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Kent Ljungquist. *The Grand and the Fair: Poe's Landscape Aesthetics and Pictorial Techniques*. Potomac, Md: Scripta Humanistica, 1985. 216 pp. \$25.00

Relatively little critical attention has been paid to Poe's use of landscape in spite of the fact that it has been noticed by many scholars and that Poe himself seems to go out of his way to draw our attention to it. One significant exception to this neglect is Kent Ljungquist, who now presents the fruits of his investigations in this revealing book, some of it new, some of it reworked from earlier essays, such as his interesting and original study of romantic titanism in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

After a useful survey in his opening chapter of Poe's awareness of and use of landscape in his tales, poems, and criticism, Ljungquist begins with a study of *The Journal of Julius Rodman* and ends with a study of "Ligeia" as a "fictional 'landscape of the mind'." Ljungquist avoids the obvious approach by postponing his discussion of the first landscape pieces that might come to mind until later in the book, placing them in the context of his overall view of the differences between sublimity and pictorialism. Thus, he places "The Island of the Fay," "The Domain of Arnheim," and "Landor's Cottage" in the context of Poe's skeptical attitude toward the value of the unbridled imagination.

Of the sublime in Poe Ljungquist writes: "For Schiller and Kant, and I think for Poe, the sublime connects tangentially with natural infinitude; it more closely suggests an ideal, supersensible realm. For the experience of the old sailor in 'A Descent Into the Maelström' does not so much consist in a delight in positive pleasure but in a sense of admiration and respect." Ljungquist reads the tale neither as an outright rejection of rationality nor as a celebration of man's ratiocinative power, but as representing "man's enlarged, strained faculties coming to grips with nature's grandeur and horror and finally achieving a conception of the ideal, super-sensible sublime."

After "A Descent" Poe turned from the sublime to more restrained and subdued landscape techniques. This tale, Ljungquist says, "marks his triumph in the sublime mode but also the liquidation of its aesthetic possibilities." "Mellonta Tauta"—in which Poe recasts serious elements from *Pym* into a satirical mode—shows Poe's further disenchantment with the sublime.

Poe's later treatments of the sublime and his comments upon it in his criticism show an eventual weariness with the subject. Ljungquist supposes, correctly I think, that "his disillusionment with this aesthetic mode may have been hastened by his antipathy to certain cultural assumptions prominent at the time." It had become outmoded by the

1840s [Thomas Cole's "Essay on American Scenery" (1836) had summed up the prevailing national views on the sublime], and Poe did not want to use it to support views of national or cultural superiority. So when he did use the sublime he chose locales that were distinctly non-American, as in "Hans Pfaall," "MS. Found in a Bottle," and "A Descent Into the Maelström."

Poe was thus led in the 1840s to move away from vastness and grandeur to an aesthetic of the picturesque that used more circumscribed settings. Ljungquist surveys Poe's use of this term in his criticism, particularly in "Autography," a source seldom used by Poe critics, and in "The Fall of the House of Usher," which he says is Poe's most comprehensive exercise in the picturesque mode. Of Poe's "Autography" Ljungquist writes that Poe's comments on the writing style of contemporary authors "remain meaningful generalizations on the picturesque because of his tacit equation between the effect of an author's handwriting and his pictorial creativity." Poe noted, for example, that the hand of N. P. Willis compared with that of Fitz-Greene Halleck had "the same grace, with more of the picturesque, and consequently, more force."

But the picturesque is associated with a number of qualities, including vigorous selection of details, the use of variation and contrast rather than the uniformity demanded by the sublime; the interplay of light and shadow; verisimilitude; and "character," a term that indicated a union of a place and personality, setting and psychology. These qualities, Ljungquist says, are nowhere better illustrated than in "The Fall of the House of Usher," where we find such examples as the framing of the landscape features of Usher's domain, the attraction of the narrator's attention by a series of vigorous details, the gradual unfolding of the scene by a succession of visual effects, the intensification or moderation of light and shadow: all picturesque elements that provoke the reader's curiosity about Usher's tortured psyche amidst a precariously balanced, if disintegrating, setting.

Like some other critics, notably Richard Wilbur and, more recently, Joan Dayan, Ljungquist is unwilling to take Poe's descriptive landscape pieces at face value, but sees them instead as examples of "picturesque disorder": deceptive dream-lands that mirror his own distrust of an ironical distance from the notion of a "fairyland" created by a dreaming narrator. Wilbur has already observed the parodic elements in the early poem "Fairy-Land"; Ljungquist goes a step further to connect this poem with Poe's negative attitude toward the subject in the review of Joseph Rodman Drake's *The Culprit Fay* and in the sketch, "The Island of the Fay," with what he views as parodies of certain attitudes and literary conventions found in Romantic nature poetry. This is perhaps Ljungquist's most interesting chapter, since

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here he deals with those Poe items that are most closely associated with landscape and offers some new ideas about them. His discussion of "Landor's Cottage," for example, goes beyond source study to look at Poe's themes from the vantage point of the sublime and the picturesque.

This is a book filled with new insights into individual tales and poems by Poe, shaped by a theory of the sublime and the picturesque in landscape painting and writing (but unfortunately marred by numerous typographical errors). The book is primarily useful, I think, for its comments on various individual works by Poe (including a new reading of "Ligeia" in the context of landscape), but it also provides a solid theoretical background for them.

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Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, ed. *Poe and Our Times: Influences and Affinities*. Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1986. 156 pp. \$18.00.

As I read Fisher's collection of essays, *Poe and Our Times*, I was repeatedly reminded of that afternoon in June 1982, when, standing at the head of a line at the Endicott Bookstore on Manhattan's Upper West Side, watching Isaac Bashevis Singer autograph my copy of *The Collected Stories*, I'd asked this great and honored man if he had ever been influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. The influence of Poe is, after all, the focus of Fisher's book; it furnishes, as Fisher states, the "single major theme" of the fourteen essays included. Indeed, the contributors to *Poe and Our Times* consider Poe's influence on poets and critics, playwrights, fiction writers, and scholars.

Relying upon Paul Valéry's notebooks and correspondence, Lois Vines reveals Poe's influence on the poet, and assesses the relationship between Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" and Valéry's life-long study of the creative process. With care and cogency, Laura Jehn Menides treats the varied evaluations of Poe by William Carlos Williams and T. S. Eliot. Discussing Charles Baudelaire's fascination with Poe, and his creation of the romantic French Poe, Roger Forclaz considers, too, Claude Richard's challenge of this legend. Furthermore, the persistence of the legendary Poe in the American theater and the difficulty of dramatizing the "man behind the legend" are ably delineated by John E. Reilly.

Comparing thematically Poe's influential detective stories with his enduring "unsolved mysteries," Bruce I. Weiner contends that the latter