
II. Manhattan Leads a Revolution

Beautiful City

Όμορφη πόλη

by Dean Andromidas

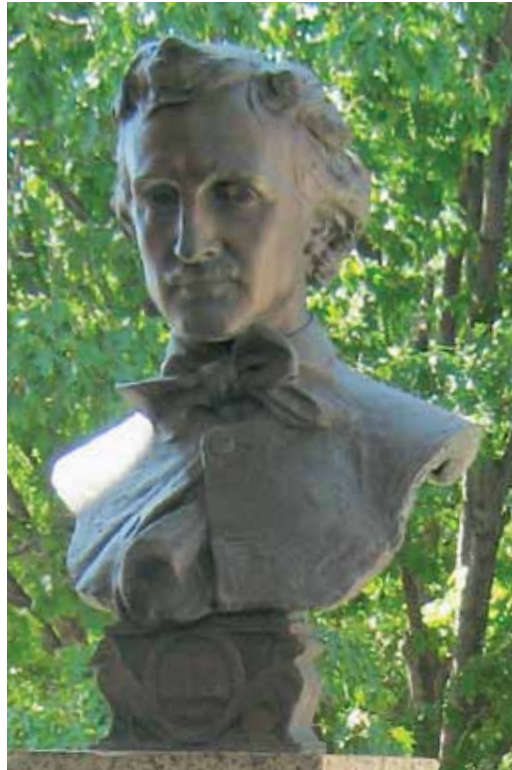
PART II of Three Parts

Edgar Allan Poe and the Beautiful City

Feb. 2017—General Howe launched his attack on upper Manhattan from his headquarters atop the high point on the Bronx side of the Harlem River overlooking Manhattan's Washington Heights. Known today as University Heights, it is now occupied by friendly forces and is the home of Bronx Community College. Having previously been the Bronx campus of New York University, an elite institution, it is endowed with grand and monumental buildings. On the highest point, where Howe situated his headquarters, is the Gould Library. An imposing edifice, designed by Stanford White, and built at the end of the 19th Century, it is reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome. Forming a semicircle around this structure is a colonnade known as the American Hall of Fame, between whose columns are placed busts of many famous and deserving, and some less deserving Americans, among whom will be found a bust of Edgar Allan Poe executed by the sculptor Daniel Chester French, an artist we will encounter later on in this narrative.

Just north of this campus, can be found the small cottage which served as the home of America's great poet. It is here where the young Virginia Poe lived her last days. Following the death of his beloved wife Virginia, Poe is said to have taken solemn and contemplative walks that led him to High Bridge, the viaduct that carried water to Manhattan from a channel that flowed past his home. High Bridge is still extant, and one can stand where Poe himself often stood contemplating a scene that must have been nothing less than a spectacular and beautiful panorama.

When the ancient Greeks set out to settle new colonies, the leader was the poet, for he would be the lawgiver. Not to formulate rules and statutes, but through the composition of the poems and music that would govern the souls of the new colony. While not a founder of New York City, Poe can rightfully be considered its most important poet, whose contributions help make New York the cultural capital of the United States. I can hear protests. Granted he is a Virginian, and the people of Baltimore claim him, and Philadelphia also has a hold on him—nonetheless, he spent the most important years of his life as a poet in New York City. This is in keeping with the fact that few of the great New Yorkers were actually born New Yorkers.



by Daniel Chester French in 1922

Statue of Edgar Allan Poe in the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, Bronx, New York City.

When we speak of Poe, we speak, above all, of the poet Poe, one of the most accomplished of the 19th Century. He had great influence on the poets of Europe, especially on modern Greek poets beginning with the generation of the 1880s, led by Kostis Palamas.

The best of Greek poets of this and even later generations pursued a sacred mission through poetry: the mission of educating the uneducated and impoverished citizenry of Greece, through transforming the language they spoke, *Dimotiki*, into a language capable of expressing profound ideas and expressions of beauty through the medium of poetry.

They fought against the tyranny of *Katharevousa*, the so called reformed Greek created by would-be scholars who claimed they were bringing the language closer to that of ancient Greece. All this was really nonsense—nonetheless, it became an official language in which not only state business was conducted, but new literary endeavors were to be written. Needless to say, only *brotgelehrt* professors and the aristocracy attempted to speak this language, and they imposed such a tyranny that, were someone to oppose it by writing poetry in the *Dimotiki*, it was considered a dangerous revolutionary act. This was the case up through the great Greek modern composer, Mikis Theodorakis, who set the works of these poets to music.

While Poe's tales were translated into Greek as early as the 1870s, the translation of his poems came much later. Lamenting this fact Palamas wrote:

[Poe] had the good fortune of having been presented to us Greeks years ago first in the first issue of the journal published by the literary society "Parnassus." Emanuel Roidis was the patron of the presentation which was diligent, valuable, worthy of its subject. But what is more, the Poe who became known to us at the time was the author of terror-inspiring but also mathematically precise short stories of great renown, but not the Pre-Raphaelite, neoplatonic, ecstatic poems—the latter have remained at the exclusive disposal of new poets. From time to time they render him in their peddler's magazines, via their language, or lack of one, via direct import or via the French route.¹

1. Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale De Gato, editors, *Translated Poe* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 37.



Kostis Palamas

Needless to say both Roidis, and Palamas were always under attack from the establishment for their fight to develop the *Dimotiki*.

Among the next generation of Greek poets was the famous diplomat-poet George Seferis, who while Greek Consul in Albania in 1937, wrote a poem dedicated to Poe, entitled "Raven—In Memoriam Edgar Allan Poe."

In 1970, while imprisoned by the Greek Junta in the Oropos concentration camp, Theodorakis set Seferis' poem to music. This was part of the composer's effort to educate the Greek population to understand the higher forms of classical music, at a time when the vast majority of Greeks had no exposure at all to classical music. Thus, Theodorakis set the poems of Greece's best modern poets—many, like Palamas and Seferis, influenced by Poe—to music which itself was derived from Byzantine and traditional themes, transformed by classical principles into a poetic-musical composition that could touch the souls of the Greek people.

Theodorakis wrote in his *Oropos Notebook*:

The melody is found in its organic unity with the human sensitivity, so that it reflects the vibrations of the specific emotional weight it contains. . . .

In the beginning was the Word! This truth is applied faultlessly in all my works. Hence, one has but to take into consideration the poetic text each time in order to interpret my music. Moreover, from the beginning I intentionally stated

that I place my pride in serving faithfully (primarily) modern Greek poetry. And this to such a degree that when one listens to a song, one cannot imagine the music with another text, nor the poem with a different music.²

Poe fought a similar battle against two tyrannies: One was the subservience to British literary criticism, and the other was the tyranny of public opinion—both of which served to stifle American cultural progress.

