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## Racial Roots of Romanticism: American and European Africanism Are The Creation of Bio-Politics

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**Abstract**

The British Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the American Edgar Allan Poe shared a number of similarities in their writing styles. Both men came onto the scene early in their respective nation's forays into Romanticism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was of the first generation of British literary Romantics, while Poe introduced his Gothic influences before the Renaissance of American Romanticism in the 1850s. In the work of both men there is an emphasis on color as it pertains to race, especially aspects of whiteness. This focus on race has been covered at length by authors such as Toni Morrison in her book *Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, but such a thorough application of the concept of whiteness has not yet been applied to British Romantic work, despite what I believe are several points of similarity. Morrison discusses the concepts of black others and whiteness in her book, and I believe that how English authors, such as Coleridge, engaged and depicted whiteness in their literary works is similar to how American Romantics such as Poe engaged with it. What's of special interest is what this shared interest means for the authors, and what prompted this shared literary engagement with race. Along with an examination of the engagement with race within Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" there will be an in-depth discussion of where this engagement with American Africanism originated for the authors. To do so, I will discuss the biographical information of both authors, and the work of Michel Foucault on bio-politics will play a very important part in identifying why these similarities in the depiction of whiteness arose and what they mean for both the American and British Romantic literary traditions. Both Edgar Allan Poe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge racialize certain characters, and their depictions of whiteness in "Ligeia" and "Christabel" actually represent their engagement with Foucault's concept of biopower, as it pertains to the state process of bio-politics created in the nineteenth century, as a way to control populations through biological regulation. Poe fully embraced the tenets of biopower, and the biologically based racism it produced, while Coleridge merely adhered to it out of the belief that it provided the best defense against the more violent bio-racism being voiced by the emergent socialist radicals amongst the lower classes of British society.

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