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Excerpt from Young Americans in Literature: The Post-Romantic Turn -- "The Origins of Originality: Poe, Hawthorne, Noguchi"

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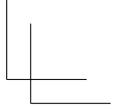
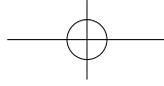
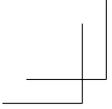
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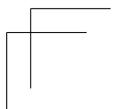
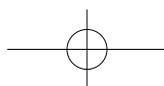
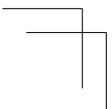
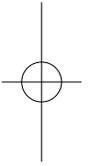
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Dedication

**YOUNG AMERICANS IN LITERATURE:**  
The Post-Romantic Turn  
in the Age of Poe, Hawthorne and Melville

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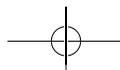
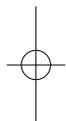
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*"Hence the term 'post-Romantic': I use it without more proof than a few passing allusions to a persistence of certain themes and images extending from the romantics to later, so-called symbolist poets."*

**Paul de Man, "Introduction to 'The Post-Romantic Predicament'" (1960)**



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AUTHOR'S NOTE: This paper was first delivered at a panel on "Originality and Plagiarism" of the 4th International Poe Conference which took place at Roosevelt Hotel, New York, on March 1st, 2015. Without the splendid moderation of Professor Jana Argersinger and the insightful comments of my fellow panelists Professor Lesley Ginsberg and Professor Carole M. Shaffer-Koros I could not have developed my argument. The text was revised and reprinted as Chapter 2 of the author's new book *Young Americans in Literature: The Post-Romantic Turn in the Age of Poe, Hawthorne and Melville* (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2018).

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Origins of Originality  
--Poe, Hawthorne, Noguchi --  
Takayuki Tatsumi  
(Keio University, President of The Poe Society of Japan)

Edgar Allan Poe's critical principle seems very simple, based on his thrice-told reviews of Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story collection *Twice-Told Tales*. In the first two reviews (published in the April 1842 issue and the May 1842 issue of *Graham's Magazine*) he put emphasis upon the three tenets of unity, variety and originality, while in the third review (published in the November 1847 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*) he prefers effect to allegory. Poe is a famous, or infamous, plagiarism hunter, who often accused others of duplication without foundation. For instance, Poe thought it highly likely that Hawthorne's "Howe's Masquerade" plagiarized his "William Wilson." In his second review of the collection Poe states:

In "Howe's Masquerade" we observe something which resembles plagiarism--but which may be a very flattering coincidence of thought. ... The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called "William Wilson," one of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. ... there are various points of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each case there is a quarrel--that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself," of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56 of "William Wilson." (James Albert Harrison's edited *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* [hereafter abbreviated as "H," XIII, 112-113])

Chronologically speaking, Hawthorne's "Howe's Masquerade" was published in 1838 and reprinted in the anthology in 1842, while Poe's "William Wilson" was published in 1839. Poe's accusation is undoubtedly an anachronistic mistake. Insofar as Hawthorne's tale precedes Poe's, the latter cannot blame the former for plagiarism, but Poe did just that. Certainly, the

structures of both tales sound similar, as if the common theme of "double" in fact produced duplication, seducing Poe to resurrect his favorite topic of plagiarism as "duplicity," or, "twice-toldness." But, a careful glance at the two tales makes us note the critical difference between Hawthorne's puritanical "allegory," which tells of "the ghosts of the ancient governors of Massachusetts" including at their end the "figure in a military cloak", and Poe's aesthetic "effect," which puts more emphasis on the encounter with one's double. Such a difference leads us to the following presupposition: apart from the topic of plagiarism as duplication--whether Poe actually read Hawthorne's tale before writing his own or not--"William Wilson" seems to be the skillful parody, or the unwitting critique, of "Howe's Masquerade," in terms of Poe's aesthetics that give priority to effect over allegory.

Furthermore, discovering another duplication between Poe's tale "The Masque of the Red Death" published in 1842 and Hawthorne's "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" published in 1838 from which Poe must have borrowed, Robert Regan asserts that Poe "invites the careful reader...to see 'The Masque of the Red Death' as a critical exercise which out-Hawthorned Hawthorne" (Regan, "Hawthorne's Plagiary; Poe's Duplicity," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25.3 [December 1970]: 296). Note that despite the accusation the tone of Poe's second review of the collection remained so positive as to praise Hawthorne's style as purity, his force as abounding, and his high imagination as gleaming from every page. Nonetheless, his third and final review of the book published in 1847 grows more and more negative, even to the point of distinguishing between Hawthorne's "originality," which he had once appreciated, and the "peculiarity" he now more aptly attributes to the same author.

The "peculiarity" or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne, would, in its mere character of "peculiarity," and without reference to what is the peculiarity, suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation. But at his failure to be appreciated, we can, of course, no longer wonder, when we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points--at that point which, having the least concern with nature, is the farthest removed from the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater number of the subjects, and which in some measure interferes with the direct conduct of absolutely all. (H, XIII, 147-148).

