

“Whiteness”: Its Place in the Historiography
of Race and Class in the United States

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I am delighted to be able to participate in this conference. As an historian of the American working class and a teacher, and as a white American who has been concerned with the role of race in the construction of U.S. society since my childhood, I have wrestled in many ways with the themes being addressed here. While my participation in this conference reflects my hopefulness that I might provide some useful ideas for discussion here, I am especially eager to learn from all of you here, both in terms of your own ideas about race and in terms of your criticisms of my ideas.

In the past decade, the articulation of concepts of “whiteness” has prompted a paradigm shift in the study of race in the United States. From my research work to my teaching, it has changed the ways I think about class, gender, and ethnicity, as well as the ways I analyze relationships between white workers and workers of color, not just African Americans but also Mexican Americans and Asian Americans. It has also impacted my analysis of relationships between different groups of color (that is, without white workers present) and among white workers (that is, without workers of color present). The concept of “whiteness” has changed not only the ways I understand racism and write and teach about it, but also the very ways I situate myself in the classroom and explain myself to my students. In short, it has had a profound impact on not just my work but my very relationship to my work.

The recent emphasis on “whiteness” in American historical studies was sparked by the publication of David Roediger’s The Wages of Whiteness in 1991. Although Roediger insisted that his formulations derived from the work of other historians, sociologists, and particularly African American writers, the richness and clarity of his presentation and his

insistence on the political implications of his historical research grabbed the imaginations of an entire cadre of American scholars and anti-racist activists.¹

Roediger's argument emphasizes the historical specificity of the American experience, that in the United States the industrial revolution took place within the context of a society in which racially-based slavery was a key economic institution. Industrialization confronted white workingmen in the pre-Civil War period with multiple dimensions of downward mobility. The application of a division of labor, technology, and a reorganization of production "deskilled" much work and turned artisans or would-be artisans into unskilled laborers. Time clocks, work schedules, rules, and fines undercut workers' "freedoms" on the job. White male workers' much vaunted "independence" seemed to be quickly melting away, as fears of all sorts of "dependencies" grew. Economic insecurity from seasonal layoffs, downturns in business cycles, or outright discharges in one's later years, put male workers' status as "breadwinners" in jeopardy. For many wage-earners the workplace no longer served as the location of their self-definition in proud terms. Instead it became a site of abuse, subordination, and the loss of self-respect. Comparing themselves to the captives of the South's "peculiar institution" whose status was being hotly debated in the newspapers, the government, the pulpit, and the streets, white male workers began to decry their impending subjection to "wage-slavery." These fears were compounded by the centrality of "republican" ideology in ante-bellum American society, that is, the idea that political citizenship ought to be reserved for the economically independent. White Americans drank deeply of the Anglo-originated notion that voice in a community's or nation's political life was the property of those who exercised control over their own economic lives. The American Revolution

itself had been fueled by men, particularly slaveholders, who feared being reduced to the status of “slaves” of Great Britain. 2

A generation later, the industrial revolution was threatening to reduce most white workingmen to a dependant status akin to slavery. This threat did not lead them, or at least many of them, Roediger argues, to identify with the plight of the slaves. Rather, most of them struggled to differentiate themselves from the slaves. Given the atmosphere of racism that permeated American society, white male workers developed a discourse, a perspective, an identity, in which they asserted that they **could not** be becoming slaves, since only “black” people could be slaves. They knew that “black” people were slaves, that they were “white,” and that, therefore, they could not, should not, be subjected to enslavement in any form. 3

While white male workers exercised considerable agency in this cultural and ideological turn, they also received ample encouragement in this endeavor from employers, politicians, clergy, newspaper editors, and even playwrights and stage performers. They were offered material benefits that advantaged them over people of color, such as exclusive access to certain trades or neighborhoods. They gained the right to vote regardless of economic status, via reform of the state constitutions which had originally made a certain level of property ownership requisite for the franchise. They were given access to the labor of black men and women at such low cost that even poorly paid workers might afford domestic servants. They were given permission to “play at” being “black” on the minstrel stage or in the streets. And, when the frustrations of their lives got to be too much for them, they were even given permission to vent those frustrations in “race riots” and lynchings. 4