Writing in his *Marginalia* in 1844, Poe decried the “disgusting spectacle of our subservience to British criticism” (pages 188-189):

We know the British bear us little but ill-will; we know that, in no case, do they utter unbiased opinions of American books; we know that in the few instances in which our writers have been treated with common decency in England, these writers have openly paid homage to English institutions, or have had lurking at the bottom of their hearts a secret principle at war with Democracy; we know all this and yet, day after day, submit our necks to the degrading yoke of the crudest opinion that emanates from the fatherland. Now if we must have nationality, let it be a nationality that will throw off this yoke.

As for “public opinion,” his critical essays are imbued with nothing less than scorn for its banality and stupidity. Poe held to a higher standard. In his preface to a volume of his poems, Poe wrote, “with me poetry has been not a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence; they must not, they cannot at will be excited with an eye to paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind.”

Poe may have been a patriot, a spy, and a fabled writer of stories and essays, but above all Poe was a poet whose poetic genius imbued with that genius everything else he did or might have done. His disdain for British critics was not simply a desire to create an “American,” or national, literary tradition. His pursuit was much higher,—it was nothing less than the creation of beauty and the sublime. That required educating the “taste” of American citizens to be able to understand beauty and the sublime.

In his essay, “The Poetic Principle,” Poe writes, “a poem deserves its title only in as much as it excites, by elevating the soul.”

Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. I place Taste in the middle, because it is just this position which, in the mind, it occupies. It holds intimate relations with either extreme; but from the Moral Sense is separated by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to place some of its operations among the virtues themselves. Nevertheless, we find the *offices* of the trio marked with a sufficient distinction. Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Of this latter, while Conscience teaches the obligation, and Reason the expediency, Taste contents herself with displaying the charms:—waging war upon Vice solely on the ground of her deformity—her disproportion—her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious—in a word, to Beauty.

An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus, plainly, a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odors, and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryliss in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colors, and odors, and sentiments, a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odors, and colors, and sentiments, which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us—but a wild

2. George Giannaris, *Mikis Theodorakis Music and Social Change* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1972), pp. 157-158.

effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry,—or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods—we find ourselves melted into tears—we weep then—not as the Abbaté Gravina supposes—through excess of pleasure, but through a certain, petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness— this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted— has given to the world all *that* which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and *to feel* as poetic.

Developing this concept in a way that would be very much appreciated by the Greek composer Theodorakis, Poe continues extending the principle to as far as the Landscape Garden, but especially Music.

The Poetic Sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes—in Painting, in Sculpture, in Architecture, in the Dance—very especially in Music—and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the composition of the Landscape Garden. Our present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of meter, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained *in fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot*

have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess—and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate, then:—I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. *That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement, *of the soul*, which we recognize as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore—using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes:—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least *most readily* attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion, or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve, incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work:—but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that *Beauty* which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem.

I have read this passage countless times and always discover something new, something more profound than before. The reader might want to reread this long passage, for it expresses the very essence of Poe and the mission he put before himself. It was for the cause of beauty and the “excitement of the soul,” that Poe the poet fought his life-and-death struggle. As General

Greene would have said, he fought this struggle, “not as a representative of America but of the whole world.” In this very profound sense, Poe was nothing less than the Shelley of America.

The reader should reflect carefully on Poe’s discussion of Music and Poetry. One might ask what was the music Poe had made reference to. By the 1840s, Handel, Haydn, and even Mozart were well established in America, particularly their operas and religious music. But Beethoven, who I believe was not even as well-established in Europe as his predecessors, was first introduced into America by way of

New York City. It was in 1841 that the New York Philharmonic was founded, and in their first concert they performed Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*—the first performance of a Beethoven symphony in the United States. In 1846, they held a benefit concert in an effort to raise funds for a new concert hall, where they performed, again for the first time in the United States, Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*. This symphony became their standard work when a grand performance was called for.

Poe, who had already relocated to New York in 1846, attended the performance. At the time he shared the position of co-editor of the *Broadway Journal* with Henry C. Watson, who was a very well known music critic. The latter’s brother-in-law, George Loder, was the Philharmonic’s conductor, a man also well known to Poe.

On the question of music, Poe moved in a circle of composers, performers, and music critics. One of the most famous American song writers, George Pope Morris, was among them. In a review of the latter’s *National Melodies of America*, Poe wrote:

There are few cases in which mere popularity should be considered a proper test of merit; but the case of song-writing is, we think, one of the few. When we speak of song-writing we mean, of course, the composition of brief poems with



1836 oil on canvas by Henry Inman

George Pope Morris

an eye to their embodiment in melody. In this ultimate destination of the song proper, lies its essence, its genius, its spirit. It is the strict reference to music—the dependence upon modulated expression—which gives to this branch of letters a character altogether distinct and unique; which separates it in a very great measure, and in a manner not sufficiently considered, from the ordinary proprieties of literature; which allows it, and even demands for it, a vast latitude in its laws; and which absolutely insists upon that certain wild license and inde-

finitiveness which is recognized by every musician who is not a mere fiddler, as an important point in the philosophy of his science—as the soul of the sensations derivable from its practice—sensations which bewilder while they enthral, and which, perhaps, would not so enthral, if they did not so bewilder. . . .

The sentiments deducible from the conception of sweet sound, are, in themselves, exceedingly indefinite; those derivable from harmony and melody the most indefinite, and the least susceptible of analysis, of any with which the metaphysician has to deal. Give to music any undue decision, imbue it with any very determinate tone, and you deprive it, at once, of its ethereal, its ideal, and, as we sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury; you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up; you exhaust it of its breath of fire. It then becomes a tangible and easily appreciable idea—a conception of the earth, earthly. It will not, indeed, lose all its power to please, but all which we consider the distinctiveness of that power.

