural and awful, but it suggests unbroken peace, melancholy though it be. In "The Valley of Unrest"24 there is a similar picture. The dell smiles in silence where the "mild-eyed stars" keep watch by night from azure bowers, and where the "red sunlight" lies lazily by day. In "The Sleeper"25 there is an even more complete picture in which the sound of words, as well as their connotation, is skillfully used with the pictures to suggest a strange and melancholy peace. The mystic moon at midnight exhalés "an opiate vapor, dewy, dim," which,

. . . softly dripping, drop by drop
Upon the quiet mountain top
Steals drowsily and musically

into the valley where a contagion of sleep seems to have spread to all objects. The lily "lolls upon the wave," the lake seems consciously slumbering, and the rosemary -- the

flower of remembrance -- "nods upon the grave." This last image is especially significant, for it hints of forgetfulness and suggests anticipated unrest.

The contrasting scenes are characterized by supernatural stirring, which has no connection with actual winds. In "The City in the Sea" the movement comes from some mysterious inner source,

As if the towers had thrust aside
In slightly sinking, the dull tide --
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy heaven.

In "The Valley of Unrest" Poe again uses his method of negation to stress the abnormality of the scene:

Nothing there is motionless --
Nothing save the airs that brood
Over the magic solitude.
Ah, by no winds are stirred those trees
That palpitate like the chill seas
Around the misty Hebrides!
Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
That rustle through the unquiet Heaven

Over the lilies there that wave
And weep above a nameless grave!

The unnaturalness of the scene is emphasized by the fact that nothing is motionless except the air, normally the most active element. In the images of the "palpitating trees" and "rustling clouds" there is a strange uneasiness, but in the lilies that "wave and weep above a nameless grave" there is pure grief. In "The Sleeper" the unrest is anticipated by the "bodiless airs" that flit through the chamber,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully -- so fearfully --
that shadows, like ghosts, rise and fall over the walls and
floor. In these pictures we have a demonstration of Poe's
method of subordinating gloom to supernatural strangeness.
There is a reversal of man's usual associations with utter
quiet and perpetual movement. The most mysterious scenes
are those in which there is a restless stirring; the peace-
ful ones are those in which there is unbroken quiet. The
two types of landscapes blend their separate effects into
an indefinite impression of melancholy strangeness.

In "Dream-Land" 26 -- a portrayal of a dream experience
-- Poe describes a region "out of Space, out of Time," in
which the images are those called forth irrationally by the
death-obsessed dreamer. An "Eidolon, named Night" reigns
on a black throne over a region entered "by a route obscure
and lonely." There are

Bottomless vales, and boundless floods,
And chasms and caves and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the tears that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire.
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters -- lone and dead --
Their still waters -- still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

26"Dream-Land," Works, VII, 89.
Making use of apparent contradictions, Poe catalogues a multitude of images that produce varying sensations suggestive of death and the unknown. Although each image is strange and melancholy, many are pleurably so. The whole impression is that of a vast, shadowy panorama, peaceful and soothing to "the spirit that walks in shadow."

The second type of melancholy effect is differentiated from the first by the feeling of hopelessness that is aroused. There is no diverting image of brightness in these shadowy landscapes. The mind in a state of despair summons images that are characterized by unlifting gloom. Every object suggests death as a mysterious, unending night from which there is no hope of escape.

In "Spirits of the Dead" there is pictured the imaginary realm that is viewed by the mind obsessed with "dark thoughts of the gray tombstone" and overwhelmed by the will of those who were companions in life. The night is devoid of starlight, man's symbol of hope. There is only a red glow from the orbs -- a terror tormenting man's weariness.

As a burning and a fever
Which would cling to thee forever.

There is a permanency in the despair:

Now are thoughts thou shalt not banish --
Now are visions ne'er to vanish --

The breeze, symbolic of the breath of God, is still; and the unbroken, shadowy mist is "a symbol and a token" of the "mystery of mysteries" -- death.

In "The Lake: To--," there is described a landscape composed of images that are aroused by a mental gloom so intense that the idea of death seems a terrifying, fascinating alleviation. Drawn to the beauty of loneliness, the poet sees in the landscape a picture of death. There is a "wild lake, with black rock bound," the latter image suggesting permanency. Mystery is associated with the idea of dense shadows, immediately brought to mind by the description of "the tall pines that towered around." The "pall" of night has a funereal association, and the "mystic wind" suggests terror as well as beauty. The rising terror is heightened by the allusion to the "poisonous wave."

There is a particularly skillful use of vowels to slow the rhythm and heighten the effect of melancholy through sound.

In "Ulalume," landscape is again used to set the tone of melancholy and to provide a wholeness of effect through the unity of natural phenomena, objects from the material world, and mental and spiritual contemplations. By portraying an autumn landscape, Poe at once arouses in the


reader's mind a feeling of gloom that is associated with the death and decay evidenced in nature. The scene is in the isolated "misty mid-region of Weir," near the "dank tarn of Aubier." Loneliness is suggested by isolation, and strangeness by mistiness. The "dank tarn" brings to mind the idea of perpetual shadow. Increasingly melancholy notes are added by the description of the skies as "ashen and sober" and the cypress leaves as "withering and sere." Sound is brought into use by the selection of names and words that have an eerie and sombre quality. The description adequately preludes the assertion that the woodland is "ghoul-haunted." The reader is aroused to a state of ominous and unlifting gloom that makes him share the narrator's sense of desolation and realize the futility of attempts to evade the unmitigated grief.

The preceding works, in which Poe created the effect of melancholy, furnish some of the best illustrations of the exemplification of Poe's literary theory in his use of landscape. The scenes are unreal and imaginary, yet beautiful in unity. The individual landscapes are inseparable from the whole, for while maintaining the tone, forwarding the theme, and creating impressions in themselves, they are subordinated to the "totality of effect." All the works in this group have a theme based on some novel idea connected with death. There is a repetitious
use of certain images, colors, and sounds that are associated with universal feelings aroused by contemplations of death. The arrangement of these items varies with the type of melancholy effect desired. In scenes conveying the impression of pleasurable melancholy, the idea of strangeness is kept foremost by a use of the supernatural, of startling contrasts, and of ideas and images that are suggestive of peace. In scenes demanding an effect of melancholy deepened to despair, no element of brightness diverts the hopeless gloom.

Joy as an effect is created by Poe to afford variety and deepen the effect actually desired by contrast. His theory of poetry holds that beauty is the realm of the poem and that melancholy is inseparable from beauty. He does, however, include several landscapes and many fragmentary scenes that reveal the feelings of pure happiness man receives from beautiful natural scenes; and he pictures such scenes to arouse a happy mental state. Since the state of joy directly opposes that of melancholy, it is to be expected that the landscapes created to produce joy would be in direct contrast with those created to produce melancholy. Such is the case. The scenes of joy are characterized by vitality, airiness, light, and brilliant coloring.