The “whiteness” of which David Roediger and others write and speak has had no cultural content of its own or existence independent of a relationship with “blackness.” This “whiteness” has been created – and recreated – out of a relationship not with historically black or African or African American culture, but a “black” culture invented out of the repressions, projections, desires, and fantasies of non-black people. The roots of these processes lie in the ways that these non-black people have experienced not only the origins but also the perpetuation of American industrial society. They have lived frustrating lives within a society which raised their expectations of dignity, respect, excitement, and material gain, only to deny them the realization of the same. Yet they enjoyed privileges and power within this society, not only to live above the levels accorded most people of color but also to exercise power over the lives and dominant representations of people of color. Hence, with the cooperation of white employers, politicians, media owners, and cultural generators, they created a “blackness” out of their own unfulfilled desires, acted to repress and deny it, and then defined themselves as “white,” as not-being what they had created as “black.” They have known that they are “white” because they have known that they are not “black.” 5

One of the most interesting twists in David Roediger’s argument has been not simply his contention, but his compelling demonstration, that African Americans have long understood the inner workings of this process. Three years ago, he published a massive – and largely overlooked -- compilation, Black On White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White, bringing together more than fifty essays, excerpts, and poems written over the past century, which not only demonstrate that Black Americans have long been making sense of how white racism has functioned but also offer acute insights to those of

us, of whatever racial backgrounds, who are willing to listen to them. Hear, for instance, James Baldwin, the quality of whose perceptions is rivaled only by the quality of his prose: “[I]n this debasement and definition of Black people, they debased and defamed themselves. And brought humanity to the edge of oblivion: because they think they are white. Because they think they are white, they do not dare confront the ravage and the lie of their history. Because they think they are white, they cannot allow themselves to be tormented by the suspicion that all men are brothers.” Or consider this excerpt from a previously unpublished short story by Ralph Ellison: “The other day I was down to Brinkley’s store, and a white cropper said it didn’t do no good to kill the niggers ‘cause things don’t get no better. He looked hungry as hell. Most of the croppers look hungry. You’d be surprised how hungry white folks can look. Somebody said that he’s better shut his damn mouth, and he shut up. But from the look on his face he won’t stay shut long.” Mia Bay has recently provided an amazing companion volume to Roediger’s. Her The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925 goes beyond intellectuals’ publications to include the insights of rank-and-file African Americans from diverse walks of life. The results are spell-binding. 6

Scholars have found the investigation of “blackface minstrelsy” to be a fertile ground in which to explore this process. Roediger himself offered a chapter on this subject in The Wages of Whiteness in which he emphasized the intertwining of class and racial dynamics in America’s first form of popular entertainment. These performances celebrated “preindustrial joys” which “could survive amidst industrial discipline,” and they provided an opportunity for white males reluctantly on the path to working-class status to perform “the polar opposite of the anal retentiveness associated with

accumulating capitalist and Protestant cultures.” By performing “the preindustrial permissiveness” imputed to black Americans, white minstrels and blackface paraders allowed themselves an outlet for their frustrations even as they reined in their own desires. Roediger’s accounts of blackface festivities which dissolved into random attacks on African Americans suggest the intensity as well as the contradictions of the emotions experienced by white male workers in the early stages of the industrial revolution. 7

Eric Lott, a cultural studies scholar, has delved most deeply into these contradictions in his brilliant book, Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class. He argues that the “whiteness”/“blackness” relationship has been shaped by a process of “attraction and repulsion,” in which white male workers have wrestled, typically unconsciously, often painfully, with their “attraction” to what they construct and consume as “black” culture (preindustrial rhythms, hostility to authority, hyper-masculinity, athleticism, natural musicality and physical grace, and more) on the one hand, and their efforts to control their urges in this direction by condemning, outlawing, imprisoning, and killing black people. Lott writes: “Ascribing this excess to the ‘degraded’ blackface Other, and indulging it – by imagining, incorporating, or impersonating the Other – workingmen confronting the demand to be ‘respectable’ might at once take their enjoyment and disavow it.” But this process has neither been simple nor stable, as playing not with invented “blackness” could at any moment explode into a racial pogrom or a revolutionary challenge to the capitalist order. 8

Other scholars have emphasized that, frustrations and tensions notwithstanding, white workers have enjoyed real material privileges from their position within a racially-shaped capitalist order and that these privileges are an integral part of “whiteness.” In The