Again in his “[The Rationale of Verse](#),” Poe writes: “The perception of pleasure in the equality of sounds is the principle of Music.” As for “equality,” he writes, “Its idea embraces those of

similarity, proportion, identity, repetition, and adaptation or fitness.” He continues:

Unpracticed ears can appreciate only simple equalities, such as are found in ballad airs. While comparing one simple sound with another they are too much occupied to be capable of comparing the equality subsisting between these two simple sounds taken conjointly, and two other similar simple sounds taken conjointly. Practiced ears, on the other hand, appreciate both equalities at the same instant, although it is absurd to suppose that both are heard at the same instant. One is heard and appreciated from itself, the other is heard by the memory, and the instant glides into and is confounded with the secondary appreciation. Highly cultivated musical taste in this manner enjoys not only these double equalities, all appreciated at once, but takes pleasurable cognizance, through memory, of equalities the members of which occur at intervals so great that the uncultivated taste loses them altogether. That this latter can properly estimate or decide on the merits of what is called scientific music is of course impossible. But scientific music has no claim to intrinsic excellence; it is fit for scientific ears alone. In its excess it is the triumph of the physique over the morale of music. The sentiment is overwhelmed by the sense. On the whole, the advocates of the simpler melody and harmony have infinitely the best of the argument, although there has been very little of real argument on the subject.

It is amazing how Poe’s idea of “indefinitiveness” has been interpreted by academics as meaning everything from the romanticism to symbolism, when in reality it can really only be understood through what Poe himself refers to as the “indefinitiveness” in music. That being what Furtwängler famously refers to as “performing between the notes.”

One of Poe’s good friends and a discussion partner on the question of Music was the New York City music critic George Washington Peck. Peck had moved from Boston when his journal, *The Boston Musical Review* folded after only four issues. In an article in that journal, Peck expresses the same analysis as Poe, but in more musical terms, in a discussion of musical expression of effect.

The musical expression, or melody, is the result of four parts, each more or less melodious in itself, moving together. To write such sentences, it would seem the composer must needs possess four minds, each inspired with the same thought, and each perceiving how the rest will express this common thought, and molding its own expression conformable; yet the idea conveyed by the combination is one,—a grand unfolding. We remark, by the way, that this is one of the finest instances of a musical sentence adapted to one of poetry we know of.

Thus far concerning the identity between Expression and Melody. We might now go into the construction of melody, and show how it is made up of phrases and rhythmical forms, which have certain laws of succession, like measure in poetry: but it is sufficient for the purpose of this article to observe, that whatever may be the sort of current the composer expresses himself in, it must be readily separable by the mind into regular forms, and must charm and hold it all the while by gratifying the sense of beauty. The ear must be attracted and the love of order pleased; there must be delicacy and sweetness as well as strength, or the imagination will not be impressed nor the heart touched. For it is the blessed office of the poetic part of our nature, of which all the arts are so many different manifestations, to lift the soul above itself, and transport it to a more glorious state of being,—“to a sense of its possible greatness.” It recoils from the sad and wearisome realities of life, and seeks to create a more excellent world of its own in a region where all is beautiful and all calm; where the heart has a natural language, and may dare to utter its grief or its gladness without restraint. Hence it is that the plane of every work of art, of whatsoever kind, must be, as it were, a tableland, without and above our actual every-day existence, blossoming with flowers, and breathing upon the senses a fresher air, while the imagination is revealing its discoveries in this more excellent world, or it will by its incongruity make them appear as things not to be believed. Hence the necessity of harmony of color in painting, of easy and natural versification in poetry, and of agreeable combination and succession in music.

But to return. Expression,—Melody, as we

have defined it,—the stream of ideas flowing into the ear through beautiful forms, is in music the most essential quality, and bears to all other qualities the same relation that charity bears to the other virtues, since without it all is literally “as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.” Compositions may be ever so well adapted to particular effects, to the voice, to any instrument, or to the full orchestra: they may be ever so astonishing, or smooth, or intricate; so slow or fast, so easy, or so abundant in difficulties; if they do not express musical ideas in a clear intelligible consecution, they are nothing,—no more than displays of fireworks, where rockets shoot up and whirl round, now this way, now that, dazzling the eye and confusing the mind; and there is only change and motion without order or connexion. For all effects are but the accessories and servants of expression. All the voices of nature, all the qualities and varieties of all instruments that have been or are yet to be invented, are but the means which the immortal soul of man uses to convey its inward workings. One composer studies the piano, and his mind becomes so accustomed to its peculiar class of effects that he uses them involuntarily to convey his expressions. We say of such a one, that his music is strongly tinged with the piano character. Yet his composition may be of the highest order, for the effects used may be in perfect accordance with and necessary to the full conveyance of the expressions. The piano works of Beethoven are examples; they not only abound in the most wonderful variety of effects, but in the most passionately imaginative expressions. They develop the resources of the instrument, as an instrument, and not as an end. . . .

The above excerpts represent only a small portion of what can be found in the four issues of Peck’s *Boston Musical Review*. It is amazing how Peck, not to men-



Nathaniel Parker Willis

tion his journal, have disappeared from popular history and now reside in dusty archives, only surfacing now and then in academic studies often tangential to Peck or even to music.

As Odysseus drew forth the spirit of Achilles in Hades, I will indulge my reader again with a quote from Peck’s *Review*.

In a sequel to the article from which the above is an excerpt, Peck writes:

For to say in brief what we hope hereafter to illustrate at large, Music is poetry addressing the imagination through the pure reason. It conveys no new knowledge, except of its own forms, to the understanding. Its sole beauty, considered apart from the beautiful effects in which it may be performed, is in the order and symmetry of its arrangement. A single tone, though never so pure and beautiful in itself, is not music till it is woven into a musical expression, into a form of sound which takes hold of the mind and carries it onward with an irresistible strength, analogous to that of a chain of mathematical reasoning, and at the same time operates directly on the imagination. The excellence of music does not consist in its ease or difficulty, or in the perfection or imperfection of its performance, but solely in quality and force of its expressions.

The above is an example of the quality of the rich discussion of music among the circle of which Poe was an integral member. Take, for instance, the above-cited George Pope Morris, who, in collaboration with Nathaniel Parker Willis, founded the *New York Evening Mirror*. Morris would later found the *Home Journal*, which later became today’s *Town and County*—which bears little resemblance to its origins. Both Willis and Morris were well known to Poe, and their *Mirror* published an “advance” copy of Poe’s “The Raven.”

In Poe’s day Morris was the most popular songwriter of his time, although now virtually unknown. Morris was a lyricist whose songs were set to music by

among others, Henry Russell, Charles E. Horn, and the famous Stephen Foster. The first two were known to Poe, while Foster was of a later generation.

Henry Russell was an Anglo-Jewish composer and singer who spent several years in the United States, both performing and composing songs. He was a student of Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini. He put some thirty songs written by Morris to music. His most famous was “Woodsman Spare that Tree,” whose music bears a resemblance to Bellini’s “Casta Diva.” This song was perhaps the most popular song of its day, yet there is only one recording of it on YouTube, and that by a not-bad English baritone and musicologist who is a member of the British Green Party, and considers it the first environmentalist song.

