

5-2017

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

James Flynn

University of Massachusetts Boston

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.umb.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Flynn, James, "Racial Roots of Romanticism: American and European Africanism Are The Creation of Bio-Politics" (2017). *Honors College Theses*. 35.

http://scholarworks.umb.edu/honors_theses/35

This Open Access Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact library.uasc@umb.edu.

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

James Flynn

Honors College Thesis, May 2017

Departmental Honors in English

Faculty Thesis Advisor: Elizabeth Fay

University of Massachusetts Boston

There are many critics who would question a connection between the works of the English Romantic authors and the American Romantic authors, due to the claim by many that the American literature of the time was independent of English influence. Of course, Ralph Waldo Emerson's desire for a literature independent of the Old World was a considerably good thing, spurring as it did American culture's shift away from complete adhesion to English modes of literary work. However, to claim that American Romantic authors became completely independent of British Romantic authors would be to ignore the shared processes apparent in the work of both nations. While still mostly original, British and American Romantic work shared advanced and complicated approaches to pressing cultural problems, despite what Emerson may have wanted when he called for a new American literature ("American Scholar").

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.

According to Toni Morrison in her chapter "Romancing The Shadow," an examination of American Romantic fiction in her book *Playing in The Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, the literary works of the American Romantic canon are mired in the stereotypes of American Africanism. Morrison examines "how the image of reined-in, bound, suppressed, and repressed darkness became objectified in American literature as an Africanist persona" (38-39) and posits that this persona "helped to form the distinguishing characteristics of a proto-American literature" (39). The proto-American literature that Morrison discusses here is the American Romantic genre, which American writers adopted because "Romance offered writers not less but more; not a narrow a-historical canvas but a wide historical one; not escape but entanglement" (37). She goes on to describe this American Africanism not only in terms of

blackness, but also in terms of whiteness, contrasting the natures of both where they appear in American Romantic works like *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* by Edgar Allan Poe (51). Morrison concludes her chapter “Romancing the Shadow” by stating that American writers present blackness as both “evil *and* desirable, rebellious *and* forgiving, fearful *and* desirable---all of the self-contradictory features of the self” while “Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded senseless, implacable.” (59). The contrasting natures of a black presence and a white presence, in the form of others or colors, are what constitute Morrison’s definition of American Africanism.

Morrison conducts a thorough and advanced examination of the Africanist stereotypes present in the Romantic canon and her findings are accurate; however, I wish to extend the scope of her work from American literary works to English ones as well. This is a connection that she herself highlights by saying “(There also exists, of course, a European Africanism with a counterpart in colonial literature)” (38). Morrison does not discuss the presence of European Africanism very much after this point due to her focus on the American literary world. Therefore I wish to continue an examination of the connection between American and European Africanism. Morrison defines American Africanism, as a “fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire” (38) coupled with unknowable whiteness. European Africanism engages with the same concepts due to the broader context of general Western colonization and the shared trans-Atlantic emergence of bio-politics as described in Michel Foucault’s lectures, albeit with more of a focus on whiteness.

My proposed method to illustrate the shared concepts of American and European Africanism is to examine in general the similarities between American Romanticism and English Romanticism and to compare and contrast the American Romantic Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ligeia”

with the English Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel". There will be a focus on pointing out the shared trend of engaging with race in both texts, via the presence of whiteness exuding the traits Morrison would expect in it. The two texts sharing the same process of literary engagement with cultural racism means American Romantic work in general is not independent of English Romantic work, and that the idea of a European Africanism inherently linked to the American Africanism which Morrison referred to in her book has merit.

Before a close reading of the two texts is given I will provide a brief summary of the plots of the two works. The short story "Ligeia" depicts a man's interactions with an intelligent, mysterious woman named Ligeia, a woman whose mental prowess and other-worldliness go beyond her death to possess the narrator's thinking and life. Ligeia was the narrator's wife, but also his intellectual superior. She was his teacher in philosophy and introduced him to the work of transcendentalists. The narrator was obsessed more with Ligeia's intellect than her beauty. Although he admired both, Ligeia's vast stores of knowledge are what really drew him to her, not her ivory skin and dark hair. However, her sudden death robbed both her and the narrator of all this knowledge. The narrator fell into a vast depression and moved to England where he re-married, his second wife being "Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine" (Poe 259). Rowena was Ligeia's opposite in both an intellectual and physical regard. She didn't have command of the vast stores of knowledge that Ligeia had and where Ligeia had dark hair, Rowena's was blonde. The narrator became addicted to opium during his new residence in England and was cruel towards Rowena, constantly harping on her deficiencies and lamenting the loss of Ligeia. Eventually Rowena grew ill and when she died the narrator stayed by her body, lost in the grasp of opium. After three days he noticed repeated stirring and signs of life from Rowena, signs that would vanish soon after they started, only to begin again a while later. Eventually, during one

these episodes Rowena rose from her resting place and cast off her shroud to reveal that Rowena has transformed into Ligeia. The narrator once more has Ligeia, the object of his obsession, regarding him with her strange eyes, but in an utterly horrific and unnatural manner. This is where the short story ends.

“Christabel” is set during an indistinct medieval period and depicts a maiden named Christabel’s strange encounter with the mysterious and subtly malevolent Geraldine. In the first part of the narrative poem, written in 1797, Christabel secretly brings Geraldine into the castle inhabited by her father the Baron Leoline, the Bard Bracy, and herself. Geraldine rests with Christabel in bed, but not before revealing a strange and malevolent side to her, a supernatural and demonic characteristic belied earlier by many ill omens going off due to her passage into the castle. Sleeping with Christabel allows Geraldine to keep her from telling others of her monstrous secret. Part two of the poem, which was written in 1800, picks up after Geraldine’s night with Christabel, and constitutes Christabel realizing that Geraldine is demonic and Geraldine gaining control over Leoline and turning him against Christabel. The poem remained unfinished despite the fact that when Coleridge finally published the two parts of the poem in 1816, it had only been distributed to his inner circle in manuscript form up to that point, he said he was going to continue the poem. Coleridge never did however, and the narrative poem ends with all seeming to be lost, with Christabel discredited by Geraldine, Bard Bracy sent away, and Leoline under Geraldine’s influence.

Within both Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ligeia” and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Christabel” there are female antagonists with connections to traditionally female mythological monsters that seduce and kill men, in Geraldine’s case it is the lamia and in Ligeia’s case it is the siren. In “Christabel” Geraldine looks upon Christabel with “shrunken serpent eyes” (Coleridge 233, l.

602) and Bard Bracy's dream of a snake strangling a dove (Coleridge 232) is a representation of Geraldine's malevolent influence over Christabel. Leoline however misinterprets the Bard's dream and mistakes Geraldine for "Lord Roland's beauteous dove" (Coleridge 233, l. 569) when she is actually the snake. While Ligeia is not a lamia, her gaze functions in a similar way to Geraldine's in that it ensnares and captures the attention of the gazed upon, the narrator becoming "possessed with a passion to discover" (Poe 252) their meaning. While Ligeia does not have much of a connection to the lamia, she does have a connection to another female mythological monster that seduced and killed men, namely the siren. A siren is a female mythological monster known for luring sailors, who were categorically male in Greek times, to their deaths by casting their ships into the rocks where the sirens sat. So, while the two women may not be a reference to the same mythological creature, the mythological creatures they do represent acted in similar ways.

Similarly, while the siren was not known to kill with its gaze, both Geraldine and Ligeia use their respective gazes to seduce and harm men. Ligeia uses her gaze to entrance the narrator, her eyes became the focus of his obsession with her, and they "at once so delighted and appalled" (Poe 253) him. Ligeia's eyes enthralled the narrator to her will. Likewise, Geraldine's gaze is what entrances Leoline and condemns Christabel. When Geraldine wishes to charm Leoline and bend him to her will her eyes become, "large bright eyes divine" (Coleridge 233, l. 595). However, this gaze merely feigns a look of innocence and purity. When Geraldine looks at Christabel it is revealed that she has "shrunken serpent eyes" (Coleridge 233, l. 602), this is the true state of Geraldine's gaze and it seems like the gaze she turns on Leoline is merely a parlor trick. Or maybe the gaze only comes out when Geraldine actively hexes a person as she does Christabel at that moment, regardless her gaze is snake-like. The references to the lamia and the

siren, as well as the presence of a gaze dangerous to men, indicate a focus on presenting women as dangerous. This misogynistic presentation of women enabled the authors to expound on the negative aspects of power and the aristocracy, without criticizing those patriarchal institutions too much and call for their complete dissolution. Coleridge and Poe, Coleridge more so, had misgivings about the corruption at the upper echelons of society, but did not wish to bring the structure of their nation's societies crashing down.