Possessive Investment in Whiteness, George Lipsitz argues that “whiteness has a cash value” that is manifested in unequal access to housing and mortgages, education, employment opportunities, and the intergenerational transfer of inherited wealth. This “cash value” encourages white Americans to “invest in whiteness,” to remain true to the identity they have been accorded. Legal theorist Cheryl Harris contends that, through the mechanisms of the American legal system, “whiteness” is a form of “property.” Though its status is typically “unacknowledged” and its basis not explicitly spelled out, it “forms the background against which legal disputes are framed, argued, and adjudicated.” Since the days of slavery, Harris argues, “whiteness” has been protected by the law – in distinctions between freedom and slavery, in access to the right to vote and citizenship, in the protection of *de facto* advantages and the accumulation of privilege across generations. At the same time, by being cloaked in invisibility, it provides legitimation for the persistence of inequality. 9

While these dynamics – the intertwining of race and class, the processes of repression and projection, otherization, and the protection of the material benefits of “whiteness” – can be usefully theorized, they are also best understood, as David Roediger suggested at the very beginning of this intellectual journey, within a specific historical context. They are not only created out of particular experiences in particular times and particular places, but they are also re-created over time, incorporating new groups and generations, and changing even as they are reified into “property” or made invisible.

Scholars keeping these concerns in mind have added fresh insights, including a much needed instability, to the study of “whiteness.” This has particularly been true in the exploration of the ways that diverse immigrant groups, with particularistic identities in

their countries of origin, became “white” in the United States. Roediger and labor historian James Barrett, in a widely cited essay, have suggested the notion of “in between peoples.” Many European immigrant and ethnic groups spent generations, they contend, in a position in between African Americans (and Asian Americans and Latino Americans), on the one hand, and “whites,” on the other. Their behaviors in these periods – towards people of color, unions, political formations, social movements, and the like – were determined by their “in between” status and, perhaps, their efforts to become not simply “American,” but particularly “white.” Matthew Frye Jacobson, an American Studies scholar, argues that such immigrants experienced a “whiteness of a different color,” that they could both be “white” and be seen (by others and by themselves) as racially different from other whites. Jacobson, like Barrett and Roediger, insists that these experiences can best be organized within an historical framework that pays attention to social, political, economic, and cultural context. Moreover, these processes do not have an inevitable linear developmental logic to them. Racial status at any moment might be unstable, and movement towards “whiteness” in one period might be followed by a sliding back towards “in between” status in the next, depending on a variety of factors in society, within the particular group, and in the nature of that group’s interaction with society. Neill Foley, in a brilliant examination of the experiences and interactions of whites, African Americans, and Mexican Americans in Texas in the late 19th century, suggests that white farmers could “lose their whiteness” as they slid down the socio-economic ladder from landownership to tenancy to sharecropping to rural wage-labor. 10

The study of European immigrants “becoming white” began, appropriately enough, with investigation of the complexities of the Irish experience. In The Wages of Whiteness, Roediger pointed out that the British had long described them in stereotypical terms that eerily echoed the terms that would later be used by whites to depict African Americans, that there was strong Irish support for the abolition of slavery in the years before the massive immigration to the U.S., and that relationships between Irish Americans and African Americans were infused with violent energy from the 1850s through the 1920s. Noel Ignatiev, in How the Irish Became White, not only analyzed the intertwining of race and class through which Irish immigrants and their children and grandchildren climbed America’s socio-economic ladder to several small but noticeable steps above the African Americans to whom they were once compared, but he also assessed the costs to them of their inclusion in a white racial consensus that separated them from the African Americans whose material status was often quite close to theirs. To be sure, the Irish received the material privileges of access to better blue collar jobs, sinecures in the urban police force, and status in the growing urban Catholic church, and they were able to practice the cultural license of minstrelsy and blackface entertainment, but the price of their superior status over African Americans was to be their inferior status to other “white” Americans. 11

Jews, particularly those of Eastern European origins, have also been the subjects of careful study. In Whiteness of a Different Color, Matthew Frye Jacobson argues that Jewishness in America became racialized as projected social differences became embodied in perceived physical characteristics, that “visible markers” were “interpreted as outer signs of an immutable, inner moral-intellectual character.” Not surprisingly,

then, Jacobson and other scholars of Jewish racialization have paid close attention to the public performance of Jewishness, particularly on the theatrical stage and in film. By the mid-20th Century, Jacobson argues, Jewish difference became constructed less around perceptions of physicality, less around race, and more around religion. This subtle but important shift eased the way, he argues, for Jews to become “white” in America. Yet, given his larger framework in which there are many different kinds of “whiteness,” he suggests, “the question is not *are* they white, nor even how white are they, but how have they been both white and Other?” Other scholars have asked valuable questions that complicate Jacobson’s analysis even further. Michael Rogin, in his study of Hollywood, suggests that Jewish participation in the construction of racial representations of African Americans – for instance, Al Jolson’s putting on blackface and singing in the first talking film, “The Jazz Singer” – was an important step in their process of becoming “white.” By playing at being “black,” they signaled their integration into the “white” community. Karen Brodtkin argues that it was the economic upward mobility of Jews in the mid-20th Century that facilitated their access to “whiteness.” 12