In "Al Aaraaf" there is to be found the best illustration of Poe's use of landscape to create an effect of
happiness. The "crystal home" of Kesace lies "lolling on the golden air," 30 the "opal'd air in color bound." 31 The fairy flowers are of many varieties, some strangely purple-stemmed, some exhaling purple perfume. A diamond window of the palace looks above to the purple air and below to the pavement of "molten stars." 32 There are "star isles," 33 "violet bowers," 34 "sheeny mountains," 35 and a "yellow star" 36 in a "yellow night." 37 While the images are richly appealing to the senses, the whole is a picture of ideal happiness.

In "Fairy-Land," 38 a pictorial representation of the imaginary realm of childhood fancy, there is not the clear, ideal joy of "Al Aaraaf." There is a strange, shadowy melancholy:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Dim vales — and shadowy floods —} \\
\text{And cloudy-looking woods,} \\
\text{Whose forms we can't discover} \\
\text{For the tears that drip all over.}
\end{align*}\]

The melancholy is subordinate to joy, however. There are "huge moons" that put out the starlight and bury "every

\[\begin{align*}
30 & \text{"Al Aaraaf," } \textit{Works, VII, 23, line 17.} \\
31 & \text{Ibid., p. 24, line 20.} \\
32 & \text{Ibid., p. 30, line 8.} \\
33 & \text{Ibid., p. 34, line 23.} \\
34 & \text{Ibid., p. 33, line 2.} \\
35 & \text{Ibid., p. 29, line 15.} \\
36 & \text{Ibid., line 13.} \\
37 & \text{Ibid., line 9.} \\
38 & \text{"Fairy-Land," } \textit{Works, VII, 44.}
\end{align*}\]
drowsy thing" in a labyrinth of light. The "moony covering" soars in the sky at dawn, showering its golden atoms. This poem exemplifies Poe's method of creating pleasure by giving infinite range to the play of the imagination.

In numerous poems Poe makes use of images that are associated with ideal joy. The following descriptions disclose a repetition of those previously pointed out:

. . . . . . . . a land . . . . . . . .
A thousand leagues within the golden west,
A fairy land of flowers and fruit and sunshine,
And crystal lakes and overarching forests,
And mountains, around whose towering summits the winds
Of Heaven untrammeled flow -- 39

"The golden threshold of wide-open gate of dream . . . the gorgeous vistas . . . amid empurpled vapors"; 40 "perfumed sea"; 41 "thy flower-enamelled shore, O Hyacinthine Isle!
O Purple Zante!"; 42 "the stars that . . . seem to twinkle with a crystalline delight," and "the balmy air of night"; 43 and

Thou wast all that to me, love,
For which my soul did pine --
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,

40 "To -- --," Works, VII, 106.
41 "To Helen," Works, VII, 46.
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,  
And all the flowers were mine. 44

These separate images and fragmentary landscape pictures  
stir the reader to a vague sense of pleasure by their  
beauty and, more significantly, by their association with  
a state of joy.

Included among the poems demonstrating the effect of  
joy are "To the River" and "Stanzas." The two poems sug-  
gest that man's deepest pleasure has its source in the  
contemplation of natural beauty. "To the River" 45 is a  
metaphoric conception of the "crystal, wandering water"  
as an emblem of the glow of beauty in man's heart. Beauty  
manifests itself through concrete forms, mirroring the  
feelings of the observer. "Stanzas" 46 shows the power of  
the natural scene to arouse the soul -- to create the  
"poetic sentiment." The spirit is lit with a "passionate"  
light drawn from the sun and stars; and common objects  
suddenly become tokens of "what in other worlds shall be."

In this chapter it has been my purpose to present  
Poe's theory of poetry, to show how this theory was applied  
to the use of landscape, and to determine -- through anal-  
yses of illustrative works -- the method of its exemplifica-  
tion. It was found that Poe held the primary purpose of the

44 "To One in Paradise," [Works, VII, 86.]
45 "To the River," [Works, VII, 42.]
poem to be the attainment of a pleasurable and indefinite effect. All parts of the poem were to follow the pre-determined design and produce an impression of "totality." Poe applied his literary theory to the use of landscape: he selected appropriate individual items, and he arranged the items artistically, blending ideas and words into a whole. A feeling of beauty was aroused through the unity and harmony of the landscape. At the same time there was created a state of mind in keeping with the desired effect. Poe made use of the definite relation that he saw between mental states and objects of the material world. There are a variety of mental states, and each one summons particular images from the physical world in unreal forms and imaginary combinations. The associative powers link these objects and arrangements with suggestive colors and sounds. The poet may artfully describe the scenes of his imagination and thereby arouse in the reader the feelings that prompted the landscape creation. Poe produced two types of indefinite effect -- melancholy and joy. The same method was used in both. Images, arrangements, words, sounds, colors, versification, and various artistic devices were used to suggest the intended effect. In producing the effect of melancholy, all elements were employed to point to the chosen end, suggesting the loneliness, mystery, and terror that are aroused by contemplations of death. When
contrasting images were used as a means of regulating the intensity of the effect, they were skillfully subordinated to the whole impression. To obtain the effect of joy, Poe created scenes that were brilliant, airy, and characterized by abundant vitality. In none of his poems did Poe attempt to show scenes that were "real" in the ordinary sense of the word. He purposely created unreal scenes that, in their unity and harmony, had a transient appearance of reality to the reader's excited imagination. The poet's attainment of effect depended upon his success in selecting and arranging the images that his own particular mental state evoked. When the description produced in the reader a mental state paralleling his own, the poet achieved his purpose. He created "effect."
CHAPTER IV

POE'S USE OF LANDSCAPE TO ACHIEVE EFFECT IN THE TALES

In the preceding chapter a study was made of Poe's theory of poetry, of the application of this theory to the use of landscape, and of the methods employed in the exemplification of the theory through Poe's use of landscape. It was pointed out that the main purpose of the poem was to create an indefinite and pleasurable effect. Landscape was seen as an important means to the attainment of this end; it could create the "poetic sentiment" and at the same time produce particular states of mind in keeping with the desired effect. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the theory of the short story, to show how this theory governed the use of landscape, and to analyze the tales in which Poe made use of landscape.

Poe held that "in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is the point of greatest importance." The chief point of differentiation between the tale and the poem is found in the type of effect produced. The short story attempts to produce a definite effect that is both vivid and novel. Since unity is

1 "Twice-Told Tales," Works, XI, 106.
inseparable from the desired "totality of effect," the plot, setting, theme, characters, and tone must move un-deviatingly toward the chosen end. The plot is defined as "that in which no part can be displaced without ruin to the whole." The beginning, middle, and end of the story must be perfectly balanced, with such reciprocity between the related parts that it is impossible to determine whether or not an individual part depends upon or supports another. The theme must be rigid or plastic enough to accomplish the desired end; and it must give the appearance of originality, for "the desire of the new is an element of the soul." Poe explains that since "the mind of man can imagine nothing which has not really existed," ordinary ideas must be held "in so novel and so fantastic a light, as to have all the appearance of originality." As in the poem, brevity is an important factor in the maintenance of unity. In order that a tale may be looked upon as a whole, rather than a succession

4"Night and Morning," Works, X, 117.
7Ibid., p. 55.
of related events, it must be of a length suitable for reading at one sitting.  

