

RHETORICS OF WHITENESS: RACE, CLASS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
EARLY AMERICAN MODERNISM

by

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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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Abstract

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For over a decade a critical discourse on whiteness has been evolving in several areas of academic study. Growing out of multiculturalism, feminist studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies and other disciplines, whiteness studies offer a new epistemological lens through which to interrogate and analyze culture, rhetoric, and literature. However, whiteness studies—and therefore this dissertation—is controversial. While some people see it as a narcissistic re-centering of the white subject position in the face of multicultural efforts to dismantle racism, others see the need for a critical inquiry into an “invisible whiteness” which appears to privilege white people in various ways.

This dissertation examines the marginalization of racialized others in selected works of literary Modernism and its relationship to representations of labor exploitation in an effort to find out how marginalization as a form of literary whiteness contributes to the rhetoric and development of early Modernism, in order to help my reader better understand how this literature contributes ideologically to the social consciousness of its readers. I argue that notions of *human will*, and the *capacity for choice* as well as the literary tropes of *grace under pressure*, and the *celebration of danger* function as rhetorical elements of literary whiteness.

Chapter two examines texts representing various disciplines in order to construct an epistemology of whiteness that answers questions such as how whiteness remains peculiarly unmarked at the same time that it dominates our culture. Chapter three examines how many of these ideas get woven into literary texts of the North American canon of early modernism specifically. Also discussed is the relationship between modernism, individualism, and rhetoric. Chapter four articulates and demonstrates a theory of literary whiteness primarily using Ernest Hemingway's collection of his first forty-nine short stories and secondarily using Clifford Odets's play, Waiting for Lefty and John Steinbeck's novel, The Grapes of Wrath. Chapter five examines Odets's Waiting for Lefty, Mike Gold's Hoboken Blues, Or the Black Rip Van Winkle, A Modern Negro Fantasia on an Old American Theme and William Attaway's Blood on the Forge as texts that resist literary whiteness in various ways.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One:	Introduction, Whiteness: An Intimate Enemy	1
Chapter Two:	Surveying the Landscape: Making Whiteness Visible	16
Chapter Three:	Toward Individualism: Literary Modernism and the Spectre of Whiteness	80
Chapter Four:	Rhetorics of Whiteness: Identity and Labor in the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway	111
Chapter Five:	Rhetorics of Resistance: Race, Class and the Negation of Literary Whiteness	166
Conclusion:		208
Bibliography:		210

Chapter One
Introduction
Whiteness: An Intimate Enemy¹

While I have lived in the United States for over two decades, I grew up in England in a large, very Caribbean, family. My family was not typical of families in England in the 1970's since we lived, in very concrete ways, the duality Du Bois speaks of in Souls of Black Folks. I had both a public and a private self that would be informed by experiences that lent credence to my double-consciousness. In public, I was called Ian, and indeed *was* Ian, while in the privacy of my home and amongst extended family members I was called Delroy, a Jamaican, Caribbean name as different from Ian as key aspects of each of my two identities were from each other. These identities were nurtured in Afro-Jamaican culture, but deeply embedded in social whiteness and British culture.

These differences between the larger British culture I experienced outside of my home, and the Jamaican culture practiced inside my home came seamlessly to me. It is only in the act of reflection that I notice them for what they were, part cultural protection, and part cultural assimilation. This double-consciousness would prove to be important for the critical perspective toward notions of race and identity that I would come to see as vital to my sense of self. It also captures, in many respects, the reasons why I see this study on the subject of whiteness as important and why I seek to understand how affinities to whiteness become embedded in so much of what we do when we read literary texts and what we see when we read the world around us.

My household in England was governed by my father who, true to his Caribbean

¹ The subtitle, "An Intimate Enemy," is inspired by Ashis Nandy's book The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism. My theory of literary whiteness is partially informed by Postcolonial Studies generally, and Nandy's text in particular.

culture, was very authoritarian. His strictness now seems an ironic holdover of Victorian notions of family left behind by the British in the Jamaican colony he grew up in. The England in which he raised his children during the 1970's and 80s had long since relaxed the idea of discipline by which he still lives his life today. I view my father's idea of discipline as ideological. This discipline is something he learned and was on him as a colonial subject in his own homeland. It is also something that has affected me in many ways long after he has left the colony where he learned it, and long after the colony has changed into something he would have great difficulty recognizing today.