Poe criticizes the dangers of decadent aristocracy through his representation of Ligeia's dangerous knowledge. The narrator's wife Ligeia is connected to a decadent aristocracy through the small amount of information the narrator relates about her background. He says that, "... I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine." His description of an "old, decaying" German city conjures to mind images of decadence, of something that had once been grand, but now is slowly falling apart. This concept of decay is then carried over to Ligeia's heritage due to the narrator immediately following this description of the city with a discussion of Ligeia's family. The narrator says, "Of her family --- I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted". While the narrator does not say that Ligeia's family was decaying, the image of the city and the family becomes blurred in the reader's mind due to the proximity of the descriptions. This occurrence is a rhetorical effect that mirrors the real world situation where dominant aristocratic families often became synonymous with the city or land where they held power. The city is "old" and the family is "ancient" the two are related and tie in with each other. Thus the allusion to a "decaying" German city and an "ancient" family lineage connect Ligeia to a decadent aristocratic familial history. She is the representation of aristocratic decadence, with an excess of knowledge that Clark E. Griffith, in "Poe's "Ligeia" and the English Romantics", points out is

seemingly unrelated to everyday life (20). However, I believe that Ligeia's excessive knowledge nonetheless grants her enormous power over the lives of regular individuals, like Lady Rowena whom she possesses. The fear present within the story is partly a fear of the aristocrat, of individuals with immense and tyrannical power over others, and even life itself. While the Southern elite may not have had the set-in-stone system of aristocratic titles that England had, their society still constituted an aristocracy, with an agrarian system that made the owners of plantations the Lords and Ladies of their estates and the black men, women, and children forced to labor on them. While Poe supports this sort of power in governing the life of black individuals, he seems to be apprehensive of the danger this power presents to white people, as seen with the tragic fate of Lady Rowena.

Geraldine displays a similar focus on the demonic aspect of the aristocrat, which constitutes an excess of power. Like Ligeia, Geraldine comes from a decadent aristocratic background as well, one that poses a threat to the characters around her. She is the daughter of "Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine" (Coleridge 228, l. 407), a claim which would place her on the highest branch of the English aristocratic tradition, since lords held nearly the greatest amount of power within British society, being second only to the monarch in terms of titles. Meanwhile, Leoline, Christabel's father, is only "a Baron", albeit a rich one. Barons were the lowest title bestowed upon members of the English aristocracy. The dichotomy between these two levels of power allows Coleridge to present both desirable and undesirable power, the difference between the benevolent patriarchal powers of Leoline and the malevolent ones of Geraldine. Leoline holds power, he holds complete charge over his castle and the people in his lands, as seen by the way he is able to order the bard Bracy about. However, he is not too far removed from a connection with his people and his lands, his power being the smallest amount

attainable by aristocrats. When Geraldine tells Christabel about being taken captive by five warriors, Christabel immediately assures her that Leoline's "stout chivalry" and "friends" will allow her safe passage back to her family home. It is clear that Leoline has power, but that power seems to be a benevolent one, a power based around rules of honor and the maintenance of benevolent relations with one's subjects. These aspects of Leoline's power are seen respectively through the "chivalry" Christabel mentions, and the fact that, according to Christabel, Leoline regards the men he will order to conduct Geraldine to her home, "friends". Geraldine meanwhile, is descended from a Lord, a station which carried with it enormous power over a vast quantity of lands. This sort of removed relationship would not conceivably allow any sort of direct connection between the Lord and the common people populating his lands. Leoline only becomes tyrannical, such as giving orders to Bracy "in tones abrupt, austere" (Coleridge 235, l. 650), once the highly aristocratic Geraldine enters his halls and begins to influence him with her gaze, revealing the danger a corrupting excess of power can have on a person in a powerful position.

This fear of the aristocrat, of excessive power, is coded into a fear of whiteness in the stories of both authors in a way that lines up with Morrison's depiction of American Africanism, and thus, as I posit, European Africanism. However, before conducting an investigation of how Poe and Coleridge engaged with race, it is necessary to place them in their proper contexts. This necessitates grounding Morrison's definition of American Africanism through other scholarly works. A scholar who discusses many of the same themes that Morrison does is Janet Koenig who, in her chapter "Romantic Racialism and the Antislavery Novels of Stowe, Hildreth, and Melville" in the book *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American Art and Literature 1790-1860*, addresses the use of racial stereotypes in the Romantic work of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's*

Cabin and Hildreth's and Melville's satirical repudiation of it in their respective works of *The Slave* and *Benito Cereno*. Koenig asserts that Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflected the tenets of romantic racialism, a term she attributes to the historian George Frederickson, which "viewed the supposed African American racial attributes---childishness, docility, patience, affection---as positive qualities in the face of the ungentle world of capitalist materialism and ruthless national expansionism" (288). What's interesting is that the romantic racialism Koenig references dealt with the more positive implications of blackness used by Romantic writers. This is a topic that Morrison covered in her text *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), namely her point that American authors viewed blackness as both bad and good, "rebellious *and* forgiving" (59). Romantic racialism seems to consist of the more positive stereotypes included in Morrison's discussion of stereotyped blackness.

Koenig goes on to highlight that despite the positive intentions of Romantic works like Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* their use of romantic racialism only helped to "naturalize racialism and to reinforce the idea that African Americans were irreducibly different from the "Anglo-Saxon race"" (298) in much the same way that minstrel shows did. Koenig cites *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* continued success despite "the reactionary racial climate of the Gilded Age" (298) to support her point that the text ended up serving a racist agenda. She also claims that Herman Melville was critical of romantic racialism, interpreting his *Benito Cereno* as a burlesque satirizing "blackface minstrelsy, the romantic racialism displayed in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the public's complacency" (300). In effect, Koenig is saying that Melville stood somewhat apart from other American Romantic authors due to his repudiation of the racial stereotypes they engaged in, a point that seems to be countered by Morrison with her inclusion of Melville's own claim of "the power of blackness" (*Playing in the Dark* 37). While Koenig and Morrison may

disagree over which particular authors displayed racial stereotypes in their works and to what purpose, the fact remains that both scholars realize the existence and popularity of racial stereotypes in works of the American Romantic canon (Morrison 37; Koenig)

The best way to bridge a connection between the Romantic racialism described by Koenig, which represents the positive stereotypes of blackness Morrison highlights in American Romantic fiction, and the work of Edgar Allan Poe would be to highlight the connection between Poe and Herman Melville. Both Morrison and Koenig highlight Melville's involvement in the use of race in American Romantic works. As established earlier, Koenig discusses how he might have opposed blatant racialism in works of American literature (Koenig 300), while Morrison identified his participation in the system of racialism with his claim to "the power of blackness" (*Playing in the Dark* 37). The idea of a white nineteenth century writer that is both against romantic racialism and yet still implicitly biased when it comes to race is not out of the realm of possibility. Melville can be both the man criticizing romantic racialism (Koenig 300) and the one trumpeting "the power of blackness" (Morrison 37), contradictory as these actions may seem at first. Regardless of which stance one deems most correct, either with or against, it's clear Melville was engaged with this racial process.

While there is debate on the relative benevolence of Melville's engagement with American Africanism and romantic racialism, Poe's engagement with American Africanism was overtly racist. In his article, "Absolute Poe: His System of Transcendental Racism" Maurice S. Lee introduces a view of Poe as a man whose political beliefs, namely his stance against abolition, conflicted with his transcendental philosophical beliefs (755). Lee states that Poe received his transcendentalist beliefs, which dealt with a refusal of Enlightened ideas about duality through an acceptance of absolute unity, mainly from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*

(760). Lee believes that Poe had trouble connecting these philosophical values with his racist views, stating that “Poe cannot celebrate a transcendentalism that synthesizes black and white,” and interprets his short story “Metzengerstein” as an allegorical piece which depicts the destruction that would result if the Northern states succeeded in their plans for abolition (761). He also provides biographical information on Poe stating that “Poe never owned a slave and was ambivalent about Southern plantation culture” and yet was very anti-abolitionist (752). Lee conducts an interesting and thorough investigation into the conflict between Poe’s political and philosophical beliefs and their reflection in his literary works. One important fact that Lee seems to miss and that John Carlos Rowe covers in his book *At Emerson’s Tomb*, specifically in his chapter “Antebellum Slavery and Modern Criticism: Edgar Allan Poe’s *Pym* and “The Purloined Letter””, is that Poe sold a slave and was thus an active participant in the institution of slavery. This doesn’t discount Lee’s work, it’s just further proof that Poe was mired in this system.