The creation of a definite effect comes with the presentation of "perceptible images with . . . definite sensations."  
The skillful artist having conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out . . . then invents such incidents -- he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. . . . In the whole of the composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. 

In the tales of effect "the true critic will but demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable." 

It is at once obvious that, adhering to the principles of the short story, Poe found no place for purposeless landscape description. If natural scenes are drawn, they must aid in the production of effect. The tale frequently offers opportunities for the use of landscape settings; but ordinarily such use demands unity of place

11 "Letter to B--," Works, VII, xliii.  
and little else. Poe's theory demanded something more: landscape must aid in the creation of effect. Again it is necessary to recall Poe's attitude toward the natural scene. He believed that there was exhibited a unity of effect in novel arrangements of individual elements of the physical world; furthermore, he associated these arrangements with mental states. In the preceding chapter we saw landscape arrangement devised for the purpose of producing the indefinite impressions demanded by poetry. Here we see the same method used to produce the definite effects demanded by the tale.


In the three mystery stories Poe makes a singular use of landscape for effect. Critics have almost unanimously agreed that the landscapes of these tales furnish exceptions to his usual "ill-defined . . . and highly colored elaborations of ideal scenes." The consensus has been

---

14 Killis Campbell, Introduction to Poe's Short Stories (American Authors Series), p. xx.
that Poe was attempting to draw real scenes. It is my contention that these landscapes were created for effect and are as illustrative of his guiding theory as are the tales of terror. It was important that Poe establish the verisimilitude of his stories, and laying scenes in supposedly actual places was a means for the accomplishment of this end. An investigation shows that he made no effort to restrict his descriptions to reality.

In "The Gold Bug," "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," and "William Wilson" the settings are designed to forward the interest of the story and at the same time heighten the effect of mystery. Poe believed that when man's mind is dominated by feelings of mystery, there arise images suggestive of the unknown and the strange: mistiness, isolation, peculiar vegetation, inaccessible or unexplored regions, dreariness, and abnormality. In producing an effect of mystery, then, Poe selects those images that man naturally associates with mystery. From these images he arranges landscapes in keeping with the theme of his particular story.

The setting of "The Gold Bug" is laid near Charleston, South Carolina:

This Island is a very singular one . . . separated from the main land by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime. . . . The vegetation . . . is scant. . . . No trees of any magnitude
are to be seen. Near the western extremity may be found, indeed, the bristly palmetto; but the whole island, with the exception of this... point, and a line of hard, white beach on the seacoast, is covered with a dense undergrowth of sweet myrtle... prized by the horticulturists of England. The shrub here often attains a height of fifteen or twenty feet, and forms an almost impenetrable coppice, burthening the air with its fragrance.14

We... proceeded in a northwesterly direction, through a tract of country exceedingly desolate and wild, where no trace of human footstep was to be seen... The sun was just setting when we entered a region infinitely more dreary than any yet seen. It was a species of table land, near the summit of an almost inaccessible hill, densely wooded from base to pinnacle, and interspersed with huge crags that appeared to lie loosely upon the soil... Deep ravines, in various directions, gave an air of still sterner solemnity to the scene.15

Poe makes use of certain local characteristics in the setting of his ratiocinative story; but he surrenders accuracy to the main interest of the tale. The country is made a wild and desolate one, because such a scene heightens the idea of adventure and mystery. It is not necessary that Poe make the scene fantastic; indeed, such a treatment would be inconsistent with a theme in which accuracy of circumstantial details is important. Never straying beyond the limits of possibility, Poe describes a scene that is "singular," "exceedingly desolate and wild," and pervaded with an air of "stern solemnity." In

presenting merely the unusual -- the scene unknown to ordinary man -- the effect of mystery is created.

"A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" is an account of a strange mesmeric experience involving a mesmerist, Dr. Templeton, and his patient, Bedloe. Between the two there had grown up a powerful magnetic relation, and Bedloe's will succumbed to that of the mesmerist "by the mere volition of the operator, even when the invalid was unaware of his presence." On this particular occasion Bedloe, while walking in a solitary mountain region, undergoes an experience exactly paralleling that which the physician, many miles away, is recording on paper. Such a story demands a setting of extraordinary character to aid its more sharply defined effect of mystery heightened to the fantastic. The scene, which is laid in a wild region in the Ragged Mountains near Charlottesville, Virginia, is described as it appeared to Bedloe on a "dim, misty day, toward the close of November . . . during the Indian summer." There was "an indescribable . . . aspect of dreary desolation" about the whole scene; the "solitude appeared absolutely virgin"; and the thick mist hanging "heavily over all objects" served to "deepen the vague impressions

17 Ibid., p. 166.
which these objects created."\textsuperscript{18} This landscape skillfully illustrates Poe's use of the quality of vagueness to arouse the reader's sense of the strange and create a feeling of apprehensive curiosity. The scenes that follow, the highly fantastic landscapes of a mesmeric dream, are used to provide a setting for the "wildly picturesque" Oriental city, "such as we read of in the Arabian Tales, but of a character even more singular than there described."\textsuperscript{19} There is no terror in the fantastic landscapes of this story; there is only peculiarity and inexplicable mystery. Important in producing the effect is Poe's method of holding the Oriental scene with its splendor and civilization against the background of the dreary, desolate country "trodden never before by the foot of a human being."\textsuperscript{20}

In "William Wilson," a mysterious allegory dealing with conscience, Poe employs landscape in a single instance to aid in the creation of an atmosphere of strangeness. The description of a school in Stoke Newington, England, is a strange mixture of truth and fancy. The strangeness does not come from the novelty of individual objects, but from the vague and dream-like impression of the whole.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 167. \textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 169. \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 167.
and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight, at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking, each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere. . . .

The details of this scene are neither fantastic nor unusual; but Poe arouses a feeling of mystery by imbuing ordinary objects with a quality of vagueness. He makes the reader conscious of the strange atmosphere pervading the scene by describing his own impressions of the place.