Interesting work is also being done on other groups – from how Italian immigrants became “white” to diversity among Asian immigrants to how Asian Indian immigrants “fit” within America’s economic and racial hierarchy. The “whiteness” framework suggested in this paper has become a touchstone for these new studies, even of groups who have no expectation of becoming “white” themselves. Scholars of Asian American and Latino American experiences also recognize race as a social construction, that race and class are intertwined in American society, that white supremacy includes cultural as well as political and economic domination, and that subordinate groups must struggle to

create new representations of themselves as much as they must resist the representations of them which have been created by hegemonic groups within the dominant culture. 13

Another recent development within this field has been the exploration of the intertwining between “whiteness” and gender, the roles that “whiteness” has played in the construction – and reconstruction – of masculinity and femininity. Most of this work incorporates class as well. The interjection of “whiteness” into the study of American history may well provide the foundation for a new synthesis of race, class, and gender, a synthesis which has eluded American labor historians for the past thirty years. 14

The crisis of independence faced by white workingmen in the American industrial revolution and the continuing transformation of American industrial society can be understood as a crisis of masculinity just as much as a crisis of “whiteness.” White boys were raised not just to be self-employed artisans, but also to be the heads of households. Even when they could no longer achieve the economic independence of master artisans, or journeymen for that matter, they still aspired to earn a “family wage” and keep their wives at home, both as a badge of their successful “manhood” and as a source of deferential labor that constructed the home as a pastoral refuge from the dog-eat-dog world of the marketplace and the workplace. Dreams of working class white masculinity were threatened by factories, time clocks, rules, machines, assembly lines, scientific management, recessions, depressions, and automation, on the one hand, and an increasingly feminized and ethnically and racially diverse workforce, on the other. White male workers responded to these experiences in complex and contradictory ways, influenced by their childhoods, their families and neighborhoods, their workplace and union cultures, their particular ethnicities and their place on the road to “whiteness,” by

the structures of the economy and the representations generated by mass and popular culture. Understanding them as white and male as well as workers is critical to understanding them. 15

Two contemporary arts activists have used their skills to explore – and explode – issues of “whiteness,” masculinity, and working-class status. In Slaughter City, playwright Naomi Wallace creates several characters whose personal crises revolve around “whiteness,” gender, and sexuality, all within the context of a packinghouse in the aftermath of a strike. The embodiment of these issues by complicated, passionate characters has the potential of opening the eyes – and minds – of audiences. In Jails, Hospitals, and Hip Hop, a solo performance masterpiece, and White Boyz, a film, Danny Hoch dances around the lines of minstrelsy, presenting white male characters who express – or avoid – their own contradictions by playing at being “black.” Wallace and Hoch are avid readers of the new “whiteness” literature, and their artistic work provides an exciting opportunity for its insights to reach beyond the bounds of academia. 16

Interesting – and disturbing -- work has also been developing about the place of women within “whiteness,” both as objects of men’s desires and fantasies and as agents in their own right. Glenda Gilmore, in Gender and Jim Crow, has demonstrated the particular place accorded women within the “white” imagination – protected from the marketplace and the public workplace, responsible for the construction and maintenance of the home as a refuge from the outside world. Recent studies of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan revival by Nancy MacLean and Kathleen Blee suggest that white women were no longer content to be the objects of men’s fantasies but that they actively sought to participate in public life, including the Klan. The first woman elected United States

Senator hailed from North Carolina and was an ardent proponent of white supremacy.