While his second review praised Hawthorne's "originality," the third review denies that he is

original, defining a new category of "peculiarity" which essentially differs from "originality," making his tales not merely "monotonous" but also detached from "the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment and from the popular taste." And it is "the strain of allegory" that prevents Hawthorne from being original, various, and popular (that is, effective).

So, what happened between the first two positive reviews and the third and final review, that is, between 1842 and 1847? To bring to light the importance of this gap in time, we must survey the "Longfellow War" of 1845, which took place exactly between 1842 and 1847.

Poe waged war on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), who was in those days an "American Institution." Poe had in fact time and again criticized Longfellow after reviewing the latter's first novel *Hyperion* (1839). But what is strange is that, once the war was opened in 1845, it was not Longfellow himself but an anonymous person named "Outis" ("no one" in Greek) who fought the war throughout, starting with Poe's review of Longfellow's anthology *Waif* (1844, dated 1845) in the *Evening Mirror* of January 14, 1845, and ending with Poe's last answer to Outis in the *Broadway Journal* of April 5, 1845. "Outis" was a constructive as well as penetrating critic, not aggressive like Poe. With each exchange of opinions, the war turned more and more to Poe's disadvantage, particularly because some of Poe's accusations of plagiarism turned out to be completely unfounded. The point disputed in the war was that of plagiarism versus originality, one of Poe's favorite topics in his quest for the literary independence of America.

As for the relationship between plagiarism and originality, in his reply to the letter of Outis (*Broadway journal*, I, April 5, 1845), Poe later mitigated his attitude towards Longfellow. In Sidney Moss's opinion, "he proceeded to acquit Longfellow of 'moral delinquency'--that is, of willful plagiarism --and to explain his unconscious plagiarism--imitation" (Moss, *Poe's Literary Battles: The Critic in the Context of His Literary Milieu* ] Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1963] 180).

Despite Poe's consistent emphasis on the idea of originality, the Longfellow War (1845) ended up with Poe looking like a possible plagiarist. Thus, Poe winds up by defending not only Longfellow but also himself:

The poet is thus possessed by another's thought, and cannot be said to take of it, possession. But, in either view, he thoroughly feels it as his own--and this feeling is counteracted only by the sensible presence of its true, palpable origin in the

volume from which he has derived it----... ("Plagiarism—Imitation—Postscript to Mr. Poe's Reply to the Letter of Outis," *Broadway Journal* [April 5, 1845], 211-212).

This passage reminds us of Poe's idea in the third review of "originality": the reader, Poe argues, "feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer--and himself" (H, XIII, 146). Here Poe finds it difficult to determine the extent to which an author can be called original or plagiaristic; in the special case where a writer, as reader, feels another writer's originality as if it were his own, the distinction between originality and the effect of originality becomes problematic. Thus, it is through the Longfellow War in 1845 that Poe ended up by radically revising his idea of originality in the third review of Hawthorne's collection in 1847 and questioning the distinction between originality and plagiarism. If this viewpoint of originality characterizes Poe's literary criticism, it can also be said to be analogous to the ratiocinative tales he was trying to establish as a brand-new literary subgenre between 1841 and 1844, in which the stakes were the distinction between truth and the effect of truth. Considering Poe's review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* and his literary experiment with the mode of ratiocinative tales that was to be developed into detective fiction, it is safe to say that Poe came to deconstruct the very origins of originality in the mid-1840s.

What interests me now is that Poe's rhetoric of self-defense was to be repeated by an internationally renowned fin-de-siècle Japanese poet Yone Noguchi (1875-1947) who was very active around the turn of the century.

The writings of Yone Noguchi, who was championed in the fin de siècle by such literary geniuses as Arthur Symonds, Thomas Hardy, Paul Claudel, Willa Cather and George Meredith, has just lately been rescued from oblivion. Important here has been Edition Synapse's 2007 publication of the collected works of Noguchi, edited by Prof. Shunsuke Kamei, and director Hisako Matsui's beautiful cinematic representation of Yone Noguchi's American wife in the United States: "Leonie." Despite Noguchi's bigamy, Leonie gave birth to the internationally known artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-88). Indeed, it is well-known that it was through the works and poetics of Yone Noguchi that Ezra Pound (1885-1972), the guru and tireless promoter of literary modernism, discovered the legacy of Japanese poetry, which he subsequently turned into a creative engine for western poetic avant-gardism. Since Noguchi published in 1896 his first poetry collection in English *Seen and Unseen* including "My Poetry," which is deeply influenced by the master of haiku Matsuo Basho, it is highly