George E. Horn was the son of a German composer and musician who emigrated to England, where he served as music tutor to the Royal Family, but is also known to be among the first to promote Bach in England. The son emigrated to the United States, and became a popular singer and composer who later became the director of Boston’s Handel and Hayden Society.

Long before Dvořák, and Horn in collaboration with Morris, delved into the songs of African-American slaves. This is an excerpt from his book *National Melodies*:

In the spring of 1837, my professional engagements induced me to visit the enterprising and hospitable city of Natchez on the Mississippi, where first I heard the melodies of the South, sung, danced and accompanied on the banjo and violin by the Negroes of the plantation; and in this section of the country alone, can they be heard with their own peculiar expression of joyousness and melancholy, unaffected by the amalgamation of what is termed science and taste, which, if too lavishly introduced, destroys



by Édouard Mané/Library of Congress
Illustration from a French translation of “The Raven.”

all national music; feeling being its only requisite. Simple national feeling constitutes its sole charm.³

These composers do not “measure up” to a Mozart or Beethoven—nonetheless their songs are beautiful, and express a truth of the spirit of the times.

It is not without a deeper significance that Poe chose to carry out his struggle in the city of New York. Poe earned a meager living by editing literary journals of his time, first at the *Southern Literary Messenger* and then in Philadelphia at *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*. But their owners were more interested in profits than art. Perhaps worse to Poe was their poor taste, and he longed to establish a journal of his own. The idea first came to him in Philadelphia where he proposed to call it *The Penn*, but found no backing. In

1844, five years before his death, he migrated to New York City, which was rapidly overtaking Philadelphia as the nation’s cultural capital. He secured a position as sub-editor of the *Evening Mirror* and then at the failing *Broadway Journal*, which he eventually bought out, but he was unable to rescue it from bankruptcy. Nonetheless, he sought to establish his journal, which he hoped to name *The Stylus*.

New York was every bit a battleground for Poe, where there was a thin line between literature and politics. The battle was fought in the magazines and as well as the salons. The two major literary magazines were entitled the *American Whig Review* and the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. The former trumpeted the views of the “Whig” party, and many of its readers and supporters would later form the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln; while the latter’s supporters were partisans of the Democrats, and many, al-

3. From the review, “George Edward Horn’s *National Melodies*,” appearing in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Volume 5 Number 11, November 1839.

though by no means all, would later support the Confederacy, including its editor John O’Sullivan. Poe’s works appeared in both journals.

“The Raven” first appeared in the American Whig Review.

Poe and the Creation of the Beautiful City

With its great harbor and the opening of the Erie Canal, New York became the wealthiest of the young republic’s cities, and many of its wealthy citizens took a keen interest in patronizing the arts. James Fenimore Cooper formed his informal Bread and Cheese Club, which included the painter, inventor, author, and diplomat Washington Irving; painter and inventor Samuel Morse; and Hudson River school landscape painters Asher Durand and Thomas Cole. In 1825, Morse, Durand, Cole, and others created the National Academy of Design, “to promote the fine arts in America through instruction and exhibition.”

Poe was a celebrated guest at the some of the most sophisticated salons in the city, where he often recited his poems and conversed with the literati of the city, who in many cases were also among the rich and powerful, as well as the true artists like himself.

While his literary accomplishments flourished and reached the apex of his powers, his financial and business affairs always proved a failure. This may be attributed to his own character. He expresses this himself in a letter to James Russell Lowell: “I have been too deeply conscious of the mutability and evanescence of temporal things, to give any continuous effort to anything—to be consistent in anything. My life has been whim—impulse—passion—a longing for solitude—a scorn of all things present, in an earnest desire for the future.”

But the more likely reason for his poverty was his frank and clear literary criticism, whose standard was nothing less than the preceding quote from his “Poetic Principle” suggests. Having, as Heine once said, an “accursed conscience” for the truth, he earned many enemies from among the many mediocrities that com-



Portrait by John Wesley Jarvis/New York State Historical Association
James Fenimore Cooper

prised the Literati of his time. He had nothing but scorn for the Transcendentalists, whose works he saw had little or nothing to do with poetry. Even the famous Longfellow, who wrote poetry from his desk at Harvard, where he was a professor, lost all of Poe’s respect.

As for the New York literati of his time, Poe wrote just such a book entitled *The Literati of New York City*, which cut to the quick on all the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The Raven and Central Park

In Poe’s time, on what is now Manhattan’s West 84th Street, stood a modest but stately house on the 216-acre

farm owned by the Brennan family. The homestead extended from what is now the west side of Central Park, to Riverside Park on the Hudson River. In the summers of 1843 and 1844, Poe and his family lived as guests in this house. Poe took contemplative walks about the woods that lay near the house, no doubt wandering into the territory of the future Central Park. But he also would spend hours sitting atop “Mount Tom,” the huge rock that can still be found in Riverside Park, where he looked down onto the beautiful Hudson Valley. It was in this environment where tradition has it that he wrote the final drafts of his immortal poem, “The Raven.”

The purpose of this anecdote is not to discuss the poetics of “The Raven,” but Poe’s powerful contribution to the poetics of landscape architecture, of which Central Park and Riverside Park are suburb examples. Do you ask, “what does Poe have to do with the topography of the beautiful city?” When one flies over Manhattan, the most distinctive feature is not the masses of stone, brick and concrete, reinforced by underlying steel, which reach high into the sky. It is rather the broad rectangular splash of greenery we know as Central Park. Snowy white in the Winter, brown with the emergence of greenery and blossoming flowers in the Spring, its rich greenness in the Summer and its riotous multicolors in Autumn have been a delight for New Yorkers for many decades.



Poe's House in Manhattan.

We don't have to go into some dusty archive to find evidence of Poe's contribution. In 1847, Poe published "The Landscape Garden," and later, in 1849, the last year of his life, he wrote "Landor's Cottage." In the former, Poe wrote of Mr. Ellison's passion:

I mean the most liberal public or recognized conception of the idea involved in the phrase "poetic sentiment." But Mr. Ellison imagined that the richest, and altogether the most natural and most suitable province, had been blindly neglected. No definition had spoken of the Landscape-Gardener, as of the poet; yet my friend could not fail to perceive that the creation of the Landscape-Garden offered to the true muse the most magnificent of opportunities. Here was, indeed, the fairest field for the display of invention, or imagination, in the endless combining of

forms of novel Beauty; the elements which should enter into combination being, at all times, and by a vast superiority, the most glorious which the earth could afford. In the multiform of the tree, and in the multicolor of the flower, he recognized the most direct and the most energetic efforts of Nature at physical loveliness. And in the direction or concentration of this effort, or, still more properly, in its adaption to the eyes which were to behold it upon earth, he perceived that he should be employing the best means—laboring to the greatest advantage—in the fulfillment of his destiny as Poet.