My father's position as a police officer in Colonial Jamaica afforded him certain benefits and it is through these apparent benefits that he learned to read, write, and acquire the elegant arrogance I often associate with British Victorianism. He enjoyed relative privilege, then, in a country and culture organized by an aristocracy of the skin in exchange for his compliance, and his aiding and abetting of authoritarian rule in Colonial Jamaica. It is also his status as enforcer that made him believe in his work—so much so that he often treated Jamaicans who dissented harshly, jailed them, and sometimes severely beat them.

I hardly ever saw my father affectionate or emotional in the way we think of these terms today. I never once heard him say, "I love you" to anyone. I can only say that this, too, is both cultural, and a reflection of his lived-experiences under colonialism in Jamaica. He didn't seem to want overt affection directed at him, either. This is not to say he didn't laugh or tell jokes—he was very good at that, but the only emotion I really saw him invested in was anger. A hardened masculine, even Victorian, exterior veiled the others.

This carried over into his fierce protection of us, his children. If someone touched us, he would fight verbally or physically, it didn't matter. I never saw him lose. If we did things we shouldn't, he beat us very hard. He had then, and has now, a strong sense of right and wrong, which clearly reflects the world that cultivated him. I never saw him cry, or scared, or frightened except once.

Witnessing Whiteness

The one time I saw my father express what I now consider to be fear occurred one night as my family sat in our living room watching a television documentary called Panorama. Panorama was similar to 20/20 except its topics always tended toward world-wide political issues. I particularly remember one evening; I think it was in 1976, I could have been no older than eight or nine, watching an edition of Panorama. It was something of a pivotal event in my young life, and I credit it as being instrumental in shaping key aspects of my personality, the lenses with which I view the world, and my coming to consciousness of the meaning and relevance of skin color as a social marker. The topic of Panorama on this evening was Apartheid in South Africa. South African security forces had gunned down students no older than my oldest brother who was sixteen or seventeen, and some as young as me.

I think I was traumatized enough by the scenes of the massacre and its aftermath, but I was particularly disturbed by my father who, for the very first time that I could remember, started to cry. As he became more engrossed in the footage, he became more agitated. My entire family seemed stunned, sitting in silence as we watched both scenes of my father and those on the television in disbelief. My father exploded into a loud outburst. I was used to him yelling, "quiet!" as he watched his television programs but

this was different. I do not recall him ever being quite as animated as he was then. His demeanor changed the energy in the entire room, and he became visibly angry. I also felt many emotions all at once—anger, sorrow, empathy, fear—all sorts of things. Though the scenes on the television confused and disturbed me, I didn't need any explanations for my father's reactions. I think I knew, implicitly, why he was disturbed; it was the connection that he saw between the children on the screen and, *his* children sitting in the living room. What I didn't know then, but what I suspect now, is that he also saw unpleasant parallels between his own actions in a Jamaica he had left some twenty years earlier, and the actions of the South African security forces he was observing on the television.

While this was not the first time I was made aware of *difference* this was one of the first times I was made aware of blackness, and the visible effects of an apparently powerful code—whiteness. The scenes both on the screen and in our living room illustrated for me what blackness meant in the world I lived in; a socio-economic world constructed by some to propagate what George Lipsitz has called a “possessive investment in whiteness.” Though I did not understand precisely why the students were being killed, I recognized that part of the reason was because they had black skin, just like me. Similarly, my father responded the way he did because he knew he and his children were black and he understood what that meant.

The scenes of my father and those of the documentary reshaped experiences I had had before seeing them, and continue to shape my interpretation of events today. Had I not seen the documentary and my father's reaction to it, I think I would have shaped an experience I had shortly after them differently.

Experiencing Whiteness

Ours was the only black family on our block and, it was a very closely-knit block. There were the Wests next door to us, the Waites next door to them, then the Palmers, the Smiths, two or three houses with no children, and at the very end of the block, the Jenkins.

While neither blood nor marriage related any of the families to each other, the children took to calling all the parents “aunt” and “uncle.” So, for example, Mr. Palmer would be called “Uncle Dave” and Mr. Waite would be called “Uncle Harold” and Mrs. West would be called “Auntie Jane” by all of the children on the block. Since I thought of myself as one of them because we played together, went to school together, and even ate together sometimes, I took to using the words “aunt” and “uncle” as well.