Poe mentions terror as one of the most suitable effects for the tale. In five stories of terror -- three of them sea tales -- landscape is an outstanding feature. A series of settings is necessary in the sea adventure, and it is possible to make these settings contribute to the theme, the plot, and the tone of the work as a whole. Poe realized that he could heighten the effect of terror by making the scenes themselves terrible. Conceiving effect as a state of mind, he devised the scenes to parallel mental states gradually changing from perplexity to sheer terror. The development of a state of mind is gradual, as feelings become more and more intensified; likewise the impressions of individual scenes must rise slowly toward the maximum effect. Poe uses the method of gradation of the novel; that

is, he develops the element of peculiarity into the strange and finally the fantastic. This method of gradation is applied to the use of colors, sounds, forms, and arrangements. Poe makes use of items that are meaningful in themselves because of association. A feeling of terror is aroused by the presentation of objects that are associated with darkness, desolation, and the mysterious unknown. The combination of these elements becomes increasingly startling and novel, and thus a climactic effect is achieved.

"The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" is a first-person account of breath-taking adventure. The confidence of the reader is secured by the simplicity of the narration and the credence of circumstantial details. Because of its extreme length, this work has often been looked upon as a novel; however, its method is that of the tale. The series of events and pictures is shaped into a whole for the purpose of creating a single effect of terror.

Landscape first appears to suggest the theme of the story. The narrator's subconscious mind, anticipating the terrors in store, visions a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears, upon some gray and desolate rock, in an ocean unapproachable.

My dreams were of the most terrific description. ... Deserts, limitless, and of the most forlorn and awe-inspiring character, spread themselves out before me. Immensely tall trunks of trees, gray
and leafless, rose up before me in endless succession as far as eye could reach. Their roots were concealed in wide-spreadin g morasses, whose dreary water lay intensely black, still, and altogether terrible, beneath. And the strange trees seemed endowed with some human vitality, and, waving to and fro their skeleton arms, were crying to the silent waters for mercy, in the shrill and piercing accents of the most acute agony and despair.  

This initial description is the pictorial account of a mind fearing shipwreck, famine, and isolation from the normal world. Every image suggests a universal fear inherent in man. When the actual journey begins, the first hint that the terrors are to become realities is given by the peculiarity of the natural phenomena. Baffling winds, alternately light and heavy, and nights of indescribable blackness disquiet the sailors; the reader begins to anticipate the subsequent events -- the shipwreck, famine, thirst, and cannibalism among the sailors themselves. These more common horrors are experienced before the survivors arrive on Desolation Island. This island is described so as to create an increasingly terrified mental state. The apparently luxuriant vegetation is misleading. There is but a single green plant growing in patches on the hills on a species of crumbling moss. The brilliant green of the plant starkly contrasts the barrenness of the island proper. Some rank herbage, lichen, and a few bitter shrubs make up

the vegetation. The beach of black sand terminates in an impassable and broken region extending to gigantic ice mountains towering above each other. Not only is there a novelty in the combination of elements -- individually the items are strange. In subsequent pictures there are rocks, "novel in their mass, their colour, and their stratification." 23 The water is thick and "never, except when falling in a cascade" has the customary appearance of limpidity." It is not colorless, or of any uniform color, but of "every possible shade of purple, like the hues of changeable silk." 24 The whole country is strewn with seeming wreckages of gigantic structures of art -- all of black rock -- although close scrutiny reveals no semblance of art in the details. Every object in the strange pictures contributes to the desolation of the whole, making way for the climaxing scene which is utterly fantastic. The final description parallels a mental state in which all reason is suspended and the imagination is dominant:

A high range of light gray vapour appeared constantly in the southern horizon . . . having all the wild variations of the Aurora Borealis. . . . The heat of the water was now truly remarkable, and its color was undergoing a rapid change, being no longer transparent, but of a milky hue and consistency. In our immediate vicinity it was usually smooth . . . but we were frequently surprised at perceiving, to

23 Ibid., p. 186.  
24 Ibid.
our right and left, at different distances, sudden and extensive agitations of the surface . . . preceded by wild flickers in the region of the vapour to the southward.25

The vapour loses its tint as it rises above the horizon, and a fine, white, ashy powder falls from its "limitless cataract, rolling silently into the sea from some immense and far-distant rampart in heaven."26 Engulfed in ever-increasing darkness, "relieved only by the glare of the water thrown back from the white curtain," the boat rushes into the embraces of the cataract and an opening chasm.27

In "Ms. Found in a Bottle" the same general method is used as in "The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym." An inexplicable and foreboding gloom, which surrounds the hero from the first paragraph, sets the tone of unnaturalness. From the outset of the voyage this quality is characteristic of the physical phenomena. There appears "a very singular, isolated cloud . . . remarkable, as well for its color, as from its being the first" since the boat's departure.28

This initial omen spreads "all at once to the eastward and westward, girting the horizon with a narrow strip of vapour, and looking like a long line of beach."29 The moon is

27Ibid., p. 242.
29Ibid.
dusky-red; the sea, "of peculiar character," is so transparent that the eye can travel some fifteen fathoms to the bottom of the sea;\textsuperscript{30} the hot, oppressive air is inconceivably calm. A parallel is seen between the increasingly ominous gloom of the natural scene and that which pervades the feelings of the narrator. The tempest makes way for a striking exhibition of contrasting phenomena. At the height of the tempest there appears a "sickly yellow" sun -- the color alone designating it as an object of terror -- which gives an unreflected and sullen glow, not a natural light.\textsuperscript{31} Just before the sun sinks into the "turgid sea," its fires go out "as if hurriedly extinguished by some unaccountable power," and like a dim, silver rim it rushes "down into the unfathomable ocean."\textsuperscript{32} The terrifying bewilderment experienced by the narrator gives way to hopelessness. There is a scene of total darkness, an "eternal night . . . horror, and thick gloom, and a black, sweltering desert of ebony."\textsuperscript{33} The supernatural sea is lit by a fitful red brilliancy, "a dull, sullen glare of red light,"\textsuperscript{34} as the fantastic ship approaches. The suspense and terror increase, rather than diminish, during the period aboard the ship.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 3. \\
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 5. \\
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 6. \\
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 7.
All in the immediate vicinity of the ship is the blackness of eternal night, and a chaos of foaming water; but, about a league on either side of us, may be seen . . . stupendous ramparts of ice, towering away into the desolate sky, and looking like walls of the universe.  

The ice opens suddenly, and the ship whirls dizzily into "a gigantic amphitheatre, the summit of whose walls is lost in the darkness and the distance." The ship plunges madly into the grasp of the whirlpool, "amid a roaring, and bellowing, and thundering of ocean and tempest. . . ."