There may be an object in full keeping with the principle suggested—an object unattainable by the means ordinarily in possession of mankind, yet which, if attained, would lend a charm to the landscape-garden immeasurably surpassing that which a merely human interest could bestow. The true poet possessed of very unusual pecuniary resources, might possibly, while retaining the necessary idea of art or interest or culture, so imbue his designs at once with extent and novelty of Beauty, as to convey the sentiment of spiritual interference. It will be seen that, in bringing about such result, he secures all the advantages of interest or design, while relieving his work of all the harshness and technicality of Art. In the most rugged of wildernesses—in the most savage of the scenes of pure Nature—there is apparent the art of a Creator; yet is this art apparent only to reflection; in no respect has it the obvious force of a feeling. Now, if we imagine this sense of the Almighty Design to be harmonized in a measurable degree, if we suppose a landscape whose combined strangeness, vastness, definitiveness, and magnificence, shall inspire the idea of culture, or care, or superintendence, on the part of intelligences superior yet akin to humanity—then the sentiment of interest is preserved, while the Art is made to assume the air of an intermediate or secondary Nature—a Nature which is not God, nor an emanation of God, but which still is Nature, in the sense that it is the handiwork of the angels that hover between man and God.

These were not two pieces written to earn the normal fee of four dollars a page, but they do, on the one hand,

beautifully express mankind's God-given mission of developing the cosmos. On the other, they were his intervention into the lively debate at the time on the future of the beautiful city of New York. In 1811, at the time when New York City did not extend north, even only to what is now 14th Street, city planners marked out the notorious "grid" pattern of streets and avenues that extended the full length and breadth of Manhattan, regardless of the topography of the ground. Its aim was purely to maximize the real estate potential of the island. Hills and dales were to be flattened, marshes drained, and the entire coastline to be turned over to the builders of docks and wharves.

While planners saw the grid as an efficient means to develop New York as a commercial center of the United States, real estate speculators such as John Jacob Astor, whose mission in life was to own all of Manhattan, took advantage of it for making high profits.

James Fenimore Cooper aptly described these speculators, "How loathsome is a state of society that reduces the feelings of neighborhood, religion, veneration for the past, hopes for the future, country, kindred, and friends, to the level of a speculation! The locusts of Egypt do not bring such a blight on a land, as the passage of a swarm of these restless, soulless, shiftless, and yet for ever *shifting*, creatures, who do not stay long enough in a place to love anything but themselves, and who invariably treat the best affections as they would deal with a bale of goods, or a drove of cattle on its way to the shambles. These are not the men who, by manly enterprise and bold conceptions, convert the wilderness into a garden, but reptiles that wander in their footsteps, swagger of their own exploits, come and go incessantly, and, like the rolling stone, gather no moss."⁴

It was in fact a fight to beat back the "gridders" that Poe was very much a part of. These two tales come out of his discussions with artists of the Hudson River school of landscape painters such as Thomas Cole and the latter's protégé, Frederic Edwin Church, and landscape gardeners such as Andrew Jackson Downing. All shared with Poe a deep appreciation for beauty and the sublime.

A well-known landscape artist and one of the founders of the Hudson River School as well as the National Academy of Design, New Yorker Thomas Cole published his essay on "American Scenery" in 1836, writing:

4. James Fenimore Cooper, *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1983) page 88.

Poetry and Painting sublime and purify thought, by grasping the past, the present, and the future—they give the mind a foretaste of its immortality, and thus prepare it for performing an exalted part amid the realities of life. And rural nature is full of the same quickening spirit—it is, in fact, the exhaustless mine from which the poet and the painter have brought such wondrous treasures—an unfailing fountain of intellectual enjoyment, where all may drink, and be awakened to a deeper feeling of the works of genius, and a keener perception of the beauty of our existence. For those whose days are all consumed in the low pursuits of avarice, or the gaudy frivolities of fashion, unobservant of nature's loveliness, are unconscious of the harmony of creation—Heaven's roof to them is but a painted ceiling hung with lamps; No more—that lights them to their purposes—They wander 'loose about;' they nothing see, themselves except, and creatures like themselves,

Short lived, short sighted.

What to them is the page of the poet where he describes or personifies the skies, the mountains, or the streams, if those objects themselves have never awakened observation or excited pleasure? What to them is the wild Salvator Rosa, or the aerial Claude Lorrain?

There is in the human mind an almost inseparable connection between the beautiful and the good, so that if we contemplate the one, the other seems present; and an excellent author has said, "it is difficult to look at any objects with pleasure—unless where it arises from brutal and tumultuous emotions—without feeling that disposition of mind which tends towards kindness and benevolence; and surely, whatever creates such a disposition, by increasing our pleasures and enjoyments, cannot be too much cultivated."

Cole goes on to elucidate the beauty and the sublime of the American landscape, defending against those who claim there is no beauty in American scenery:

There are those who through ignorance or prejudice strive to maintain that American scenery possesses little that is interesting or truly beautiful—that it is rude without picturesqueness, and monotonous without sublimity—that being des-



Metropolitan Museum of Art/Frederic Edwin Church

The Heart of the Andes

titute of those vestiges of antiquity, whose associations so strongly affect the mind, it may not be compared with European scenery. But from whom do these opinions come? From those who have read of European scenery, of Grecian mountains, and Italian skies, and never troubled themselves to look at their own; and from those traveled ones whose eyes were never opened to the beauties of nature until they beheld foreign lands, and when those lands faded from the sight were again closed, and forever disdaining to destroy their trans-Atlantic impressions by the observation of the less fashionable and unfamed American scenery. Let such persons shut themselves up in their narrow shell of prejudice—I hope they are few,—and the community increasing in intelligence, will know better how to appreciate the treasures of their own country.

Six years after the publication of Cole's essay, in 1843, Poe wrote the essay, "Morning on the Wissahiccon," about a small brook that empties into the Schuylkill River just west of Philadelphia, where he also defends American scenery in much the same terms as Cole.