There is one point, however, that Lee denies but that I find hard to dismiss, and that is the fact of Poe’s engagement with the literary racial process of American Africanism. Although Lee dismisses the idea that Poe used the “African epistemology hinted at by Dayan and Toni Morrison” (760), my own view is that Poe did use the process of racial othering described by Morrison, and that its use results from Poe’s trouble in coming to terms with his transcendental leanings. Therefore, Morrison’s work actually supports Lee’s point that Poe had transcendental beliefs, and that Poe couldn’t accept the concept of absolute unity, due to its implications of racial synthesis, despite these transcendental beliefs. Morrison’s concept supports Lee’s point because Poe’s use of American Africanism, with its focus on the separateness of whiteness and blackness, within his literary works was his way of representing his inability to accept absolute unity in his actual life. American Africanism was Poe’s way of displaying the conflict between

his racism and his transcendental beliefs. The two, transcendental leanings and American Africanism, are not mutually exclusive in Poe's work.

Melville represents one kind of American Romantic writer, a writer that was engaged with American Africanism, but moving away from it. Poe, whose comparison to the English Romantic Coleridge will be the focus of this paper, was a more conservative American Romantic. Lee describes Poe to be so racist that the non-use of American Africanism would be impossible for him given how race consumes his thoughts (752). While a connection between Poe and Melville does seem somewhat difficult to imagine given the opposite places they occupied on the issue of slavery and racism, it is in fact present and the connection links all American Romantic writers to a shared way of representing whiteness and darkness in their works. The connection between Poe and Melville also helps validate an even broader expansion of the tendencies which constitute American Africanism to English Romantic work, and thus the establishment of a concept of European Africanism. That is because when even ideologically opposite authors engage with the same process it reveals the prevalence of said process.

Where Coleridge's and Poe's coding of aristocracy and subservience, power and lack of power, tie back into Toni Morrison's American Africanism, and the European Africanism I am trying to highlight, is how they tie the color of whiteness to power and blackness to lack of power. Poe falls completely within Morrison's observations of how white American authors presented blackness and whiteness in their works. Within "Ligeia" blackness is both terrifying, the Arabesque figures on the bridal chamber come to mind, and appealing, Ligeia as partly a black other is found very desirable by the narrator. Likewise, whiteness is presented as unknowable, the bright glow of Ligeia's eyes being the puzzle the narrator is obsessed with and yet cannot figure out. In Poe's work whiteness holds a great deal of inscrutable power over

people and blackness can be both benevolent and terrifying. Likewise, an extension of Morrison's definition of American Africanism can be applied to Europe, and specifically the work of the British Coleridge. In his work, whiteness is also terrifyingly powerful, the whiteness of the malevolent Geraldine being the chief example in that regard. Inscrutable whiteness in Coleridge's work becomes representative of the aristocrats ruling English society, with blackness being attributed to their powerless serfs and lower classes. These common people are completely absent physically in the poem, and yet Geraldine's actions warn against how tyrannical actions can disrupt the balance of power, with the absent peasants that Leoline surely commands forming the invisible threat of retribution and unease of the poem.

Now that I have made a connection between Poe and the American Romantics along the line of their engagement with race in their literary works, I will examine a general connection between the American and English Romantics. In his chapter "Coleridge and Transcendentalism" Anthony John Harding examines how the American movement of Transcendentalism, which was championed by such famous American Romantics as Emerson, owed a large amount of its origin to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (222). Whereas Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson base their literary self-concepts on independence from England and English literary practices, Harding claims "the origin one prefers to claim for oneself may be quite a different matter from the origin one is actually indebted to" (222). Here Harding is referring to the fact that despite Emerson's desire to say otherwise, he and his literary circle were dependent on Coleridge's interpretation of Immanuel Kant's work as the basis of their Transcendental beliefs (222). I agree with much of what Harding states in this article, because a similar point is by Lee, who traces Poe's acquisition of transcendental beliefs to his reading of Coleridge. Lee notes that while Poe is often seen as a detractor of Transcendentalism, there are

“strong affinities between Poe and transcendentalism, in part because they go directly to Europe” (758). This explanation of Poe’s acquisition of transcendental beliefs is similar to how Harding describes Emerson’s acquisition of those same basic beliefs. In both cases, the Americans owed Coleridge for an understanding of the concepts involved. I believe such readings connecting American and British Romanticism are valid because, no matter what, such literary movements are never created in a vacuum. Transcendentalists, who Harding describes as Americans with a desire for “a new literature, perhaps even a new religious movement” (214), were reacting to philosophies and movements that had been established in Europe.

The best way to understand the European philosophies and movements that pertain to the connection of English and American Romanticism is to highlight the ones that influenced Coleridge who, as established earlier, served as a link to European philosophies for many American Romantics, including Edgar Allan Poe. Due to the changing philosophies and movements of his time, Samuel Taylor Coleridge underwent a kind of political metamorphosis, transitioning from a radical youth to a more conservative person later on in life. According to Richard Holmes in his biography of Coleridge, *Coleridge*, his early life was characterized by a certain amount of adventure and desire for change. During his first two years at Cambridge University Coleridge’s flighty college days fulfilled the wanderlust aspect of his youth (Holmes 45) and his later creation and participation in the Pantisocratic society was his way of instigating radical change (Holmes 74). This group wished to form an agricultural utopia promoting equality between the sexes and the dissolution of private property, expressing a desire to escape “corrupt European civilization” (Holmes 74) and raise children that wouldn’t be influenced by it (Holmes 72). Coleridge associated with Robert Southey who, “proclaimed himself an atheist and democrat with strong French Jacobin sympathies” (Holmes 61). Coleridge himself wasn’t an

atheist, as Holmes says his lectures reveal a “profoundly religious impulse behind all of Coleridge’s Pantisocratic radicalism” (97). Nevertheless, Coleridge’s adherence to the Pantisocratic commune, and its focus on no individual owning true private property, landed Coleridge firmly in radical territory. Furthermore, according to Arthur S. Link in his article “Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Economic and Political Crisis In Great Britain, 1816-1820”, during the 1790s Coleridge himself expressed radical “republican” beliefs and had “great enthusiasm for the French Revolution and the libertarian ideals it seemed to represent” (324). These sympathies would have set Coleridge into direct opposition with conservative thinkers and politicians, the nation of England not being one dedicated to republican ideals, like the recently independent United States (in theory, obviously the millions of black men and women who were being systematically abused by the institution of slavery detract from the notion of the United States of America being a country of the people by the people and for the people at this period in time).

Despite Coleridge’s radical beginnings in the 1790s, Link points out that Coleridge developed into quite the conservative thinker later on in life (324-325). During the later half of the 1810s, Coleridge, instead of opposing the government and proposing new and radical ideas, “avoided the question” (Link 338) of “manhood suffrage and parliamentary reform” (Link 338). Coleridge started to display a belief in the tenets of Tory humanitarianism and began to push for a return to the non-existent Golden Age before the introduction of the Industrial Revolution to England, a conservative trend supported by his proposals to start re-introducing “non-materialistic Christian values” (Link 338) to society. To give Coleridge his due, these conservative views, while guilty of not promoting equality, were aimed with a general feeling of humanitarianism (Link 325). In fact, there was nothing Coleridge liked less than capitalist

doctrines that placed the accumulation of capital above human well-being (Link 334), his specific cause being that of child labor reform (Link 333). Nevertheless, he wasn't so much a man of the people as he was a man who had sympathy for the people. Coleridge felt bad for the plight of the poor, but did not entirely stand with them.