"A Descent into the Maelström" is based upon the same experience that climaxes "Ms. Found in a Bottle" -- destruction by whirlpool. In this tale, however, the experiences are recounted by the narrator near the original site. The description of the scene at once sets the tone of horror, supplies the background, and arouses the reader's imagination so that the experiences to follow seem credible. There was a wide expanse of inky ocean, and

to the right and left, as far as eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever. . . . About two miles nearer the land, arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

---

The water became "seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels," bursting into phrenzied convulsion and "plunging on ... with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes except in precipitous descents."\(^{39}\) Again the scene altered. The sea became smooth, and streaks of foam appeared where none had been before. Suddenly the mouth of a gigantic funnel opened, revealing walls of jet black water "speeding dizzily round and round ... and sending to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven."\(^{40}\) The beholder was confounded by the horror, the magnificence, and "the bewildering sense of the novel."\(^{41}\) In a furious tempest the ship was hurled headlong into the pitchy black abyss, and the hopelessness of the situation is the more forcibly brought out by Poe's method of contrast. First there was the blaze of a full moon through the deep, bright blue sky; total darkness again enveloped the scene; "the gleaming and ghastly radiance" of rays that "streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls"\(^{42}\) of the maelström once more revealed the full horror of the predicament. Up to this point, there is a striking similarity between this experience and that in "Ms. Found in a Bottle." In both

\(^{39}\)Ibid., p. 228. \(^{40}\)Ibid., p. 229. \\
\(^{41}\)Ibid. \(^{42}\)Ibid., p. 242.
cases death has appeared imminent. In "Descent into the Maelström" a miraculous escape is effected, but the impression of terror has been successfully created.

In these three tales of adventure, Poe creates the effect of terror through the description of scenes that are powerful in their novelty. The component elements are novel in form, in color, and in arrangement. They are individually suggestive of the feelings of terror which Poe wishes to arouse. Total darkness is suggestive of death and the unknown; contrasting light, "sullen red" or "ghastly yellow," suggests the supernatural; convulsive and shrieking waters call forth feelings of agonized helplessness; barren rocks suggest isolation and resignation to the inevitable; abysses are associated with unalterable doom. Sensitive to the power of individual items as well as to their arrangement, Poe combines the elements so as to regulate the intensity of the whole impressions. The landscapes are made inseparable from the plot, so that the whole converges in an irresistible unity, a "totality of effect."

"The Fall of the House of Usher" is another illustration of Poe's use of landscape to create an effect of terror through gradation of the novel. In this tale the tone of melancholy is deepened to that of unmitigated despair. The opening scene bears a remarkable similarity to that of the
poem "Ulalume," which purposes to attain an indefinite ef-
fect. An autumn landscape is depicted to arouse feelings
of gloom that are associated with the decay evidenced in
the natural scene. Feelings of melancholy premonition are
aroused by the images of clouds hanging "oppressively low
in the heavens," by the bleak-walled mansion isolated by
"a singularly dreary tract of country," and by the "rank
sedges," the "white trunks of decayed trees," and the "black
and lurid tarn." 43 The narrator, reflecting upon the sor-
rowful aspect of the scene, feels that a "mere different
arrangement . . . of the details of the picture would be
sufficient to modify" its effect; 44 but he is unable to
make an analysis of the power that fills him with gloom.
The opening picture serves a dual purpose. It is of such
nature that every object stirs the reader to thoughts of
disintegration, thereby forwarding a theme which is con-
cerned with the disintegration of Usher's mind. At the
same time the natural scene is imbued with a quality of
sentience, and the reader is made aware of the strange be-
lief in sentience which is allied with Usher's mental
deterioration. This theory is not in conformity with the
more normal theory introduced by Poe in "The Island of

43 "The Fall of the House of Usher," Works, III,
273-274.

44 Ibid., p. 274.
the Fay." 45 Not only vegetable things display sentience to Usher: the method of collocation of the stones, the decayed trees, the "long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement . . . its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn . . . the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls" 46 -- all fulfill the conditions of sentience in Usher's opinion. The first scene sets the tone of the story, arousing a melancholy apprehensiveness and at the same time introducing the theme and the interrelated factors bearing upon it.

The tale proceeds with an account of Usher's mental and physical disintegration. The indefinite and melancholy foreboding progresses to the definite effect of terror. The climax of the story makes use of landscape to heighten the impression. There arises a furious storm, which is characterized by supernatural manifestations. The dense clouds seem "to press upon the turrets of the house," 47 and an unaccountable light faintly illuminates the doomed mansion. Violence predominates in the natural world as well as in the mind of Usher. There is a

45 "The Island of the Fay," Works, IV, 194.
terrifying contrast in the radiance of a blood-red moon, which glows upon the scene of final destruction.

"Silence -- A Fable" falls into the group of works achieving an effect of terror through landscape, but it differs from the preceding tales in which the scenes contribute to a plot involving events. This work is merely a philosophical sketch based on the idea that the voice of God is manifested in nature. Terror of varying intensity is created in the three scenes.

In the first scene every object is stirred with supernatural movement. The yellow river does not flow normally, but "palpitates forever . . . beneath the red eye of the sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion." 48 The giant water-lilies in their oozy beds "stretch towards the heavens their long and ghastly necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting heads," murmuring "like the rushing of subterrene water." 49 There is no natural wind, but the underwood of the "dark, horrible, lofty forest" is constantly agitated, and the trees "rock eternally . . . with a crashing and mighty sound." 50 At the roots of the trees "strange poisonous flowers lie writhing in perturbed slumber." 51 The gray clouds rush like a noisy cataract over

49 Ibid., pp. 220-221.
50 Ibid., p. 221.
51 Ibid.
the inert wall of the horizon. Rain falls and, having fallen, becomes blood. The crimson moon that rises through the mist lights the shore of the river, revealing a great rock -- "gray and ghastly and tall"\(^{52}\) -- on which is inscribed the word "Desolation." This scene changes to another in which the terror is intensified. The elements are cursed with tumult:

A frightful tempest gathered... And the heaven became livid with the violence of the tempest... and the river was tormented into foam -- and the water-lilies shrieked within their beds -- and the forest crumbled before the wind... and the rock rocked to its foundation... \(^{53}\)

The third scene is even more awful: the elements are cursed with silence. All movement ceases. The clouds are motionless; the waters sink low and remain; every sound and "shadow of sound" is hushed "throughout the vast illimitable desert."\(^{54}\) This final scene illustrates Poe's theory that silence is the manifestation of God's greatest wrath. Silence strikes the deepest note of terror in man, for it signifies annihilation of the soul.

"Silence -- A Fable" bears interesting comparison with the works previously analyzed. A definite similarity may be observed between the first scene of the "Fable," with its pervading quality of ominous foreboding, and the

\(^{52}\) Ibid.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 223.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 224.
visions of A. Gordon Pym before his voyage. In the poems also there are found frequent allusions to supernatural movement. The second scene of the sketch, in which the elements are cursed with tumult, finds its counterpart in scenes from each of the tales, as the intensity of the terror increases. The third scene, in which Poe reveals his belief that silence strikes the deepest note of terror in man, brings to mind the climactic points of the preceding studies. In nearly every case Poe uses silence as a means of contrast in the scenes of tumult. Violence is made the more effective by inserting the contrasting element of complete silence, a further demonstration of the supernatural. In all three scenes of "Silence -- A Fable" we find Poe's use of novel arrangements, combinations, forms, sounds, and colors.