Louise Michele Newman, in her study, White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States, even locates the roots of feminism in the very "whiteness" of late 19th and early 20th Century expressions of racism. At the same time, feminist activists have embraced "race traitorship" and repudiated the pedestal and the "privilege" that "whiteness" and femininity have supposedly offered them. 17

"Whiteness," in its invisibility, has been, is, everywhere. It has stood in the path of people of color in their efforts to achieve a human existence and it has stood in the path of white people's aspirations, too. No one has captured this more eloquently than James Baldwin. In 1965, thrusting himself into the civil rights movement upon his return from self-imposed exile in Paris, he wrote in Ebony magazine:

White man, hear me! History as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. And it is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this. In great pain and terror one begins to assess the history which has placed one where one is and formed one's point of view. In great pain and terror because, therefore, one enters into battle with that historical creation, Oneself, and attempts to recreate oneself according to a principle more humane and more liberating; one begins the

attempt to achieve a level of personal maturity and freedom which robs
history of its tyrannical power, and also changes history. 18

Some scholars of “whiteness” in the United States have heard Baldwin’s call, and they/we have wedded their/our scholarly work to activism. They/we call for “race traitorship” and the “abolition of whiteness.” Since the “white race is a historically constructed social formation,” they/we argue, “the key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race.” Given the connections between “whiteness” and class and gender that my presentation today has alluded to, I would hasten to add that the “abolition of the white race” would make a good beginning as we start out on the journey of a new millennium. 19

Footnotes

1. David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (NY and London: Verso, 1991); Roediger, Towards the Abolition of Whiteness (NY and London: Verso, 1994); Roediger offers some explanation of the genesis of his own thinking in “On Autobiography and Theory,” in The Wages of Whiteness, 3-17; “Labor in the White Skin: Race and Working Class History,” in Mike Davis and Michael Sprinker, eds., Reshaping the U.S. Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s (London: Verso, 1988); “Notes on Working Class Racism,” New Politics [Second Series] 7 (Summer 1989). Both of these essays have been reprinted in Towards the Abolition of Whiteness. Roediger’s scholarly antecedents can be traced in Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Saxton, The Rise and Fall of the White Republic (NY and London: Verso, 1990); Theodore W. Allen, The Invention of the White Race; Volume I: Racial Oppression and Social Control (NY and London: Verso, 1994) and Volume II: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America (NY and London: Verso: 1997); George Fredrickson, White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History (NY: Oxford, 1981); Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (NY: Oxford, 1971); Oliver Cromwell Cox, Caste, Class, and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics (NY: Monthly Review, 1970); George Rawick, From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Racial Formation in the United States, From the 1960s to the 1980s (NY and London: Routledge, 1986); W.E.B. DuBois, Black

Reconstruction in America (NY: Atheneum, 1977 [1935]); Langston Hughes, The Ways of White Folks (NY: Knopf, 1934); James Baldwin, The Price of the Ticket (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Ralph Ellison, Shadow and Act (NY: Vintage, 1972); Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992).

2. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, Part II: "Race and the Languages of Class from the Revolution to the Civil War," and Part III: "Work, Culture, and Whiteness in Industrializing America," pp. 41-92. On "republicanism," see Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (NY: Oxford, 1970); Bruce Laurie, The Working People of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Edward Pessen, Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967).

3. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, chap. 4: "White Slaves, Wage Slaves, and Free White Labor," pp. 65-92. Some scholars have placed the origins of "whiteness" well before the industrial revolution. They have typically seen Bacon's Rebellion of 1675 as a critical turning point, when the racial basis of slavery was firmed up, the demise of indentured servitude was preordained, and barriers between "white" and "black" were institutionalized. See, for this argument, Allen, The Invention of the White Race, Volume II, chapters 10-13, pp. 177-239; Edmund Morgan, American Slavery/American Freedom (NY: Oxford, 1975). See also Thomas Holt, "Making Race: Race-Making and the Writing of History," American Historical Review, February 1995.

4. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, chap.5: “Class, Coons and Crowds in Antebellum America,” and Chap.6: “White Skins, Black Masks: Minstrelsy and White Working Class Formation before the Civil War,” pp. 95-131.
5. On the particular roles played by film, see Richard Dyer, White (NY: Routledge, 1997) and Daniel Bernardi, ed., The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996)
6. James Baldwin, “On Being ‘White’ ... and Other Lies,” [Essence, 1984]; Ralph Ellison, “A Party Down at the Square,” [posthumously published in Flying Home, 1996], in David Roediger, ed., Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to be White (NY: Schocken, 1998), pp. 178, 348. Mia Bay, The White Image in the BlackMind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925 (NY: Oxford, 2000).
7. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, pp.118-119; 122-123. See also Alexander Saxton, The Rise and Fall of the White Republic, chap. 7: “Blackface Minstrelsy,” pp.165-182.
8. Eric Lott, Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class (NY: Oxford, 1995), p.148 ff. See also Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds., Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth Century Blackface Minstrelsy (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); William J. Mahar, Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Culture (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 1998).
9. George Lipsitz, The Possessive Investment in Whiteness (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” in Kimberle Crenshaw et al, eds., Critical Race Theory (NY: The New Press, 1995). See also Derrick Bell, “Property Rights in Whiteness – Their Legal Legacy, Their Economic Costs,” in Richard