Link maintains that the main reason Coleridge was so conservative was because of his fear of revolt. At this point in his life, Coleridge certainly had a lot going for him, if not financially then at least with his myriad connections to the upper class, and there is something to be said for the transition from a wild college youth to a more established poetic genius. The transition from radical to conservative would make a certain amount of sense, since he certainly had a lot more to lose at this point in his life, if not in wealth than at least in reputation. But I wouldn't say his success as a poet was the sole reason for his transition from radical to conservative, Coleridge doesn't appear to be that shallow. I agree with Link when he says that the, "fear of social revolution haunted his mind" (338), it was the violence of revolution that Coleridge feared, the inevitable fallout that comes about when the status-quo is changed through upheaval rather than reform. He'd always been anti-war, even in his radical days (Holmes 97), so nothing could be worse than a civil war to Coleridge, a war that Link says he feared would erupt in 1819 due to the failing post-war economy of England and various fatal clashes between protestors and the government (338). The violence practiced by the socialists amongst the lower classes would fuel his fears and instigate his accumulation of conservative values.

Coleridge and Poe shared a fear of violent revolt in their respective countries and, due to this fear, both men developed conservative beliefs that are reflected in their literary work. Poe feared a slave uprising, and a world where black people and white people were considered equal (Lee 761). Coleridge feared the violence that would result from an uprising of the lower classes

of English people against the upper classes (Link 327). Coleridge's attempts to quell unrest by exhorting himself and his countrymen to "become a better people" (Link 333) while still retaining the political institutions of England form a parallel with Poe's didactic "Metzengerstein" which depicted Poe's belief of how disastrous a Civil War between the North and South would be (Lee 756). In both cases the men are taking conservative positions on societal change, Coleridge is against violent socialism, and Poe takes the morally abhorrent position of supporting the institution of slavery in the United States. Both men are fearful of societal upheaval, Coleridge more justifiably than Poe given that the horrors witnessed in the French Revolution showed how damaging a socialist uprising could be. Poe's fear originated from his racism.

The connection between the Africanist processes, both American and European, displayed in Poe's "Ligeia" and Coleridge's "Christabel" mirrors the authors' shared fear of violent social upheaval. While "Metzengerstein" might be the most obvious vehicle Poe chose to express his fears of social upheaval in, I believe "Ligeia" and its depiction of blackness and whiteness in the ways described by Morrison in *Playing in the Dark* (59), was also a way Poe displayed his racial fears of revolt. Likewise, "Christabel", written during and towards the end of Coleridge's more radical youth (Holmes 59), but actually published during his outspoken conservative years (Link 324-325) contains Coleridge's burgeoning fear of societal upheaval in the form of a demonic other with pre-dominating traits of whiteness disruptive to the status quo. That's not to say that Coleridge and Poe were aligned politically, far from it. According to Holmes, Coleridge was "anti-slave trade" (97), and would have been morally opposed to Poe's virulent racism. But, anti-slave trade does not preclude one from racist beliefs and actions. In "Christabel", Coleridge used a racism unrelated to biopower that, as Foucault states, "allows

States, or a class, to displace the hostility that is directed toward [them], or which is tormenting the social body, onto a mythical adversary” (258). This racialization couched whiteness in the archaic form of the demonic unknown, as represented by Geraldine, and revealed Coleridge’s fear of his nation’s own, white, lower classes. Geraldine’s demonic whiteness is a trait which marks Coleridge’s knowledge that it is not racial others that had the potential to destroy the nation, but rather economic others, people who shared the same race as him but whose differing economic status got in the way of them sharing the same interests. Hence Coleridge’s attempts, through Christianity, to join people together whose self-interests would not normally align in any other way in his more conservative years (Link 838).

While Coleridge focused on solidarity, Poe worked hard to perpetuate stereotypes that kept people apart and his fiction reflects this endeavor. Poe’s short story “Ligeia” features a character named Ligeia that the scholar Maurice S. Lee believes is a representation of aspects of the black other and “a figure of amalgamation” (764). I agree, Ligeia does have black racial attributes that Poe used to establish her as a racial other and thus associate her with all the racial fears and feelings common to such depictions. However, Ligeia is not just a black other and as a figure that amalgamates white narrators, she actually displays various aspects of what Morrison associates with otherworldly whiteness and is thus an amalgamation of the two concepts, blackness and whiteness. Lee believes Ligeia can amalgamate others, but isn’t an amalgamation herself (764). He focuses on her ability to amalgamate the narrator, and not her traits of amalgamation. I believe Ligeia isn’t just an “embodied black figure” (Lee 764) but rather an example of the synthesis of black and white that Lee stated Poe feared (761) with her bodily aspects representing blackness and the unknowable light of her eyes representing whiteness.

Ligeia's physical aspects establish her as a black other. The initial description of Ligeia's "marble hand" (Poe 249) seems to establish her whiteness. Add to this description the information that she was calling the German Rhine home (248) and it may conjure to mind the image of a white European woman. However, after noting Ligeia's "marble hand" (Poe 249) and her "skin rivalling the purest ivory" (Poe 250) the narrator goes on to juxtapose this whiteness with the imagery of darkness. He establishes the dichotomy by describing, "the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally curling tresses" (Poe 250) of her hair. Here we have white and black imagery joined together, the white of her skin and the darkness of Ligeia's hair forming a contrast that draws attention to itself due to its starkness. This contrast is evidence of Poe using "the economy of stereotype" (Morrison 58) to establish Ligeia as Arabesque, with her white skin and dark hair forming the racial stereotype of Middle Easterners. Poe's repeated allusions to the Arabesque, such as the one to "Ashtophet, of idolatrous Egypt" (249) which foreshadows the narrator's "ill-omened" (249) marriage to Ligeia, cement Ligeia as an Arabesque black other.

Lee's identification of Ligeia as solely a black other doesn't account for her non-physical aspects of whiteness. While Lee does identify Ligeia as "a figure of amalgamation" (764), he reaches this conclusion through the way the narrator's "white subjectivity is subsumed by the gaze of Ligeia, whose "black" eyes are "far larger than the ordinary eyes of [his] own race" (764). Lee is stating that Ligeia is a figure that amalgamates, and not an amalgamation in and of herself. Lee interprets her as a black other, specifically an Arabesque one, with the ability to amalgamate others. I believe Lee focuses too much on the physical aspects of Ligeia and misses the trait that establishes her inscrutable whiteness (Morrison 59). What Lee fails to recognize is that the narrator makes sure to impress upon the reader that it is not Ligeia's physical attributes that make something about her strange and confounding. He initially establishes her eyes as the

source of this strangeness, but then backtracks after an initial description of their black imagery by saying that the “strangeness” of the eyes was “distinct from the formation or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to as the *expression*” (Poe 259). Lee just takes the initial description of Ligeia’s eyes as “black” and “larger than... ordinary” (764) and establishes her as a black other with the ability to take over whiteness, without really having any aspects of whiteness herself. He focuses just on Ligeia’s physical aspects while ignoring the implications of her non-physical attributes, which are linked with “senseless” whiteness (Morrison 59). This “senseless” whiteness, in turn, is a representation of the unequal distribution of power in America, although the racist Poe is not calling for a reversal of this system.

Ligeia is connected to the American process of establishing whiteness as “unfathomable” (Morrison 59) through the way in her non-physical traits of whiteness confound and confuse the narrator. Ligeia’s strangeness is not connected to the physical attributes which constitute her aspects of blackness, but rather the non-physical trait of her “*expression*” (Poe 251). The narrator states that “The “strangeness,” however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to as the *expression*” (Poe 251). Here the term brilliancy does not refer to whiteness, but rather to the blackness of Ligeia’s eyes, which were, “the most brilliant of black” (Poe 251). Therefore, the narrator’s statement reveals that it was not the physical features of Ligeia’s black eyes that unsettled and captured him, but rather, “the *expression*” (Poe 251).

This “*expression*” (Poe 251) is couched in terms of non-physical whiteness. This is an “*expression*” (Poe 251) that the narrator intensely studies, wondering “What was it --- that something more profound than the well of Democritus --- which lay far within the pupils of my beloved?” (251). He then compares her eyes to the “twin stars of Leda” and says he became their

“devoutest of astrologers” (Poe 252). The link between the expression of Ligeia’s eyes and the white, star-like luminance radiating from them means that the expression of her eyes is set in terms of whiteness which, as established earlier, is a code for excessive power. Indeed, after the narrator mentions the expression of Ligeia’s eyes, they suddenly become “large... shining... divine orbs” (Poe 252). When the narrator just focused on a physical description of her eyes they had also been described as large (Poe 251), but they never had light coming out of them. Therefore it must be the newly introduced “*expression*” (Poe 251) of Ligeia’s eyes which creates the non-physical, yet none-the less observable, whiteness that illuminates them.