In the various types of work demanding an effect of terror, Poe's use of landscape is in strict accordance with the theory of the short story. To achieve the totality of effect, he creates scenes that arouse definite mental states while serving as settings; moreover, he draws the settings into the thread of the plot to attain a close-knit unity. His method of arousing states of mind is the same in both poetry and prose, but in the tale he presents "perceptible images with definite . . ."
sensations." Individually and in relation to the whole, the colors, sounds, and forms are meaningful. Man’s powers of association are of a reciprocal nature. Certain mental states involuntarily bring forth particular images from the physical world; and those same images likewise create particular mental states. With this theory in mind, Poe proceeds to select and arrange items of his landscape so as to bring about the mental state desired. The reader is made to feel even as he sees. When Poe has created the desired feelings in his reader, he has secured his effect, the end toward which he worked.

55 "Letter to B--," Works, VII, xlili.
CHAPTER V

POE'S PHILOSOPHY AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON HIS USE OF LANDSCAPE

Usually a writer's treatment of nature reveals the underlying theories upon which he bases his philosophy of life. This is especially the case when his works are reflective. Poe's writings are of such a speculative nature that critics have introduced widely different contentions concerning his religious and philosophical beliefs. By one critic he is looked upon as a "soured and self-willed unbeliever";\(^1\) by another he is considered a dreamer "who felt the indwelling of a consecrated spirit," believing that his genius united him "with supernal powers in nature";\(^2\) by another he is asserted to have held "a conception of God that is theological but not philosophical";\(^3\) and by still another he is seen as one who acknowledged "faith in a Supreme Being" and was conscious of his imperfection in the eyes of his Maker.\(^4\) These varying

\(^1\)Strong, quoted by Killis Campbell, *The Mind of Poe*, p. 15.


opinions are due to the fact that Poe made no effort to clarify his beliefs or systematize the complex ideas involving literary, aesthetic, scientific, and ethical views; however, we find various expressions of his beliefs in the poems, tales, essays, and criticism. It is necessary to consider these sources as a whole if we are to draw anything like an accurate conclusion.

In this final chapter of the study of Poe's use of landscape, it is my purpose to determine Poe's basic philosophic ideas and to point out the extent to which these ideas are reflected in his use of landscape. The first part of my discussion will deal with Poe's conception of God, his belief that God's law is manifested in nature, and the relationship that he saw between himself, a literary artist, and God. The second part of the discussion will be concerned with the influence of Poe's beliefs on his use of landscape.

In Poe's earliest writings -- his poems -- he mentions the Deity frequently, "now in thoughtless ejaculation, now in reverent appeal, now in matchless attributes." The fact that he makes only rare allusions to Christ, that in the revision of a poem he deliberately erased the name Jesus, and that he entirely omits mention of the Holy Spirit

points to the conclusion that he was not a Trinitarian.  

His contempt for theological dogma is expressed in the following passage: "Absolutely all the argumentation which I have seen on the nature of the soul, or of the Deity, seems to me nothing but the worship of His unnameable idol."  

Not until "Eureka" appeared in 1848 did Poe do more than hint at the nature of the Deity to which he alludes so frequently in his works, and even then he made no attempt to define His person or His powers. We may begin tracing his references to God from "Tamerlane," which appeared in 1827. In addition to the mention of God in an exclamatory prayer, there is a firmly expressed belief in immortality:

I know -- for Death who comes for me  
From regions of the blest afar,  
Where there is nothing to deceive,  
Hath left his iron gate ajar,  
And rays of truth you cannot see  
Are flashing thro' Eternity --  

In "Dreams" Poe speaks of "the beam of an eternity" and "Paradise," whereas in "The Lake: To---" he uses the term "Eden" in reference to the afterlife.  

---

6 Ibid.  
7 "Marginalia," Works, XVI, 129.  
10 "The Lake: To---," Works, VII, 21.
Dead" alludes not only to God, but to the symbolism through which He is revealed.\textsuperscript{11} The basic theme of "Al Aaraaf" is the power and love of God as it is manifested through beauty in nature. "Israfil" describes celestial ecstasies and perfections. "Hymn," a prayer addressed to Mary, Mother of God, is an orthodox expression of faith in God and a belief in immortality. "The Lake: To--" and "To Annie" interpret death as a state of rest for both body and mind. There is a variation of the idea in "The Sleeper," "The City in the Sea," and "The Valley of Unrest," which suggest that the peace of death is broken when the dead are forgotten by their survivors. The tragedy of "The Raven" is founded upon fear, steadily progressing in the mind of the lover, that there is no afterlife.

Poe's prose writings do not disclose as many expressions concerning religion as do the poems; however, there are to be found several items of significance. In two of the essays Poe asserts a belief in immortality;\textsuperscript{12} in one he acknowledges the "infallibility of the Divine Word";\textsuperscript{13} in a note on the essay "The Study of Nature," he refers to "the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of the Great Cause

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} "Spirits of the Dead," \textit{Works}, VII, 13.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} "Macaulay's Essays," \textit{Works}, X, 159.
\end{itemize}
of all being."\textsuperscript{14} In a critical notice Poe declares that "men deny a God only with their lips."\textsuperscript{15} That religion did not mean to him the mere "embodying of a poetical fancy" is shown in another critical review in which he speaks of religion as a "pervading feeling of the heart which enters into and characterizes the actions of those who feel its influence."\textsuperscript{16}

The various ideas and statements found in the prose and poetry suggest that Poe's conception of the nature of the Deity was indefinite. That he possessed a firm belief in a controlling God, however, is undeniable. His early leanings toward belief in a God not only of knowledge, but of Beauty, are expressed in "Al Aaraaf." Here he sees beauty as the "direct revelation of the divine in mankind, and the protection of the soul against sin."\textsuperscript{17} Seeing beauty and order as synonymous, Poe gradually began to see the Deity as the highest kind of order, and in the systematic operations of nature he viewed God's true characteristics. In "The Power of Words" he explains that "certain

\begin{itemize}
  \item[16] "Journal" by Frances Anne Butler (Fanny Kemble), Works, VIII, 31.
\end{itemize}
operations of what we term Nature, or the natural laws, will, under certain conditions, give rise to that which has all the appearance of creation," when really these operations are the "mediate or indirect . . . results of the Divine creative power."\(^{18}\) The Deity is the cause, the source of all motion being thought, and the source of all thought, God.\(^{19}\) In "The Island of the Fay," written in 1841, Poe makes a clear expression of the idea of unity. He declares that he loves to regard the valleys, rocks, waters, forests, and mountains as themselves but colossal members of one vast and animate whole -- a whole whose form (that of the sphere) is the most perfect and inclusive of all; whose path is among associate planets; whose meek handmaiden is the moon; whose mediate sovereign is the sun; whose life is eternity; whose thought is that of a God; whose enjoyment is knowledge; whose destinies are lost in immensity. . . .\(^{20}\)

He sees the endowment of matter with vitality as a principle -- "indeed as far as our judgments extend, the leading principle in the operations of the Deity."\(^{21}\) Cycle is within cycle without end; and all revolve "around one far-distant centre which is the Godhead."\(^{22}\) God is referred to as "the

\(^{18}\)"The Power of Words," *Works*, VI, 140.