Delgado, ed., Critical Race Theory (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995). A fascinating account of how all this could matter in court of law can be found in Walter Johnson, "The Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s," Journal of American History, June 2000. In a similar vein, see Ariela J. Gross, "Litigating Whiteness: Trials of Racial Determination in the Nineteenth Century South," Yale Law Journal 108 (October 1998)

10. David Roediger and James Barrett, "How White People Became White," in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Neill Foley, The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

11. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, chap. 7; "Irish American Workers and White Racial Formation in the Antebellum United States," pp. 133-163; Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (NY: Routledge, 1995).

12. Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color, chap. 5: "Looking Jewish, Seeing Jews," pp. 171-199. Quotes from pp.174, 176. Harley Erdman, Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Michael Rogin, Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Karen Brodtkin, How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

13. Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned 'Other' in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," American Quarterly, 44 (September 1992); David Roediger, "Guineas, Wiggers, and the Dramas of Racialized Culture," American Literary History, 7 (1995); Gunther Peck, "Padrones and Protest: 'Old' Radicals and 'New' Immigrants in Bingham, Utah, 1905-1912," Western Historical Quarterly (May 1993); Ronald Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore (); Lisa Lowe, Immigrant Acts (); Peter Kwong, The New Chinatown (); Vijay Prashad, The Karma of Brown Folk (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)

14. Roediger, "The Crisis in Labor History: Race, Gender and the Replotting of the Working Class Past in the United States," in Towards the Abolition of Whiteness; J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris, eds., Perspectives on American Labor History: The Problem of Synthesis (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989).

15. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, chap.3: "Neither a Master Nor a Servant Am I;" chap 4: "White Slaves, Wage Slaves, and Free White Labor." See also David Wellman, Portraits of White Racism (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993); David Halle, America's Working Men: Work, Home, and Politics among Blue Collar Property Owners (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Jessie Daniels, White Lies: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse (NY: Routledge, 1997); Abby L. Ferber, White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy (NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Allan Berube with Florence Berube, "Sunset Trailer Park," in Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, eds., White Trash: Race and Class in America (NY: Routledge, 1997); John Hartigan, Jr., Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

16. Naomi Wallace, Slaughter City (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996); Danny Hoch, Jails, Hospitals, and Hip Hop (NY: Villard, 1998); White Boyz (Fox Searchlight Films, 1999).

17. Kathleen M. Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) suggests that the connections between race and gender run very, very deep in American history. On the later periods, see Glenda Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); LeeAnn Whites, “Love, Hate, Rape, Lynching: Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Gender Politics of Racial Violence,” in David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, eds., Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1896 and its Legacy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Grace Elizabeth Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940 (NY: Vintage, 1998); Nancy MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan (NY: Oxford, 1994); Kathleen M. Blee, Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Louise Michele Newman, White Women’s Rights; The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States (NY; Oxford, 1999); Mab Seachrist, Memoir of a Race Traitor (Boston: South End Press, 1998).

18. James Baldwin, “White Man’s Guilt,” Ebony (1965), reprinted in David Roediger, ed., Black on White, p.321.

19. David Roediger, “Introduction,” to Towards the Abolition of Whiteness; Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, eds., Race Traitor (NY: Routledge, 1996). The journal Race

Traitor can be reached at P.O. Box 603, Cambridge, Mass. 02140. Two recent particularly valuable personal statements can be found in Maurice Berger, White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness (NY: Farrar-Strauss-Giroux, 1999), and Thandeka, Learning to be White: Money, Race, and God in America (NY: Continuum, 1999). Some of the implications of this perspective for activism in the contemporary American labor movement are explored in “The End of Whiteness? Reflections on a Demographic Landmark,” New Labor Forum, 8 (Spring/Summer 2001), a symposium edited by David Roediger and featuring Susan Porter Benson, Ajamu Dillahunt, Fernando Gapasin, and Katie Quan. This journal is available from Queens College Labor Resource Center, Queens College, City University of New York, 25 W.43rd Street, 19th floor, NY, NY 10036.