Poe was often the guest at the home of Cole's Young protégé, Frederic Edwin Church. The latter was not only interested in American landscapes, but like Poe was deeply moved by Alexander Von Humboldt, whose *Cosmos* was published in 1845. Both Poe and Church read this work with great interest and no doubt discussed it. When Humboldt published his *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America* in 1852, Church took up Humboldt's challenge to artists to portray the "Physiognomy" of the Andes.

Literally following in Humboldt's footsteps, Church traveled to Ecuador, where he stayed at the very same house in Quito in which Humboldt had resided. Church's artistic guide was Humboldt's *Cosmos*, where the great scientist has a full chapter on landscape painting. He wrote: "Landscape painting, though not simply an imitative art . . . requires for its development a large number of various and direct impressions, which . . . must be fertilized by the powers of mind, in order to be given back to the senses of others as a free work of art. The grander style of heroic landscape painting is the combined result of a profound appreciation of nature, and of this inward process of mind."

Church's paintings of the Andes, in their rich colors and detail, became legendary. In 1853 Church had taken

his “The Heart of the Andes,” which currently hangs in Manhattan’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, to Europe for Humboldt to view, but the latter died before he could see it.

The question of the poetics of Poe’s “Landscape Garden” and of his friends, the landscape painters and architects, is inseparable from the impact of the tremendous popularity of Alexander Von Humboldt and the arrival in American of his great work, *The Cosmos*. The immense popularity of Humboldt at the time is almost hard to believe. On the centenary of his birth in 1869, which was ten years after his death, celebrations were held all over the United States, including in Boston, Pittsburgh—where the celebrations were presided over by President Ulysses S. Grant—Albany, Chicago, Baltimore, Cleveland, Memphis, and San Francisco. In New York no less than 25,000 people gathered for an unveiling of a bust of the great scientist.

For Poe, Humboldt was indeed a kindred spirit, to say the least. The first two volumes of the *Cosmos* were published in 1845 and 1847 respectively, well within the lifetime of Poe. *Harper’s Magazine* of New York had already published a serialized version in 1845. Poe no doubt read this version, since the *Broadway Journal*, with Poe as editor and then as its owner, published an English translation of a German review of the *Cosmos* as well as notices and advertisements for the *Harper’s* reprint.

There can be little doubt that Poe’s “tale” of the Landscape Gardener went through several versions, and between 1845 and 1847 was profoundly informed by Humboldt’s *Cosmos*, as he depicts man, acting in the image of God, intervening on “nature” in the service of the creation of beauty and the sublime.

It is not hard to imagine the impact of the advent of the *Cosmos* on those discussions among the intellectuals, artists, and literati of New York, in the salons and



by Gustav Blaeser

Alexander von Humboldt monument at Explorer's Gate on Central Park West and 77th Street, New York City.

lectures of literary, scientific, and philosophical circles in the city, especially those in which Poe, himself, participated.

Of course the “hardest evidence” of Poe’s intimate knowledge of the *Cosmos*, is the “Eureka” which was dedicated to Humboldt and written shortly before Poe’s death.

While this author found “Eureka” a difficult piece to follow, what is clear is that it is written from the standpoint of Poe’s own profound understanding of the poetic principle. In fact he calls it a “prose poem.” It was in fact based on a lecture he had delivered at the New York Society Library.

The significance of the work does not lie in its attempt to present the laws of the Universe, in which it does not succeed, but in its effort to present true scientific method. Through the literary device of a fictitious letter written in the next millennium,

in the year 2848, Poe smashes the Aristoteleans, empiricists, and all forms of axioms, “self-evident truths,” and so called “laws.” As for Newton and his so called laws of gravity, Poe states that they were in fact simply “deduced” from the poet-scientist Kepler.

Newton deduced it from the laws of Kepler. Kepler admitted that these laws he *guessed*—these laws whose investigation disclosed to the greatest of British astronomers that principle, the bases of all (existing) physical principle, in going behind which we enter at once the nebulous kingdom of Metaphysics. Yes!—these vital laws Kepler *guessed*—that it is to say, he *imagined* them. Had he been asked to point out either the *deductive* or *inductive* route by which he attained them, his reply might have been—“I know nothing about *routes*—but I *do* know the machinery of the Universe. Here it is. I grasped it with *my soul*—I reached it through mere dint of *intuition*.”



A view from Central Park.

...Yes, Kepler was essentially a *theorist*; but this title, *now* of so much sanctity, was in those ancient days, a designation of supreme contempt. It is only *now* that men begin to appreciate that divine old man—to sympathize with the prophetic and poetical rhapsody of his ever-memorable words. For *my part*” continues the unknown correspondent, “I glow with the sacred fire when I even think of them, and feel that I shall never grow weary of their repetition:—*I care not whether my work be read now or by posterity. I can afford to wait a century for readers, when God himself has waited six thousand years for an observer. I triumph. I have stolen the golden secret of the Egyptians, I will indulge my sacred fury.* [The last quotation is from Kepler.]”

Poe and Central Park

Poe personally knew the two of the key creators of Central Park, Andrew Jackson Downing and the latter’s

protégé, Frederick Law Olmstead.

Of the same generation as Poe, Downing was among the most famous landscape designers of the period, whose work, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*, was first published in 1841 and dedicated to his good friend John Quincy Adams. Poe is said to have read this treatise, and without doubt knew Downing. Not surprisingly, Downing was also a poet. Thus it is safe to assume Poe’s two tales were in the service of promoting not only the art of landscape design, but also for the fight for a park.

Downing, like Poe, was a bitter opponent of the grid system, since it destroyed the natural topographic features of Manhattan, which had presented such potential for a city plan that would enhance the beauty of the emerging metropolis. Downing was among the first, along with William Cullen Bryant, to push for the creation of a broad park.

Downing, who died in 1852 at the young age of 37, only three years after Poe’s own death in 1849, did not

live to see the establishment of the park. That task would be given to Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux. Olmstead had a multifaceted career as a farmer, journalist, and landscape gardener. During the Civil War, he led what in effect was the medical corps. In the 1840s, Olmstead was the young editor of Putnam's, the publisher of the *American Whig Review* where many of Poe's works were published.

Not only were Poe and Olmstead acquainted through their work, but both attended the salon of Anne Lynch, later Madam Botta, who was herself a poetess. Every Saturday evening the leading and not-so-leading artistic and literary figures of the city and region gathered there. Poe often attended these stimulating evenings, and recited his poems, including the "Raven."

Vaux, who would form a partnership with Olmstead, was an English architect who was brought to the United States by Downing, with whom he worked in partnership until the latter's death.