Ligeia is connected to the American process of establishing whiteness as “unfathomable” (Morrison 59) through the way in her non-physical traits of whiteness, which has been established as the “*expression*” (Poe 251) of her eyes, confound and confuse the narrator, mirroring the qualities of the “unfathomable” whiteness that constantly appeared in the work of American writers (Morrison 59). The narrator cannot understand the meaning behind Ligeia’s “*expression*” (Poe 251), lamenting that it is a “word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual” (Poe 251). The narrator cannot truly understand what it is that makes Ligeia so mystically enchanting. He goes on to say of “The expression of the eyes of Ligeia” that he “struggled to fathom it!” (Poe 251). Here we can see a clear connection of “the expression” (Poe 251) of Ligeia’s eyes to the “unfathomable” aspect Morrison states American writers give to whiteness (59). Therefore, Poe’s description of Ligeia’s “*expression*” (251) is another example of the white imagery so often contained in American writing (Morrison 59) and the power it gives Ligeia over the narrator reveals Poe’s perception of the danger of the power white aristocrats held over others, although he only is fearful of the consequences for whites.

In order to create the mysterious and malevolent antagonist Geraldine of his poem “Christabel” Samuel Taylor Coleridge depicts, but does not use, the same Africanist racial process Poe used to create the white aspects of Ligeia. Geraldine is immediately associated with whiteness through Christabel’s description of her as a “damsel bright” (Coleridge 217, l. 58) whose “fair large eyes ‘gan glitter bright” (Coleridge 223, l. 221). This emphasis on brightness, especially in reference to Geraldine's eyes, is a reflection of what Poe establishes as the aspect which creates Ligeia’s inscrutable whiteness (Morrison 59), the incomprehensible brightness within her otherwise dark eyes. The trait that supplies a degree of otherness to Geraldine is her “bosom and half her side” (Coleridge 224, l. 253). What’s interesting is that when Geraldine reveals this part of herself to Christabel the narrator says that her bosom is “A sight to dream of, not to tell!” (Coleridge 224, l. 254). The narrator is unable to impart to the reader what Geraldine’s bosom actually looks like, leaving it, in the words of Morrison, “curtained” and “dreaded” (59). This is the classic feeling American writers attributed to whiteness and the British Coleridge is displaying similar tendencies in his own writing. This shared process of depicting whiteness as “unfathomable” (Morrison 59) is what proves that the American Africanism described by Morrison is connected to England as well, a connection that Morrison acknowledges with her reference to a “European Africanism” (38) linked to colonization.

The reason Poe depicts Ligeia as an amalgamation of blackness and whiteness is because he fears the idea of racial synthesis, to him the mixture of both aspects is what is truly alarming about them. A nondescript object within “Ligeia” explains the inner workings of Poe’s fears about amalgamation and hints towards his, nonetheless un-repentant, knowledge of the wrongness of racism. In “Ligeia” the narrator describes a tapestry that he installed in his abbey in England as “spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in

diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black” (Poe 260). However the narrator notes that these figures are Arabesque only from a certain point of view, “they were made changeable in aspect” (260), much like Ligeia herself. Sometimes the figures look like Arabesque “monstrosities”, and at other times “the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk” (260). Like Ligeia, the tapestry is more than what it appears at first, it has many meanings at once. To see other aspects of the tapestry one must view it from different angles, likewise Ligeia must be viewed from perspectives other than just that of the physical to gain an acknowledgement of the presence of her inscrutable knowledge and excessive aristocratic power which is coded into whiteness.

The tapestry belies an acknowledgement of how whiteness and blackness can coincide and how whiteness can be more damaging than blackness. The tapestry depicts “the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman” (260), this transition from the Arabesque to the European highlights the way in which aspects of blackness coincide with images of whiteness. It’s also an acknowledgement that “unfathomable” (Morrison 59) whiteness can be just as terrifying as Arabesque blackness. That doesn’t mean that Poe is saying whites and black are equal, his racism still pervades the work, but, like Morrison stated, there are “unmanageable slips” (58) which pervade the work of Poe that make it clear he might have had an unconscious acknowledgement of the greater danger that whiteness, as contrasted with blackness, posed to others and the world around them. Poe’s acknowledgement of the ghastliness of the Norman superstition is one of those slip-ups.

The tapestry in “Ligeia” is an evolution of the theme of “Metzengerstein” which, as Lee said, represented a fear of slave revolt (756). “Ligeia” is an evolution of that initial theme due to its portrayal of the negative aspects of both whiteness and darkness. The character Ligeia not

only represents a fear of slave revolt, but also German Transcendental thought, represented through her inscrutable whiteness. Clark Griffith noted the connection between Ligeia and German Transcendentalism by stating Ligeia is “German Transcendentalism provided with an allegorical form” (19). While I disagree with him on his interpretation of “Ligeia” as a satire mocking the false deepness of German Romantic thought (17), and the way English Romanticism was consumed by this false deepness (25), based on the fact that the horror and dread inspired by Ligeia’s unknown whiteness are too apparent to mark it as a satire, I agree with his connection of Ligeia to German Transcendental thought. While Clark is right in pointing out how dense Ligeia’s mystic knowledge is (19), it isn’t meant to be humorous, and “her strangely metaphysical eyes” (19) are actually emblematic of the dread attached to whiteness by American, as well as British, authors.

Also, the references to inscrutable whiteness in “Ligeia” and “Christabel” are meant to represent the misuse of social power. Ligeia’s decadent German aristocratic heritage and Geraldine’s high aristocratic status both allow them to mistreat and misuse others. Geraldine’s implicit invocation of superiority over Leoline and his household due to her position as a Lord’s daughter allows her to take control of Leoline and instigate discord within the castle. Likewise, Ligeia’s high place in the German aristocracy enables her to acquire the philosophical knowledge that allows her to apparently kill and take over the bodies of others after her death. In both cases the power granted to these women due to their societal position allow them to gain power and mistreat others. However, Coleridge and Poe were not contemplating radical ideas of toppling an entire aristocracy. Poe was always conservative and by 1816, the time “Christabel” was released to the public, Coleridge had begun his transition into conservatism (Link 324-325). Due to their conservatism both authors take pains to present the malevolent aristocracy they

depict as not the “normal” aristocracy. The authors do this by making the malevolent aristocrats in their works women, a move which distances the women’s actions from the normal aristocracy. This move allows Coleridge and Poe to criticize a general trend towards decadence and some aspects of the aristocracy’s misuse of power, without questioning the legitimacy of the aristocracy as a whole.

Both author’s antagonistic female aristocrats take over and harm the correct kind of female aristocrat, aristocrats who conform with a misogynistic view of power. The correct kind of female aristocrat within “Ligeia” is Lady Rowena of Tremaine, a submissive woman with little intellectual knowledge. While the narrator may criticize her and lament that she is not as smart as Ligeia, this is not an endorsement of intellectual females by Poe. Rather, the pursuit of an intellectual woman is what Poe presents as the narrator’s folly and ultimate undoing, revealing Poe’s focus on the apparent danger that comes with marrying an intellectual woman. Ligeia subsumes the body of Rowena, and may in fact have killed her if the narrator’s opium addled visions of shades poisoning wine are to be believed (Poe 263). This action is an example of an aristocratic woman who largely defies gender roles horrifically taking over the body of an innocent aristocratic woman who conforms to Poe’s preferred misogynistic and prevalent ideas of womanhood. The horror Poe intends the reader to feel at this point is supposed to reflect his own outlook on the correct and incorrect forms of aristocratic power. To Poe aristocratic power goes too far when it threatens the lives of white women who submit to male power structures. However, he believes that aristocratic power is perfectly fine when used to control women, and also keep white supremacy in place, a concept that was explored by Lee in his interpretation of “Ligeia” and “Metzengerstein” (764). Therefore, he backs away from an outright criticism of the aristocracy by presenting male control over females as ideal and by making it a woman who

commits a malevolent use of aristocratic power, thus separating it from the general patriarchal aristocratic system of the South.

