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# Rocky Redglare

## *The Rise and Rise of William Wilson: A Meditation on Southern Ferocity and Edgar Allan Poe*

*Well – here we have it! This is the book- the book par excellence –the book be-puffed, be-plastered, and be-Mirrored...”*

E.A. Poe, reviewing *Norman Leslie* by Theodor S. Fay in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, December, 1835.

In his justly influential (and all the better for its onomatopoeic title) study *Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe*, Daniel Hoffman remarks at length on his subject’s alleged masochism, touching upon allegations from other allegers of the writer’s “psychic impotence”-

*Whether he could get it up or not (and the evidence of the tales is pretty one-sided), you don’t have to have a certificate from Dr. Freud to recognize Poe’s sad and crippling obsession; he put into his writing an intense energy as great as that which a libidinous seducer would have expended upon the breaching of a thousand virgins. Poe was born to suffer, to thrill to the exquisite torment of those sufferings, to transmute them by his symbolistic imagination into paradigms of man’s divided nature, of man’s heroic efforts to escape his fate. 1*

Very pretty. Even *true*, in light of Edgar Allan’s delight in hoaxes, satire and literary combat for their own jokey sakes. He couldn’t expect to caper like a proto Bugs Bunny on the insecure Parnassus of a democracy newly cleared of treestumps without acquiring formidable enemies, and find them he did. Given the impolitic, puckish and ferocious way Poe made his career, to accuse him of masochism seems as gratuitous as any bioporn cooked up by Freudians. In speaking of “William Wilson- A Tale,” Poe’s best-known parable of twinning and double-dealing, critics correctly see that the author is being self-revealing, but place too-great an identification, with the authorial “I” of the tale, the willful aristocrat on run from a malignant double. I maintain Poe’s own critical and writerly practice put him squarely on the side of William Wilson II, revenant and dealer in death.