While Downing is said to have made preliminary proposals for a park, the actual commissioning of the park occurred in 1857, well after the death of both Downing and Poe. Nonetheless, the creation of Central Park follows closely the principles both of Downing's writings and Poe's "Landscape Gardener."

The beautiful landscape one sees across the more than 800 acres of today's Central Park, is a totally artificial creation. The actual land upon which it was built was anything but picturesque. In fact, it was an area of poor soil, unfit for farming and home to several shanty towns. With work crews numbering in the thousands, Olmstead worked as if he were God creating the Garden of Eden. The land was cleared, and hundreds if not thousands of tons of topsoil were brought into the park. Hills and dales and even streams were created. The park's two lakes were in fact reservoirs which formed part of Manhattan's first water system, of which High Bridge was a part—which were reshaped to suit his design.

For Olmstead, trees, shrubs, flowers, soil, and rock were as colors of a painter's palette. Olmstead laid out a path through the park in such a way that the walker encounters a series of picturesque scenes. He would create depth through the careful positioning of shrubs and trees.

Vaux designed the buildings and the bridges, which number thirty-six, each of a unique design.

While the firm Olmstead and Vaux would go on to design public parks across the United State, a few years

after the completion of Central Park, their firm won the contract to create Riverside Park, also in Manhattan, and Fort Greene and Prospect Parks in Brooklyn, which would in fact preserve small but important patches of land made sacred by the battle of Long Island-New York City.

Like Poe's "Domain of Arnheim," Olmstead's Central park was to be a living work of art, in three dimensions, where the citizens of a busy metropolis could seek healthful "recreation" through enjoying its sublime beauty. This was not to be a work of "art" preserved through spreading "keep off the grass" signs through the park. The park's Sheep Meadow and grassy knolls were kept open for picnicking and other light recreational activity. Its principal purpose was to provide the citizen a place where he could recover from the hubbub of city life, through the rejuvenating properties of nature.

Nonetheless, Olmstead fought against public pressures, mostly from politicians, to place monuments and other constructions that would turn the park into something like a fair ground, which would destroy the beauty of the park and defeat its purpose. This was in keeping with the conception of the Beautiful and the Sublime, which was really at the heart of the highest level of the intellectual and artistic climate of that era.

Poe as Architect

In terms of the Beautiful City, perhaps now is the best time to discuss the question of architecture, particularly civic architecture. That is to say the architecture of government buildings, universities and institutions.

This is not the place to go into all the architectural styles that can be seen in New York or any American city. Nonetheless there was a debate on Architecture. In fact there was, in first half of the 19th Century, a Greek revival movement. This was a very distinct debate between the Roman and the Greek, which are too often dumped into the catch-all of "Classical" architecture. The distinction between the Greek and Roman, as well as the Gothic, was clear in the minds of certain American artists and architects.

This issue became central to the debate on civic buildings, especially those of government, as well as institutions such schools and universities, and also monuments and monumental architecture. There are several fine examples of Greek revival and Gothic architecture in New York.



cc/Hu Totya

Federal Hall in Manhattan, where Washington, as the first President of the Republic, was inaugurated in what was then the Nation's first capital.



George Washington statue in front of Federal Hall.

The most accessible example of Greek revival architecture is Federal Hall in Lower Manhattan.

I will not go into a treatise on architecture but I will turn once again to Poe for a principle. He wrote in a footnote:

The mind of man can imagine nothing which does not really exist; if it could, it would create not only ideally but substantially, as do the thoughts of God. It may be said, "We imagine a griffin, yet a griffin does not exist." Not the griffin, certainly, but its component parts. It is no more than a collation of known limbs, features, qualities. Thus with all which claims to be new, which appears to be a creation of the intellect— all is re-soluble into the old.

The wildest effort of the mind cannot stand the test of this analysis.

Imagination, fancy, fantasy and humor, have in common the elements combination and novelty. The imagination is the artist of the four. From novel arrangements of old forms which present themselves to it, it selects such only as are harmonious; the result, of course, is *beauty* itself—using the word in its most extended sense and as inclusive of the sublime. The pure imagination chooses, *from either beauty or deformity*, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound, as

a general rule, partaking in character of sublimity or beauty in the ratio of the respective sublimity or beauty of the things combined, which are themselves still to be considered as atomic—that is to say, as previous combinations. But, as often analogously happens in physical chemistry, so not unfrequently does it occur in this chemistry of the intellect, that the admixture of two elements will result in a something that shall have nothing of the quality of one of them—or even nothing of the qualities of either. The range of imagination is thus unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that *beauty* which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test. But, in general, the richness of the matters combined,

the facility of discovering combinable novelties worth combining, and *the absolute "chemical combination"* of the completed mass, are the particulars to be regarded in our estimate of imagination. It is this thorough harmony of an imaginative work which so often causes it to be undervalued by the indiscriminating, through

the character of *obviousness* which is superinduced. We are apt to find ourselves asking *why it is that these combinations have never been imagined before*.

Now, when this question *does not occur*, when the harmony of the combination is comparatively neglected, and when, in addition to the element of novelty, there is introduced the sub-element of *unexpectedness*—when, for example, matters are brought into combination which not only have never been combined, but whose combination strikes us as a *difficulty happily overcome*, the result then appertains to the fancy, and is, to the majority of mankind, more grateful than the purely harmonious one— although, absolutely, it is less beautiful (or grand) for the reason that *it is less harmonious*.

Carrying its errors into excess— for, however enticing, they *are* errors still, or nature lies— fancy is at length found infringing upon the province of fantasy. The votaries of this latter delight not only in novelty and unexpectedness of combination, but in the *avoidance* of proportion. The result is, therefore, abnormal, and, to a healthy mind, affords less of pleasure through its novelty than of pain through its incoherence. When, proceeding a step farther, however, fancy seeks not merely disproportionate but incongruous or antagonistic elements, the effect is rendered more pleasurable by its greater positiveness; there is a merry effort of truth to shake from her that which is no property of hers, and we laugh outright in recognizing humor. The four faculties in question seem to me all of their class; but when either fancy or humor is expressed to gain an end, is pointed at a purpose— whenever either becomes objective in place of subjective, then it becomes, also, pure wit or sarcasm, just as the purpose is benevolent or malevolent.⁵



Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum.

You say Poe is no architect, but have you read the *Philosophy of Furniture*, a short treatise on interior architecture and decoration, where he writes of the carpet of Arabesque designs being the soul of a room? Have you taken notice of his handling or architectural details in his tales?