Geraldine gains a kind of power and influence over Christabel by sleeping with her, corrupting an aristocratic female who is constantly referred to as good and pure throughout the narrative poem. This is a woman whose eyes are described as “so innocent and blue” (Coleridge 234, l. 612) to set her apart from Geraldine and the reality of her snake-like and dangerous gaze. Christabel is the desirable aristocratic female counterpart to Geraldine’s malevolent aristocracy. Christabel is described as, “The lovely lady, Christabel, / Whom her father loves so well,” (Coleridge 216, ll. 23-24). This description presents Christabel as an ideal daughter, one who has gained the favor of her father, presumably by conforming to female gender roles. Geraldine’s malevolent nature is revealed through her moves to gain power and influence over this ideal maiden by sleeping with her, an action which constitutes a corruption of the idealized female aristocrat. Furthermore, Geraldine uses her high aristocratic station as well as her supernatural charm to gain control over Leoline, making his will align with her own and leading him to dismiss his daughter’s and Bracy’s warnings (233-235). These actions are presented as malicious and evil throughout the second part of the poem. In fact they are demonic, since the actions are connected to Geraldine’s evil serpent-like eyes and thus the mythological lamia. This demonic connection was supposed to emphasize the existence of a malign aristocracy that perverted what both Coleridge and Poe believed was a desirable system.

Coleridge was talking about an actual aristocratic system, complete with titles and designated lands, within England; Poe, meanwhile, was drawing connections between aristocratic Southern plantation culture and the governmental aristocracies of Europe. Poe was warning against Southern plantation culture becoming too decadent, but nonetheless viewed it as

essential due to its place in preserving the institution of slavery. Likewise, Coleridge was warning against a trend of increasing decadence and disconnection from the people on the part of aristocracy, but he nonetheless sides with it against the fear of the lower classes revolting, much like Poe does for Southern plantation culture against slave revolt. The conservative aspect flowing through this work of the normally radical Coleridge, who at least in his early years was very progressive for his time, may be what drew Poe to the poem and influenced him to allude to it by naming the narrator's second wife Lady Rowena of Tremaine, a direct reference to Coleridge's Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine, Geraldine's father.

There are also other ways in which the texts of "Ligeia" and "Christabel" are remarkably similar, not only does Poe allude to Coleridge's renowned unfinished poem by naming the narrator's second wife after Geraldine's father, but both authors depicted whiteness in the same way in their texts. Although Poe combined aspects of whiteness and blackness in a single character, he and Coleridge depicted whiteness itself in the same way. Where the two authors differ in some ways is why they depicted whiteness in this particular way. Although they both connected whiteness to power and the fear of the aristocrat, Poe also seated terrifying whiteness alongside darkness due his own fear of racial synthesis, while Coleridge displayed "unfathomable" (Morrison 59) whiteness in the character of Geraldine due to his fear of violent social upheaval from emergent socialist radicals within England's lower classes. In her article, "Revolution, Response, and "Christabel"" Andrea Henderson provides an interesting interpretation of "Christabel" as a work that established Coleridge's fear of revolution. She states the poem is actually an "extended, troubled, (and in certain ways masked), meditation on modes of response to "exploding novelties"" (882), the "exploding novelties" here referring to revolutions and a rapidly changing social landscape. While I agree with certain aspects of

Henderson's case, I do not agree with the identification of Geraldine as a black other, based on Geraldine looking like a "lady of a far countree" (Coleridge 223, l. 221), in Henderson's analysis of Geraldine and her labeling of her as "the epitome of disruptive foreignness" (Henderson 883). Instead, Geraldine is emblematic of the problems within England itself, as portrayed through the imagery of racial whiteness seen throughout her characterization in "Christabel".

Henderson alludes to certain aspects of Geraldine that would prove her connection to England, but drops the issue to present her as a foreign other. Henderson acknowledges that Geraldine states that, "My sire is of a noble line" (Coleridge 218, l. 79), but treats it only as a claim and nothing more. Geraldine's statement would attach her to the feudal system of the inhabitants of the poem, but Henderson interprets it as one of the ways Geraldine "trick[s] her victims in to identifying with her" (883). While Geraldine is nefarious, I do not believe her claim is necessarily untrue, and her link to whiteness dispels any notion of racial foreignness to an Englishman. Now, the argument might be made that Henderson is saying foreign in the sense that Geraldine is not English, but rather French. However, Coleridge's presentation of France and England in the poem and throughout a youth heavily involved with the revolutionary thought of France (Holmes 47) belies a belief that the French were tied closely enough to the English to have them be viewed as somewhat similar. The specific nature of Geraldine's heritage seems to be French, with her sire being "Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine". Her French heritage becomes linked with English heritage with the image of Roland and Leoline being "Like cliffs which had been rent asunder; / A dreary sea now flows between ;" (Coleridge 229, ll. 422-423) which draws to mind a picture of the English Channel separating England and France. But this separation isn't as divisive as it may seem because Leoline and Roland had been each other's "best brother" (Coleridge 229, l. 417) in the past. This familial connection presents England and

France as two countries separated by insult, but not blood, reinforcing their similarities and thus a reading of Geraldine as not a foreign character. Her distance from the other characters of the poem come from her higher aristocratic standing, not any foreign aspect.

Part of Coleridge's biographical information supports Geraldine's status as not foreign in the national sense. That piece of biographical information is that Coleridge wrote the second part of "Christabel", which identifies Geraldine's heritage and the familial connection between Leoline and Roland, in 1800 (Coleridge 213), very close to his Pantocratic youth of 1794 (Holmes 59) and long preceding his conservative years of 1816 (Link 324-325). This fact points towards the belief that Coleridge would have identified, at least in part, with French radicals, due to the egalitarian goals they shared. What Coleridge would not have identified with was the violence employed by them. Similarities between France and England support the argument that the violence being displayed there would have also cemented Coleridge's fear of violent revolt in England, because if violence could erupt in France than it could erupt in its different, but nonetheless closely related, counterpart England. The repeated references to Geraldine's whiteness reinforce her place within this extended French and English racial tree, an acknowledgement that danger could come from within, and not just from without.

While Henderson believes Geraldine's purity to be false (883), a cover through which "disruptive foreignness" (883) may enter, I believe otherwise. Geraldine's whiteness is not a mask disguising foreign trouble, but rather her whiteness is the problem itself, in the way that Morrison describes whiteness to be for American writers (59). Geraldine's whiteness is the "dreaded", "implacable" (Morrison 59) danger that Henderson describes in her article, not the mask covering it all up. This is an acknowledgement on Coleridge's part, that it is the forces from within England that will destroy it. Geraldine's status as white, dangerous, and racially

related to England cements her as a symbol Coleridge's fear of revolt. She is the aristocrat who pushes too far, whose excess of power instigates bloody revolution on the part of the lower classes, such as what happened in the French Revolution. Her actions within Part II of "Christabel" to incite disunity between Leoline, Christabel, and Bard Bracy show how Coleridge fears the forces of social upheaval will develop within England and eventually tear its institutions apart.

Violent social unrest is Coleridge's true enemy and the publication of "Christabel" in 1816 (Coleridge 213) supports this statement. England had nothing to fear from France by 1816, having soundly defeated the country by 1815 according to Link (323). England's troubles came from within, from the latent revolutionary spirit of France that Henderson indicates, and the social unrest being felt in England in the post war economy described by Link (324). Geraldine is not a masked racial foreigner representing foreign interests infiltrating the social hierarchy of England from within to destroy it, she is a representation of the fear that the social hierarchy of England is collapsing from within. Hence Coleridge's linkage of Geraldine, a demonic other, to whiteness, it's his way of showing just how dangerous Geraldine, and an excess of aristocratic power, has become. This has become class struggle, not just a racial one, but it is couched in racial terms because that is the only way Coleridge could deflect blame away from the upper classes for its cause. As Foucault shows, this was a common tactic before bio-racism came about, and it is an indicator that Coleridge didn't fall completely in line with bio-political beliefs.

