

never *thus* fell. And therefore has he never thus suffered. Have I not indeed been living in a dream? And am I not now dying the victim to the horror and mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions?

Right from the beginning, William Wilson is asking you to pity him and his fate. And, although as you learn more and more about him the idea of pitying Wilson becomes less and less appealing, it is from this standpoint that Wilson begins to tell you his wretched story.

He begins with very vivid descriptions of his childhood, eerily vivid. They seem to be his fondest and clearest memories. The descriptions are primarily of the

school in which his parents sent him to in his younger years. Wilson describes himself as a very willful, brilliant, and independent bully. He claims he had had “ascendancy over his schoolmates,” all accept one. Arriving at the school on the same day as himself was a boy who shared his very name, William Wilson. This second Wilson not only shared his name, but also looked very much like him, had the same general mannerisms, walked like him, even spoke like him, although he would only speak in a whisper. Wilson #1 would also discover that Wilson #2 was not only his age, but was born on the same day.

The relationship the two Wilsons develop becomes quite complex. It’s worth quoting Poe at length:

Nemesis and Schiller’s ‘Cranes of Ibykus’

I think the way Schiller treats ‘Nemesis,’ and he studied it in actually all the great tragedians of Classical Greece, is as the idea that, if you put guilt on yourself, you invite a higher lawfulness to strike you down. You cannot violate the order of creation without that happening. Sooner or later—it’s not like an instantaneous response, but sooner or later, it comes. Civilizations which have violated the order of creation over longer periods of time, bring *doom* about them. Which is why, if we don’t correct the present situation, the idea of mankind shrinking to half a billion people, is an imminent, visible possibility one can see on the horizon. Why? Because we are violating the laws of the universe, in the present political order.

Schiller worked on this again and again, but I think the most beautiful, coherent, powerful way is his poem “The Cranes of Ibykus.” Here, basically, he has the murder of the poet Ibykus. The cranes fly over, and Ibykus says, “If there is no one else to avenge my murder, I call upon you cranes to be my vengeance.” Later, all the poets gather at a contest of poets and rhapsodes, and a chorus of the Erinyes (Furies) enters. And, what Schiller does there is unbelievable! You will hear—I don’t know if it works in English the same way, but if you read this in German, the way the rhythm, the power of the idea, that these goddesses, who do not look human, are walking in a certain way, and the rhythm of the poem, conjures up powers that are not of this world. Just by the way Schiller writes it, the wording and the rhymes, there’s no way you cannot read it differently from all the rest. Because, it has a certain *drama* to it. And then, when these Erinyes say, “We will haunt the guilty, until he falls! Even if he

goes to the next world, we will not stop there! We will catch him and bring about his downfall!” There is this unbelievable “eeriness,” when the poem says, “Als ob die Gottheit nahe wär” [“As if the Godhead were nearby”]. So, something eerie is established. And then, eventually, the Erinyes go away. The whole theatre is full of people, full of poets, full of singers, and then all of a sudden the cranes fly over the stage. And then the murderers, it slips out of their mouths, and they exclaim, “Sieh da! Sieh da, Timotheus! Die Kraniche des Ibykus!” [“See there! See there, Timotheus! Behold the cranes of Ibykus!”].

In the letters between Goethe and Schiller, Schiller actually says that the murderers do not reveal themselves because they feel guilty, since they are such evil killers that they don’t feel guilt. They don’t have this conscience. They reveal themselves because of the earlier appearance of the Erinyes, because something totally *sublime*, something totally “eerie,” has been established. And, therefore, they lose control and give the secret away. And they are immediately seized and thrown before a tribunal, and are tried. This is *Nemesis* striking down—they have to reveal themselves, they cannot help it. Whenever you commit a crime, it’s not an instantaneous thing. It’s not that you steal something, and then your punishment comes immediately. But you become involved, entangled in a tragic condition, and *eventually this higher justice* means you cannot enjoy the fruits of your evil.

—Helga Zepp LaRouche,
reply to cadre school question,
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