Walking through New York City, one sees all the forms of architecture—classical, Gothic, Beaux Arts, both “modern” and “post-modern,” and the endless and fanciful styles in between them. It is clear that the above quote by Poe will give us the metric upon which to judge these forms separating the Beautiful and sublime from the fanciful, fantastic, and even the humorous as well as the deformed.

If we must refer to an architect, let it be the landscape painter and architect, the above-mentioned Cole, who wrote of the superiority of the Classical Greek over the degenerate pseudo-classicism of the Roman, and on the other hand the grandeur of the Gothic.

The architects and landscape architects, painters and literary figures all knew each other. One of course

5. Edgar Allan Poe, *The Literati of New York City*, (1846), pp. 197-98, see notes.

could find Poe himself among these figures.

If we look at the Greek Revival architecture, the best-known example in Manhattan is Federal Hall, built on the site of the original Federal Hall where Washington, as the first President of the Republic, was inaugurated in what was then the Nation's first capital. It was erected in 1842, two years before Poe's arrival in Manhattan.

The principle architect was Ithiel Town, who, at a time when architects were not much more than builders using pattern books to erect edifices, was one of the major promoters of Greek-revival architecture. He amassed a library of over 3,000 volumes of books on architecture. He was assisted by his protégé Alexander Jackson Davis, who is credited with designing the colonnaded front of the building which was modeled after the Parthenon. The third architect was John Frazee, who designed the rather impressive interior rotunda. The statue of George Washington was erected in 1882, and was executed by John Quincy Adams Ward, a very noted sculptor we will meet again in this narrative.

While the wrecking ball at the service of real estate speculators has wrought far more destruction on New York City's architectural wonders than Allied bombers did in any German city, some other remarkable specimens of this Greek revival are still in existence if one looks carefully. For example, Town designed a remarkable-looking Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum, built in 1843. It includes a handsome facade of six Ionic columns supporting a Greek classical pediment. The building still stands, recently renovated, minus one of its wings. It stands literally up against the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. It was saved from the wrecker's ball only because the Cathedral itself was never fully completed.

Another remarkable example of this architecture is the Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island. This former sailors' retirement home was commissioned by Richard



Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island.

CC/Dmadeo

Randall, Revolutionary War soldier, ship master, and privateer. In a will drafted by Alexander Hamilton, he had bequeathed a large fund to establish the retirement home which was to have been built near Washington Square Park, but for various reason was built on Staten Island instead.

Other, more modest buildings can be seen in Brooklyn, in the form of row-houses not far from the church where the Schiller Institute's Chorus rehearsals are held.

While there seems to be no direct evidence of an acquaintance between Poe and Alexander Jackson Davis, the architect apparently crossed the former's path from time to time. One of Davis' most famous designs was the Gothic revival Lyndhurst Mansion, at Tarrytown, designed for Phillip Paulding, Revolutionary War officer and sometime Mayor of New York. Phillip's brother was James K. Paulding, a literary figure in the Knickerbocker circle who was an early patron of Poe.

This brings us to the Gothic revival, which can be seen in an endless number of churches, but also universities, including City College. All these architects of the Poe generation were designing villas in the Gothic, Tudor, and Italian villa style. While none have survived

the wrecker's ball in Manhattan, they do survive in the scenic haunts of the Hudson River Valley, whose owners included Washington Irving, Samuel Morse, and many others.

As new waves of immigrants landed in New York, they bought with them new forms of architecture. One such immigrant was Alexander Saeltzer, who studied at the famous Bau Academy established in Berlin by the famous Karl Friedrich Schinkel. An expert in acoustics (his treatise can be downloaded from archive.org,) he designed the Academy of Music, with 4,500 seats, which was the largest opera house of its time. Completed in 1854 on 14th Street and Irving Place, it played host not only to famous opera companies and the New York Philharmonic, but also visiting Chinese acrobats.

The two buildings of this celebrated architect that can be seen today, are the Astor Library, now a public theater, and the Anshe Chesed Synagogue.

Poe prematurely died, most likely murdered, in 1849, an almost irreplaceable loss for the development of culture and art in America. At the same moment, a political struggle enveloped the nation that led the

country into a bloody civil war. Indeed New York played a key role in that struggle. It was at Cooper Union that William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the *New York Post*, sponsored an election event for the young Abraham Lincoln, an event which is credited with lending decisive support for his winning the Republican nomination and then the Presidency.

While much can be said about Bryant, both positive and critical, he was nonetheless an accomplished poet for whose work Poe offered qualified praise. (See Poe's "The Poetic Principle.")

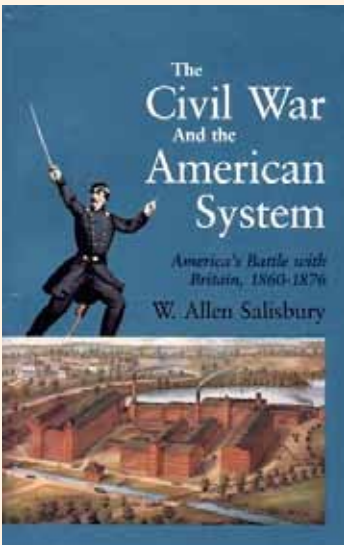
Those who believe Poe's death was murder, look to his highly critical writings as having generated many enemies. Moreover, the political struggle that led to the Civil War was already in full swing. It is therefore significant that at the time of his death, he was on a speaking tour to raise advance subscriptions for a literary magazine which would be entitled the *Stylus*. The founding of such a publication had been Poe's life-long ambition. He had been given that opportunity by the 21 year-old Edwin Howard Norton Patterson, co-editor with his father, John B. Patterson, of the *Spectator*, a weekly published out of the small Mississippi river port of Oquawka, Illinois, but widely read throughout the region.

While Oquawka remains a small town, at the time it was one of the towns that provided strong support for Abraham Lincoln, who was good friends with the Phelps family. They, were founders of the town, along with the Pattersons.

It was Poe's outspoken literary criticism that fired the ambition of the young Patterson, who had studied the classics, to found a magazine with Poe as its editor. Poe's role in this effort was to collect five hundred to a thousand pre-subscribers for the publication. It was this mission that led Poe to begin what would become his last speaking tour. Poe's intention was to tour the southern states for these subscriptions. His method was to organize speaking engagements to raise funds and solicit subscriptions. It is also interesting that the subject of these talks was "The Poetic Principle." The first three, which were the last, were given twice in Richmond and once in Norfolk, where they were enthusiastically received. He was preparing one for Baltimore when he died.

End of Part II. Part III will follow in the next issue of EIR.

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