\(^{20}\)"The Island of the Fay," *Works*, IV, 194.


\(^{22}\) *Ibid.*
great landscape gardener of the whole earth," who sets the hemispheres in array. 23 In "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" Monos declares that God's voice is manifested in "the laws of gradation so visibly pervading all things in Earth and Heaven." 24 In "Eureka" Poe gives a detailed explanation of his theory of the oneness of the Universe, which is "the utmost conceivable expanse of space, with all things spiritual and material." 25 Poe declares that "we believe in a God," 26 and he conceives this Deity as "Spirit -- that is to say, ... not Matter..." 27 An "intuition altogether irresistible, although inexpressible, forces" Poe to conclude that "what God originally created -- that that Matter which, by dint of his Volition, he first made from the Spirit, or from Nihility, could have been nothing but Matter in its utmost conceivable state of... Simplicity." 28

By "absolute Simplicity" Poe means

one particle -- a particle of one kind -- of one character -- of one nature -- of one size -- of one form -- a particle, therefore, "without form and void" -- a particle positively a particle at all points -- a particle absolutely unique, individual, undivided, and not indivisible only because He who created it, by dint of His Will, can by an infinitely less energetic exercise of the same Will, as a matter of course, divide it. 29

---

26 Ibid., p. 203.
27 Ibid., p. 205.
28 Ibid., p. 206.
29 Ibid., p. 207.
The Universe was effected "by forcing the originally and therefore normally One into the abnormal condition of Many." 30 This diffusion from Unity "involves a tendency to return into Unity." 31 Because of the danger of frustration in the tendency to return into Unity "before the fulfillment of any ends proposed in multiplicity," 32 a repulsion was necessitated to "allow the approach," and forbid the junction, of the atoms; suffering them infinitely to approximate, while denying them positive contact; in a word, having the power -- up to a certain epoch -- of preventing their coalition, but no ability to interfere with their coalescence in any respect or degree." 33 Poe holds that there exist no other principles in the Universe than Attraction and Repulsion.

The former is the body, the latter the soul: the one is the material; the other the spiritual, principle of the Universe. . . . All phenomena are referable to one, or to the other, or to both combined. 34

"The Thought of God is to be understood as originating the Diffusion -- as proceeding with it -- as regulating it -- and, finally, as being withdrawn from it upon its completion." 35 Resulting from the discontinuance of the Divine

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 211.
34 Ibid., pp. 213-214.
Volition are "the two agents, Attraction and Repulsion."  
These principles of 
Attraction and Repulsion -- the material and the 
spiritual -- accompany each other, in the strictest 
fellowship, forever. Thus the Body and the Soul 
walk hand in hand.  
When Matter shall have fulfilled its purposes, it "shall 
have returned into its original condition of One," that 
is, into absolute Unity. 
It will then . . . be Matter without Attraction and 
without Repulsion -- in other words . . . Matter no more. In sinking into Unity, it will sink at once 
into that Nothingness which, to all Finite Percep-
tion, Unity must be -- into that Material Nihility 
from which alone we can conceive it to have been 
evoked -- to have been created by the Volition of 
God.  
"The regathering of this diffused Matter and Spirit will 
be but the re-constitution of the purely Spiritual and 
Individual God." Poe concludes his essay with the ad-
monition to "bear in mind that all is Life -- Life -- Life 
within Life -- the less within the greater, and all within 
the Spirit Divine."  
The declaration that "the Body and the Soul walk hand 
in hand" suggests a basis for the theory of sentience which 
Poe introduces in "The Island of the Fay" and "The Fall of 

36 Ibid.  
37 Ibid., p. 244.  
38 Ibid., p. 310.  
39 Ibid., p. 311.  
40 Ibid., p. 313.  
41 Ibid., p. 315.
the House of Usher." Whether or not Poe actually endorsed this theory is a moot point. It is significant that his discussion in "The Island of the Fay" is fanciful in tone. The statement "I love to regard ..."42 carries with it the implication of semi-seriousness. In "The Fall of the House of Usher" the theory is treated in the same manner as are many of the pseudo-scientific ideas that appear in the tales. A comment from one of the critical reviews throws a degree of light on the controversy. Poe is speaking of a particular passage in one of Bryant's poems:

This ... passage is especially beautiful. Happily to endow inanimate nature with sentience and a capability of action is one of the severest tests of the poet.43

This statement points to the conclusion that, while the theory of sentience was interesting to Poe, he held no definite belief in it. His scientific explanation of unity made illogical the denial of sentience, for man has no reason to feel that the endowment of matter with vitality is restricted "to the regions of the minute, where we daily trace it," and not extended "to those of the august."44

Poe's conception of God as the controlling force of the Universe involves a belief in immortality. In a letter

42 "The Island of the Fay," Works, IV, 194.
44 "The Island of the Fay," Works, IV, 195.
to Lowell, the ideas of "Eureka" are restated:

Matter without atom or division is God, and its activity is the thought of God, and the individualizing of this activity forms intelligent creatures. It thus comes that man is individualized by his material body; that when we die we merely undergo a change. The worm becomes the butterfly. The stars are the homes of such beings as death produces among us. . . . 45

Immortality, evolving from the all-embracing unity of the Universe, is viewed from a scientific rather than a theological viewpoint.

Poe uses various terms to designate the unity which to him constituted beauty -- balance, equality, proportion, harmony, and adjustment; and he conceived the controlling force behind the operations of the Universe as a God of beauty, of order, of harmony. He sees in nature the outward expression of God's law, single and infallible, yet providing for every possible contingency. Man is warned against "the leading Evil, Knowledge," which leads him away from Beauty, Nature, and Life. 46 This evil makes man attempt to control the natural laws, whereas his salvation lies in his complete submission to their guidance. 47 We must have "infinite faith in Nature and her Laws" 48 and

45 Poe to Lowell, Werke, XVII, 183.
strive to interpret correctly God's method of revelation.
The Deity manifests His power through two kinds of beauty
-- the terrible and the fair; but man frequently recognizes
His power in the catastrophes of nature only -- "the thunder
cloud, the storm, the earth-quake, and the ocean-wrath." 49
Actually God's more powerful manifestation is in the silent
exaltation of the soul, wherein He expresses His love. That
God also exhibits His greatest wrath by condemning His sub-
jects to absolute silence is borne out in "Sonnet-Silence." 50
Man is warned against the absolute silence in which nothing-
ness prevails -- annihilation. Poe believes that nature
holds rich symbolical meanings, and he sees science as an
evil which destroys the symbolism and thereby distorts the
deeper meanings of the Deity.