Towards the later part in his series of lectures at the College de France from 1975 to 1976 the French philosopher Michel Foucault explained his concept "biopower." This is a phenomenon that developed in the early nineteenth century where nation-states gave up the classic Hobbesian understanding of power over the individual that formed the basis of most

governments in exchange for power over people as a whole, the “global mass” as it were (242). This new form of control developed into “the power to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die” (241). What that means is that through the means of sanitation, newly discovered vaccines, and the giving of aid to the populace, governments in the nineteenth century gained the power to help certain populations live. Conversely, they gained the ability to not provide these benefits to certain unwanted populations, thus forming the mechanic behind letting certain populations die. Whereas before governments could only make people die, through capital punishment and wars and the like, governments that used biopower gained control over how their subjects actually lived their lives.

However, with this newfound power came a problem. How could a nation-state justify the upkeep of one portion of the populace at the expense of another? It had to find a way to justify the new divisions in the populace that were being created. And Foucault states that it is here that racism becomes a necessary part of biopower. Since the essential function of racism is to divide populaces into smaller subsets or races, states justified their ability to ‘let’ people die by saying it was happening to an inferior race. It also justified the eventual consequences from such actions, because wars that exterminated lesser races inevitably resulted in the deaths of people in the race the state is supposed to protect, by stating that these deaths served the purpose of culling the weaker portions of the protected race in war, therefore “regenerating one’s own race” (257). Basically the thought process was that by pushing a supposedly superior race to the limit the weaker portions of it are destroyed and the race as a whole is left supposedly purer. That was more something that the Nazis did however, Poe adhered more towards the idea of culling separate races, the idea of his own race being destroyed horrified him. The idea of a racism that “justifies the death-function in the economy of biopower by appealing to the

principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger insofar as... one is an element in a unitary living plurality” (258) will be very important for Poe’s self-identity and thus the horror of his literary works. Meanwhile, Coleridge actually fights against this tool of biopower, as seen with his repeated attempts to get the English government to abolish the slave trade and soften their empirical practices (Holmes 97). However, he will eventually align himself with the government in his later years, but that does not mean he sides with Poe in the exercise of racist biopower. It merely means that Coleridge identified the nation-state’s use of biopower-related racism as the lesser of two evils in comparison to the bio-political racism practiced by proponents of early nineteenth-century socialist movements.

Foucault identifies the socialist movement that began to grow in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as another entity, separate from the state, that called upon biopower to further its goals (262). Foucault states that whenever socialists deviate from the purely economic aspects of their goals and find the need to “stress the problem of struggle” (262) against the upper class it uses racism to make the eventual conflict and destruction of its foes easier to handle. Much as the state needs to dehumanize the populations that it lets die, the rising socialists needed to find a way to dehumanize the class that they were rising against and racism is the tool that they used to do so (262). Foucault states that “socialist thought... is after all very much bound up with the themes of biopower” (262). Foucault means that emergent radical socialists fully participated in the ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die concepts of biopower. They engaged in the process of ‘make’ live through their emphasis on preserving, through an equal distribution of wealth according to one’s participation in labor, the lives of individuals they thought worthy. They also took part in the ‘let die’ aspect of biopower through their demands for the destruction of the upper class.

England was a huge proponent of biopower in the colonial sense that Foucault explicates. To set up the British Empire it had to participate in the merciless division and subjugation of the people occupying the lands it wanted to hold. England participates in, as he calls it, “colonizing genocide” (257) whereby entire native populations are destroyed and racism is used to justify their destruction. Coleridge aligns himself with a nation-state that uses biopower: he doesn’t like the presence of biopower when it is used at home against native English, but he’s willing to align with the out-of-sight out-of-mind biopower that is used to perpetuate British Empire. He’s also willing to use biopower in the positive ‘make’ live sense, as seen with his repeated attempts to get the state to institute child labor laws that would regulate factories and help keep English children alive. This humanitarianism is a perfect example of how biopower allowed nation-states to ‘make’ people live. However, Coleridge’s fear of the biopower used by English socialists is represented in a more antiquated, non-biopower related form of racism, a kind of racism which “allows States, or a class, to displace the hostility that is directed toward [them], or which is tormenting the social body, onto a mythical adversary” (258). Coleridge identifies with the upper class that is facing hostility from the biopower-perpetuating socialists that represent the lower classes, despite the excess of power some of the aristocracy wield. In “Christabel” he projects the lower classes hostility onto Geraldine, who represents the “mythical adversary” through her supernatural status, demonic energy, and far too great power. These traits are represented through her whiteness, which in turn is a representation of the racism used by biopolitical socialists.

While England’s most blatant uses of biopower were conducted out of the sight of most of its native populace, American biopower was brazenly displayed with the intense control and regulation of the lives of African slaves. These people were separated from other races in a way

beyond that of earlier racist ideology, so much so that Americans began to argue about the actual humanity of Africans. White Americans had so dehumanized these people that arguments were made by Southern senators as late as the 1860s that Africans were not human at all. Due to the abolition of the slave trade, the births and lives and deaths of African slaves were carefully monitored by Southern slave holders to upkeep the slave population. The separation of the African population from the white population of the United States is an example of how racism was used to justify the use of biopower by the state over the lives of a population.

Poe's transcendental fears of absolute unity are founded on his identification with a "unitary living plurality" (Foucault 258) that remains separate from other groups. Poe's identification as a white American was necessary in his mind because it was the only way one could justify the massive degradation of a group of people that formed the basis of American slavery. Poe might not have realized that to upkeep the institution of slavery such a division was necessary, although Lee does point towards him being unusually conscious of the matters of racism, but the fact remains that he fell right in line with the form of racism that was necessitated by the American state to keep slavery alive. His absolute fear of a transcendental unity that mixed and recognized as the same, whiteness and blackness (Lee 765), was created by the explicit need for separate black and white populations necessitated by an American utilization of biopower. Poe relied on the racism supplied to him by biopower as part of his self-identity. Since he was white he believed himself to be both different from and superior to black people. To him the horrific part of his short story "Ligeia" comes from the idea of being co-opted, of being torn from the group he identifies with and forced into a larger, less separate plurality. It isn't the loss of the individual that he fears; after all, his initial interest in transcendental belief shows an interest in the idea of "absolute oneness" (Lee 765). However, Poe is only interested in "absolute

oneness” (Lee 765) when it excludes all individuals outside of the white race and doesn’t venture outside the boundaries of that race. He believed that the power given to whiteness may be excessive at times, as the decadent knowledge of Ligeia shows, but still believes it a necessary part of the American slavery system since it allows for the separation of blacks and whites according to the rules of bio-power.

This then begs the question of how to read the character of Ligeia. As stated earlier, she does retain elements of the black other while also showing characteristics of the dread whiteness that Morrison argues many white American writers end up portraying in their literary works (58). The combination of these traits in Ligeia is what reveals the fear with which Poe regarded absolute unity, not just the takeover of the narrator by Ligeia (Lee 764). Indeed, the power that was discussed earlier in an evaluation of her aristocratic heritage is in fact bio-power. Ligeia displays her possession of the power to “make live” and “let die” through the way in which the knowledge she gains from her place in the aristocratic system allows her to will herself back into life and to force Rowena out of it. For Poe the horror from these actions stems not from the use of bio-power itself, but that it was used against a person Poe would classify as part of his racial in-group, something that normal uses of bio-power avoided.

The character Geraldine in “Christabel” represents Coleridge’s fear of the abuse of biopower by socialist agitators in Britain that started to occur when aristocrats abused their power, a power that had recently gained a bio-political edge. This fear is couched in the older kind of racism that isn’t connected with biopower; a racism that creates others in order to deflect the blame and hostility directed at a particular class of people away from themselves (Foucault 258). Geraldine is an attempt on Coleridge’s part to place all the wrongs experienced in England on the shoulders of a demonic other whose whiteness implies that the true problems that England

faces are the ones at home. The main problem being that the newfound bio-power being utilized by the aristocracy is creating an even worse use of bio-power by emergent socialist radicals who are reacting against the aristocracy. Coleridge sides with the aristocracy in this fight, because the continuation of their system represents the least amount of radical change and thus chance for bloody chaos. He hopes that the aristocracy can be somewhat reformed, although certainly not annulled, a desire represented by him making the bio-power held by the aristocracy evil only when it's in the hands of a woman. The power Geraldine wields is bio-political in nature due to the way it changes Leoline's perception of in-group and out-group. It influences him to cast off those he once thought of as part of his own group, namely Christabel, in a way that eerily mirrors the way Foucault describes bio-power necessitates the use of racism to divide populations prior to applications of making live and letting die can be made.