It didn't take one of the parents long to pull me aside one day and tell me off properly. Mr. Waite instructed me not to call him Uncle Harold. I was to call him Mr. Waite. He told me he wasn't my uncle. Though I knew this to be true, I also knew that Carl Palmer, Kim Palmer, Geoffrey West, Pamela West, Craig Jenkins, Trudy Jenkins, Allison Smith, and Andrew Smith weren't his nieces and nephews. But *I* was to call him Mr. Waite. I was embarrassed, angry, ashamed, and for a split second I despised him, his nieces, nephews, and everyone else who looked like him. Mr. Waite had articulated, through his words and actions toward me, a system of inclusion and exclusion that until that point I was completely oblivious to, and which was based purely upon his white skin and my black skin. He had asserted an identity that alienated me and people who looked like me from him. I never referred to any of them as aunt or uncle again. Similarly, I never forgot my father's rage and emotion at seeing dead children on the streets of South

Africa.

Though many other events took place in my life to further shape and mold me, I remember these with particular clarity. Children can often sense when things are not quite right. I think those children in South Africa knew the difference between right and wrong; the same difference my father became aware of as he watched the television, and the same difference Mr. Waite helped me to see. I was connected to those South African children in ways I hadn't imagined before. It seemed Mr. Waite had made brothers and sisters for me out of perfect strangers half a world away. The children in South Africa and I were now connected by a powerful, common experience, certainly different by degree, but just as certainly similar by kind.

If, however, my relationship with Mr. Waite were that simple, this introduction would be much easier to write, and my initial response to him would be the one I would have of him today. I don't. My relationship with Mr. Waite and his children was complex, deeply rooted, intimate, and could not be explained by simply using racial categories alone.

Many years later I would go back to England, back to his house, and watch his genuine happiness and tears of joy as he opened his door to a face he would slowly come to recognize as my own. We would sit and reminisce about a neighborhood, thirty years past, that we both knew and loved. Our conversation that day was one of redemption for both of us.

My experiences with "race" in the United States have been very different because whiteness is articulated differently here. When I arrived in the early 1980's I was submerged into an all-black neighborhood in the all-black town of East Orange, New

Jersey. I recall that both in the neighborhood and in the high school I attended I scoured the mass of faces I saw looking for a white one; something that would resemble the world I had left. To those high school students I was *white*—in my speech, my dress and my actions. And to me, they were a form of blackness that was alien to me. I was as confusing and anomalous to them as they were to me.

Articulating the Terrain

How do we make sense of my initial introduction to—and confusion with—black American culture? How can we account for its reading of me as white? What should we make of Mr. Waite's actions? What are the implications for how we might read the world? Similarly, how do we make sense of my father's role as both racial oppressor and racially oppressed in colonial Jamaica? The comparison draws unpleasant parallels for me between his actions, those of Mr. Waite and those of the South African Security officers. Indeed, my father's actions, as well as Mr. Waite's, and my own interaction with black America upon arrival here underscore the reality that whiteness is more than a matter of skin complexion and shows it to be an ideology with powerful material and cultural roots.

These questions about what initiated Mr. Waite's actions, a working-class man like my father, how he comes to understand racial inclusion and racial exclusion, how this is related to the actions of the security forces in South Africa, and to my own experiences, the ideological and rhetorical mechanisms that are at work and what they are for, encouraged me to look closely at Western culture, particularly here in the United States where issues of race, class, and equality are so much a part of the on-going national discourse. These questions also began my inquiry into how ideas about race

become imbricated into language, literature and other artifacts of culture. They therefore inform my examination of whiteness studies generally and help constitute the theoretical ground I explore in this study.

Argument and Method

For over a decade a critical discourse on whiteness has been evolving in several areas of academic study. Growing out of multiculturalism, feminist studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies and other disciplines, whiteness studies offer a new epistemological lens through which to interrogate and analyze culture, rhetoric, literature and a great many other disciplines. Whiteness studies—and therefore this dissertation—is, however controversial. While some people see it as a narcissistic re-centering of the white subject position in the face of multicultural efforts to dismantle racism, others see the need for a critical inquiry into an “invisible whiteness” which appears to privilege white people in various ways.

This dissertation examines the marginalization of racialized others in selected works of literary Modernism and its relationship to representations of labor exploitation because I want to find out how marginalization as a form of literary whiteness contributes to the rhetoric and development of Modernism, in order to help my reader better understand how this literature contributes ideologically to the social consciousness of its readers.