Science, he believes, "alters" all things, and the
true reality lies in the poet's heart. He sees
man and Nature as a whole, not in isolated sec-
tions. 51

All men are subject to the spiritual exaltation im-
planted by the Deity, but the poet is especially sensitive
to beauty. For this reason Poe refers to the spiritual
excitement as the "poetic sentiment." The poet is not
only conscious of the beautiful; he is stirred with a

51 A. H. Quinn, Edgar Allan Poe, p. 162.
desire to create, to depict his own visions for the purpose of arousing the poetic sentiment in others. That Poe believed he possessed an understanding of the supernal powers in nature is substantiated by several poems. "Stanzas" is an account of a mood of spiritual exaltation:

the poet becomes conscious of a sudden but momentary illumination in which familiar objects assume a beauty and a meaning hitherto unsuspected. He means that poets are endowed with a sensiveness and a power of insight not given to ordinary men. 52

The poet is aware of the fact that natural beauty

... is a symbol and a token
Of what in other worlds shall be — and given
In beauty by our God, to those alone
Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven
Drawn by their heart's passion... \(53\)

In "A Dream" Poe speaks of the comfort afforded by a "holy dream" that confirmed his belief in his own genius "when all the world were chiding.\(54\)

Poe's philosophical attitudes -- his conception of God, his belief that God manifests His law in nature, and his consciousness of a singular relationship existing between the literary artist and the Deity -- are all strangely interwoven with his literary doctrine. It is impossible to determine whether his intellectual development was a moulding factor in his artistic development or whether his

52 Floyd Stovall, "Poe as a Poet of Ideas," The University of Texas Studies in English, No. 11 (1931), p. 55.
artistry led him into analogies involving the Universe.
At any rate, from the first writings that deal with the
critical theories, Poe pronounces unity his guiding princi-
ple, and he asserts that his theory is based on an
analogy that he perceives between "a perfect arrangement
of parts in a story or poem and the action of forces in
nature under the government of immutable law."55 In the
final expression of his beliefs in "Eureka," Poe draws an
analogy between the proper construction of plot in liter-
ature and "Divine adaptation" in the Universe.56 While
the artist may model his plots on the plan of the Deity,

perfection of plot is really, or practically,
unattainable -- but only because it is a finite
intelligence that constructs. The plots of God
are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God.

Poe sees in the unity evolving from the harmonious rela-
tion of parts a method whereby singleness of effect can be
achieved.58 More specifically, unity in this respect means
the subservience of all details to a prevailing idea, its
purpose being to create a single effect, that is, a par-
ticular state of mind in the reader. Throughout his writ-
ings Poe is lavish in his praise for the Divine Order

55 Margaret Alterton, Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe
56 "Eureka," Works, XVI, 291.
57 Ibid., p. 292.
58 Margaret Alterton, op. cit., p. xiv.
observable in nature, and he holds the pattern of unity before him as a literary guide.

The belief that God's law is manifested in nature bears upon Poe's literary theories in a significant way. First of all, the belief prompts his concern for the "poetic sentiment," that is, man's innate desire to glimpse supernal beauties. The love which God exhibits in the natural scene is felt in man through an exaltation of soul, a certain sense of the beautiful. The poet feels a desire to create, to recombine the objects of natural loveliness which have stirred him. "But to view such natural objects as they exist, and to behold them through the medium of words, are different things."59 The poet must depend on the proper selection and arrangement of objects for the attainment of his purpose. In poetry the impression desired is an indefinite one, for the contemplation of beauty that comes from viewing the natural scene arouses vague and pleasurable feelings. The poem must create the same kind of impression. "The only proper method of testing the merits of a poem is by measuring its capabilities of exciting the Poetic Sentiment in others."60 Poe makes use of landscape to arouse that sentiment: he uses the medium of words to create imaginary scenes that are the result of the sentiment within

60 Ibid., p. 284.
himself and are capable of arousing within the reader feelings that correspond to his own.

The same belief that prompts the use of landscape to arouse the poetic sentiment is responsible for Poe's appreciative attitude toward the unaltered natural scene. He sees the alteration of original beauty as degradation, as distortion of symbolical allusions to be found in the outward forms of nature. This idea appears frequently, and it becomes the central theme in several instances. Poe's endorsement of landscaping as an art does not contradict his praise of original beauty. The landscape artist performs a unique task: he adapts the individual items of the natural scene according to an artistic design. He is governed by the principle of unity in harmoniously combining and contrasting his objects.

Poe's belief that natural objects have the power to stimulate the imagination is, perhaps, of more importance than any other in a study of Poe's use of landscape. We have seen that Poe believed the poetic sentiment to be an outgrowth of effect produced by natural scenes. In all forms of literature, not poetry alone, the dominating purpose is the achievement of effect, the creation of mental states; therefore Poe does not confine the use of landscape to poetry, but he extends it to prose. He makes landscape serve as a means of arousing the imagination and producing
a definite impression. He acts on a theory that the presentation of scenes brought forth by a particular state of mind in the writer will create parallel states of mind in the reader. When man is in a certain mood, his powers of association involuntarily call to mind images of real objects from the physical world -- objects that are novel in form and combination. The writer must select the effect that he desires to produce and proceed to construct an imaginary scene in which the individual items, as well as the arrangement of the whole, will point to the pre-determined end. The unity of an individual landscape is subordinated to the unity of the whole work, and the scene devised to create a mental state is thereby made co-existent with the scene which serves as a setting. The use of landscape description which does not tend to produce the desired effect violates the principle of unity: there is no justification for useless landscape or mere imitativeness in either prose or poetry.

Poe consistently maintained the principles of his literary doctrine throughout his life. He asserted that

theory and practice are so much one, that the former implies or includes the latter. A theory is only good as such, in proportion to its reducibility to practice. If the practice fail, it is because the theory is imperfect.61

While charges may be made -- and justifiably, perhaps -- that Poe did not fulfill the requirements of his theories in all respects at all times, it is hard to substantiate any accusation that he failed to carry out his theory that landscape should be used as a means of creating effect. A fair evaluation of the strange and visionary landscapes, which have perplexed the realist and challenged the idealist, can be made only by the critic who is willing to view Poe's efforts in the light of his purpose -- the achievement of effect. Under these conditions only is there revealed the incomparable mastery of his unique art.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited


Campbell, Killis, editor, Poe's Short Stories (American Authors Series), New York, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1927.


H. J., "Complexes of Genius," The Independent, CXVI (May, 1926), 582.


Smith, C. Alphonso, Edgar Allan Poe; How to Know Him, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1921.

Stovall, Floyd, "Poe as a Poet of Ideas," The University of Texas Studies in English, No. 11, Austin, The University Press, 1931.

Ticknor, Caroline, Poe's Helen, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

*Works Consulted*

Allen, Hervey, Israel; *The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe* (2 vols.), New York, George H. Doran Company, 1926.