Therefore, both Edgar Allan Poe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge adhered to the state that they belonged to, and their works reflect this fealty. Poe does it out of a complete approval of the biopower displayed by the United States of America. However, Coleridge doesn't adhere to the biopower used by England out of any sort of specific love of racism. He sides with the state because he's afraid of the bio-political racism of the socialist class which threatens him and his upper class friends. What's interesting is that both men were neither truly part of the upper classes which they sided with. Poe was destitute for most of his life, and yet he supported the agenda of the "Southern plantation culture" of which he was "ambivalent" (Lee 752). Likewise, Coleridge had little money but did have friends in high places who supported him as he tried to emulate their lifestyles. In both respects, these men were turned away from the causes that should have really concerned them by the upper echelons of society's use of biopower. It was a common practice in the United States for the Southern elite to recruit poor white Southerners to

their cause by utilizing the racism ingrained in these people's minds. They would argue that while a poor white Southern yeoman's lot may be undesirable, at least they were not enslaved. By creating a whole class of people underneath the social class of poor white men Southern plantation owners were able to continue the institution of slavery and keep white southerners adhered to a cause that didn't benefit them. Poe wasn't a yeoman farmer, but he was a poor Southerner who was impoverished for most of his life and he fully embraced the bio-racism touted by the Southern elite. In a slightly less morally deficient state we find Coleridge who, despite his radical beginnings and middle class position in society, aligned himself more and more with the conservative parts of the country. He did not do this out of a morally bankrupt racism like Poe, but rather out of fear that the bio-racism employed by the lower classes that he should have identified more with would prove violent and dangerous to the nation's, and his own, future. That is not to say that what Coleridge did was perfectly fine, by siding against the bio-racism of the socialist classes he therefore allowed the bio-racism practiced by the English government to continue, but he did try to lessen the impact of this choice by fighting for the rights of the lower classes engaged in the factory system (Link 333) as well as make public arguments against the slave trade (Holmes 97).

Biopower is the ultimate connection between the literary practices of Edgar Allan Poe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In their writings both men engage with the new and popular process of governments regulating the populations they rule in order to gain greater control over these populations. Edgar Allan Poe supports the process of biologically enforced regulation through bio-racism, while Samuel Taylor Coleridge backs the bio-racism of the state in order to combat what he sees as the greater threat of the emergent socialists and the bio-racism they were employing to justify their rise to power. The whiteness that Poe depicts in "Ligeia" is informed

by the racism of bio-politics. It's a realization that the racism created by bio-politics is horrific and an affront to nature. This is a realization that Poe rejects, but nonetheless reveals due the presence of "unmanageable slips" in his writing (Morrison 58). The whiteness that Coleridge depicts in "Christabel" is an older kind of racism that Foucault believes was used before the creation of bio-politics (258). This racism constituted the creation of scapegoats and fearful others to deflect blame from the creator's person or class (Foucault 258). It resulted in tales of the supernatural. As Elizabeth Liggins states in her article, "Folklore and the Supernatural in 'Christabel'" Geraldine is fully entrenched in the folklore of the supernatural, and Liggins states that for the most part there isn't much of a distinction between supernatural creatures such as ghosts and fairies and demons, what matters is their otherness (92). The various portents and symbols that erupt due to Geraldine's entrance into the castle all highlight her demonic other status (97-98). And yet, her character is still not independent of bio-politics, because her whiteness is not overshadowed by her demonic traits. Her whiteness represents the bio-racism practiced by the aristocracy of England, which in turn instigated the bio-racism of the emergent socialists among the lower classes, much like how the whiteness of Ligeia was representative of the racialization practiced by American racists. Her whiteness is couched in the terms of the demonic other, and the racism of the past, because Coleridge is not adherent to bio-political beliefs. He ultimately sides with the bio-politics of the British nation-state, but only out of fear of the violence practiced by the emergent socialists. Therefore, Coleridge's and Poe's depiction of whiteness is representative of the same concept, namely the violent racism created by the concept of bio-politics, but is not consciously viewed in the same way by the two authors. Coleridge openly displays the destruction wrought by Geraldine's whiteness, Poe, however, hides his realization of the cruelty of whiteness by masking Ligeia's terrible whiteness with

Arabesque black racial attributes and falls back on depicting his bio-politically induced fear of racial synthesis. Both men are using the racism based process of bio-politics in their representation of whiteness, but Coleridge warns people of it and Poe tries to find excuses for it.

Part of the reason that the subject matter in the writing of Edgar Allan Poe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge seems so similar is because they were both engaging with the entity known as biopower within their literary works. It can be clearly seen in the way in which they represent whiteness within their fiction, specifically Poe's work "Ligeia" and Coleridge's "Christabel". Morrison claims that no white American author was free from the power of whiteness and darkness when writing their literary works, believing it to be ingrained in their minds (Morrison 46). My thesis has proven Morrison is correct on this point and adds that it was the process of bio-racism, as described by Foucault, that ingrained these ideas in the minds of these authors. Furthermore, it is clear that the bio-racism produced by bio-politics was not just limited to American authors. Bio-racism was fully alive in the Old World as well as the New. Just as the Atlantic did not impede an intellectual flow of literary ideas between the two continents, it did not impede the bio-political process and the tool of bio-racism that was used by adherents to bio-politics to achieve the level of regulatory control that they desired over the population. An engagement with bio-racism, either completely for it, as seen with Poe, or a grudging alliance with a less bloody version of it, as seen with Coleridge, was another tie binding together the works of American and English Romantic authors. The common links between the work of Edgar Allan Poe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, when it comes to their depictions of whiteness, are what support a claim to their common engagement with bio-politics and constitute a basis for the concept of a European Africanism related to American Africanism.

Works Cited

- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Christabel." *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol. 1, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912.
- Colwell, James L., and Gary Spitzer. "'Bartleby' and 'The Raven': Parallels of the Irrational." *The Georgia Review* Vol. 23, No.1 (1969), pp. 37-43. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41396522
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." South Bend, US: Infomotions, Inc., 2000. *ProQuest ebrary*. Web. 25 March 2017.
- Foucault, Michel. "Society Must Be Defended" *17 March 1976 Society Must Be Defended Lecture Series at College of France*. Ed. Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, and Francois Edwald. English Ed. Arnold I. Davidson, Translated by David Macey, 2003.
- Griffith, Clark. "'Poe's 'Ligeia' and the English Romantics.'" *University of Toronto Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Oct., 1954), pp. 8-25. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/557840. Accessed 1 Oct 2016.
- Harding, Anthony John. "Coleridge and Transcendentalism" *The Coleridge Connection: Essays for Thomas McFarland*. Edited by Richard Gravil and Molly Lefebure. Penrith, GB: Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2007. Pp.213-230. *ProQuest ebrary*. Web. 25 March 2017.
- Henderson, Andrea. "Revolution, Response, and 'Christabel.'" *ELH* Vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 1990), pp. 881-900. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/2873089.
- Holmes, Richard. *Coleridge*. Vol. 1. New York: Viking Penguin, 1990.
- Koenig, Janet. "Romantic Racialism and the Antislavery Novels of Stowe, Hildreth, and Melville." *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American Art and Literature, 1790-1860*. Edited by Andrew Hemingway and Alan Wallach. Amherst; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015. Pp. 285-309. Web. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1cx3t4m.18 Accessed 2 Oct 2016.
- Lee S., Maurice. "Absolute Poe: His System of Transcendental Racism." *American Literature* Vol. 73, No. 4 (Dec 2003), pp. 751-781. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/51013 Accessed 1 Oct 2016.
- Liggins, Elizabeth M. "Folklore and the Supernatural in 'Christabel.'" *Folklore* Vol. 88, No. 1 (1977), pp. 91-104., www.jstor.org/stable/1259705.
- Link, Arthur S. "Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Economic and Political Crisis in Great Britain, 1816-1820." *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1948), pp. 323-338. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/2707373.
- Morrison, Toni. "Romancing the Shadow" *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992. Pp. 31-59.

Poe, Edgar. "Ligeia." *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Vol. 2. Edited by James A. Harrison, AMS Press, 1965. Pp. 248-269.

Rowe, John Carlos. "Antebellum Slavery and Modern Criticism: Edgar Allan Poe's *Pym* and "The Purloined Letter"" *At Emerson's Tomb*. New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Pp. 42-62.