The literature written by white authors during the early modernist period is, in part, a response to the friction that has historically existed between white labor and black labor in the United States. Black people and racialized others are variously invisible or marginalized in works by authors such as Clifford Odets and John Steinbeck because

these authors and their texts are addressing the specific needs of white readers who, *en masse* have had difficulty understanding themselves to be citizens to the same degree that they understand black people to be citizens. In works by authors such as Ernest Hemingway, blacks are marginalized for multiple reasons having to do with deeply personal and psychological perceptions of the authors' own identity—how these authors understood themselves connected to a rapidly changing American landscape, and how that identity reflects a constructed American identity that appealed to white labor in ways it did not appeal to black labor. The marginalization of blacks in Hemingway frequently symbolizes the moral promise of a nation whose authors could not address the central moral question of their time: the legal relegation of African Americans to the status of non-white and therefore not quite human. The notions of *human will*, and *the capacity for choice* as well as the literary tropes of *grace under pressure*, and the *celebration of danger* function as crucial rhetorical elements of literary whiteness. No black character in any of Hemingway's short stories, for instance, demonstrates these characteristics. Indeed, no black character in any Modernist canonical text demonstrates these characteristics.

These rhetorical features of literary Modernism reflected and participated in a cultural phenomenon, reproduced in places of cultural production like institutions of higher education, that connected white labor to these literary tropes, and subsequently to the myth of upward mobility they craved. In the words of W.E.B. Du Bois, in the minds of white workers, and white culture in general, blacks constituted a permanent laboring class that they wanted no part of (17). Significantly, the ideas attached to marginalization, absence and invisibility in Steinbeck and Odets, along with those

attached to the presentation of human will and the ritualized celebration of danger in Hemingway had the ideological effect of reifying white subjectivity in the mind of the white reader. Whiteness itself became a commodity and a *property right* in the developing industrial landscape of modern America that was to be pursued as earnestly as the American Dream itself.

While the history of race and labor cannot uniformly be characterized by hostility, white labor leaders have often been unable to assuage the seductive advances of industrialists in the United States. This history from the civil war to the Second World War describes a confluence of several forces having to do with America's promise of social mobility, industrialization, and the creation of an industrialized working class.

The myth of mobility wasn't a myth for immigrants coming to the United States from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, nor for skilled and semi-skilled white labor in the North. To preserve democracy and mobility for white workers, labor union leaders along with employers agreed to condemn the black American to the status of permanent laboring class. Hence, white labor—both its leadership and rank and file worker—often had an ambivalent, contradictory and violent relationship with black labor during—and long after—reconstruction. On the one hand they understood themselves to be laborers, but on the other hand they wanted to aspire to all the myth of mobility promised and become capitalists themselves. This had the effect of marking black labor in particular ways. They were used as real metonyms for what white labor was not, permanent unalterable labor.

The racialization of social class by understanding blacks as permanent laborers physically and symbolically, allowed many white authors to ignore deep class-based

analyses by ignoring race. Writing only about whites freed them having to write about class in profoundly radical ways. It is working-class division along racial lines that creates the absence and marginalization we see in authors like Clifford Odets and John Steinbeck. This rationale, then, begins to explain the absence of significant black characters in the literature of the Modernist period which, for the purposes of this study is represented by Ernest Hemingway. This rationale also holds true for the proletarian literature of Modernism of which John Steinbeck and Clifford Odets are representative in this study.

The marginalization of blacks contributes to our understanding of literary whiteness by displacing blacks as fully human and making them metonyms, or signals for permanent labor. This is clearly seen in the way both Steinbeck and Odets use the very brief images of blacks in their texts. For both authors, white labor is different from black or racialized labor since the absence of racialized labor, whether unwittingly or not, has the effect of making their white working-class characters separate from an invisible permanent laboring class, and therefore “free” to pursue the myth of mobility and participate in a particularized American democracy. When this freedom is occluded by the contradictions inherent in early twentieth century industrial capitalism, both Steinbeck and Odets appeal to the immorality of a system that would create such conditions for white labor, but crucially never point to white labor and black labor’s differential treatment as causal. Ironically, then, the marginalization of black characters in the literature also limits the bounds of freedom that can be imagined by their audience to the bounds of whiteness.

In works by Hemingway the friction between white labor and black labor is invisible because the plight of white labor is almost invisible. He is less (apparently) concerned with issues of labor than he is with personal and national identity informed by individualism arising out of the rapid development of industrial capitalism. These issues of identity obscure questions of labor by obscuring questions of race.

