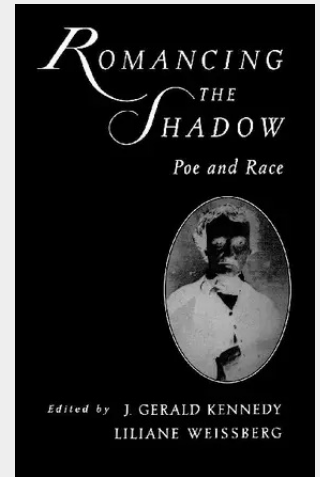


Romancing the Shadow

Poe and Race

Edgar Allen Poe's strength as a writer lay in fabricating fantasies in settings far removed from his own place and time. This dislocation renders the attitudes embedded in his fiction open to interpretation, and over the years some readers have found Poe to be virulently racist, while others found him morally conflicted, and still others detected a subversion of racism in his works' subtle sympathies for non-white characters. As a nineteenth-century Southerner, Poe was a deeply ambiguous figure, evading race issues while living among them, and traversing the North-South border with little sensitivity to its political implications. In this tightly organized volume, a handful of leading Americanists revisit the Poe issue, re-examining what it means to speak of an author and his work as racist, and where the critic's responsibility lies.

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