plausible that, as Professor Anita Patterson pointed out ("Global America Revisited: Ezra Pound, Yone Noguchi, and Modernist Japonisme," MS of the keynote lecture given at the 5th NASSS [Nanzan American Studies Summer Seminars] Conference on July 23rd, 2011 at Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan), his correspondence in 1911 with Ezra Pound invited the latter to write his famous haiku-inspired poem "In a Station of the Metro" (1913) thus establishing his own imagist poetics. This rereading reveals how Noguchi's two-volume collection of poems *The Pilgrimage* (1908 and 1909) may have been the conduit whereby the Japanese poetics of "hokku" (haiku) influenced Pound in the composition of both his imagiste manifesto, "A Few Dont's" and his "In a Station of the Metro" consisting of only two lines: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough" (*Poetry* [April 1913]). Prof. Patterson adds to this picture a very careful tracing of the ways that Noguchi's Oxford lecture "The Japanese Hokku Poetry," delivered on January 28, 1914, might have inspired Pound. By setting up an analogy between the representative 17th century Japanese poet Matsuo Basho and the exemplary American Renaissance poet Walt Whitman, Noguchi is likely to have prompted Pound to establish his own modernist poetics by re-appropriating the pre-imagist legacy of Japanese poetry and transcending the limit of the American Romantic tradition. Patterson's close reading and theoretical insights are both impressive and important.

At this point, we have to recall a literary scandal that darkened Noguchi's early career in the United States. When Noguchi's English poems started to be published in 1896 in Anglo-American literary magazines, Jay William Hudson accused Noguchi of borrowing heavily from Poe in the essay "Newest Thing in Poets, A Borrower from Poe" (*San Francisco Chronicle* 22 Nov. 1896,16). Hudson's point is that Noguchi's poem "Lines," which includes the following three lines "I dwell alone" "In world of Moan" "My soul is stagnant dawn," could not have been composed without copying and slightly modifying the first three lines of Poe's "Eulalie"(1845): "I dwelt alone / In a world of moan / And my soul was a stagnant tide." As Professor Yoshiko Uzawa has recently pointed out ("Poe ni natta nihonjin: Yone Nobuchi no 1896 nen hyosetsu sodo ["The Japanese Poet Who Passed for Poe: The Rumor of Yone Nobuchi's Plagiarism in 1896"], *Mita Bungaku* [Fall 2009]: 186-189) , the scandal of Noguchi's plagiarism could very well have destroyed his reputation as a new talent. Nonetheless, in response to Hudson's attack, Noguchi defended himself in the following fashion:

"Let critics say what they please! Poetry is sacred to me. It is not *art* for me, but feeling. My poems are simply my own journal of feeling--the footmark of my experience. I can stand anything but deceiving myself. I am not sorry a bit, if there be an exact correspondence in shape. I am thankful to God for giving me the moment when I felt the same thing with Poe. I cannot understand why you could not feel the same thing with Poe if you want to. It is not poetry at all, if you must express yourself in some other fashion when you think of one thing." (*Fortnight Review* [February 2, 1914], 271)

This self-justification strikes us as amusing, for in it Noguchi's assertion that he experienced the same feelings as Poe effectively allows him to pass for Poe himself. What makes this defense against plagiarism all the more intriguing is that it borrows heavily from the very logic that Poe himself employed when faced with a similar charge of plagiarism during the Longfellow War waged in 1845. Now let us compare Noguchi's self-justification with Poe's reply to his antagonist:

The poet is thus possessed by another's thought, and cannot be said to take of it, possession. But, in either view, he thoroughly feels it as his own--and this feeling is counteracted only by the sensible presence of its true, palpable origin in the volume from which he has derived it--an origin which, in the long lapse of years it is almost impossible not to forget--for in the meantime the thought itself is forgotten. ("Plagiarism—Imitation—Postscript to Mr. Poe's Reply to the Letter of Outis," *Broadway Journal* [April 5, 1845], 211-212).

It has already been accepted that Poe's "Eulalie" itself borrowed from the Irish poet Thomas Moore. However, it is more ironic that the very logic of Noguchi's response to the charge of plagiarism in 1896 is itself plagiarized from Poe's rhetoric of self-vindication against the same charge in the Longfellow War. Despite Hudson's scathing critique, Noguchi was able to survive the controversy and reestablish his claim to originality. This anecdote clearly reveals that at the dawn of Modernist poetics the concept of plagiarism was already being replaced with the poetics of multicultural citations. In 1913 Ezra Pound himself stated: "Practically the whole development of the English verse-art has been achieved by steals from the French" (*Poetry*, underline mine). The ideas that emerged would later inform what in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) T.S. Eliot calls the "extinction of personality" and the "simultaneous order" of literary history, both of which were to be developed into the postmodern concept of "intertextuality." Thus, the literary genealogy from Poe to Noguchi through Pound could well be reinterpreted as a trajectory not only of criticizing the traditional

idea of romantic originality but also of establishing the strategic anachronism of collaborative creativity without which no literary works could have been made possible.