Many of Hemingway's first forty-nine short stories can be separated into two broad categories, those written about the presence of physical danger like "The Killers," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "The Undefeated," and "The Capital of the World" and those written about the great American outdoors of the Midwest such as "The Battler," "Big Two-Hearted River Part I," "Big Two-Hearted River Part II," "The End of Something," and "Soldiers Home". The vacuous absence of labor as well as the symbolic representation of blacks, suggest both groups contribute to the development of Modernism through literary whiteness, and subsequently to the consciousness of white readers by establishing elements of a myth having to do with upward mobility on the one hand, and the ideology of individualism on the other to which whites become linked.

In stories about the great outdoors like "Big Two-Hearted River Part I," the scenic and open landscape establishes both the setting of the story, and crucially, the placement of the protagonist inside a constructed world where industrialized labor is evacuated. The reader is taken through a description of the landscape and brought closer and closer to the internal workings of the character's mind. This inward movement connects the character to the landscape and thus the land, which establishes a certain connection to America the nation, but it is an idyllic connection—even if it is not an idyllic landscape—reflecting, as

some of the stories do, the effects of industrialization. The stories stop being a reflection of the real outside world since the representation of industrialization is not realistically drawn. This inability to accurately draw industrialized labor signals the production of literary whiteness; white labor is elided, black labor is marginalized except in highly symbolic rhetorical constructions such as, to quote Ellison, being pierced with a fishhook, or impaled with a grasshopper (Ellison 40).

The stories that present physical danger for the protagonist also reflect the psychology and ideology of the writer. The protagonist's character is often replete with a force of will that dominates the text on the one hand, and distorts reality in specific ways on the other. This domination of the text by the will of the character is connected to literary whiteness since human will is a key trait denied racialized others in American literature. In this way, Hemingway creates a landscape against which he can only grant white characters agency. Here, agency is implicitly coded as white.

Hemingway's construction of masculinity, for example, is always white because whites are always risk-takers. Toni Morrison's logic of invisibility is useful for discussing Hemingway in this regard. Morrison suggests that literary whiteness is a response to an agent, the Africanist presence, which is not always visible as human. That is to say, whiteness comes into being because of the presence of the racialized Other in symbolic or crudely drawn human form.

The process of hiding agency appears to address some of the ways in which the psychology of an author, such as Hemingway, is implicated in the production of literary whiteness. For example, in those short stories which exemplify physical danger, the danger itself stands in for the fate of black Americans—the fate of permanent labor—of

the erased or invisible man. Unless one confronts the possibility of total loss of freedom, or the myth of freedom, one is not a man or an American and in American literature, as in American society, no black character faces that risk—the loss is simply, and preemptively, assigned to him and through him, permanent labor. Blacks cannot be seen as masculine risk-takers because they lack the “will,” the capacity for choice that must precede risk.

In social and cultural terms, we recognize that where laboring blacks are most numerous, or where conditions of slavery exist for blacks, there we also find not only the poorest conditions for laboring whites, but also the most egregious forms of racial violence—social whiteness made visibly and physically real.

Chapter two of this study examines texts representing various disciplines in order to construct an epistemology of whiteness that answers questions such as how whiteness remains peculiarly unmarked at the same time that it dominates our culture. Chapter three examines how these ideas get woven into literary texts of the North America canon of early modernism specifically, and discusses the relationship between rhetoric, individualism, and modernism. Chapter four articulates and demonstrates a theory of literary whiteness primarily using Ernest Hemingway’s collection of his first forty-nine short stories and Clifford Odets’s play, Waiting for Lefty and John Steinbeck’s novel, The Grapes of Wrath secondarily. In chapter five I present texts that resist literary whiteness by demonstrating its characteristics in either white working-class or black characters. I begin with Clifford Odets’s Waiting for Lefty where I demonstrate that text’s ability to imagine codes of whiteness for whites only. I then turn to Mike Gold who is able to imagine these codes for blacks generally in his play, Hoboken Blues, Or

the Black Rip Van Winkle, A Modern Negro Fantasia on an Old American Theme. His work constitutes a kind of response to the absence of blacks we see in fiction of the Modernist period generally, and the proletarian literature of Modernism specifically. Finally, I discuss to William Attaway's Blood on the Forge. This text imagines and presents black and white working-class masculinity—though it is a misshapen masculinity—devastated by the effects of the industrialism found in the steel mills the Moss brothers, the central characters in that text, are destroyed by.

Chapter Two

Surveying the Landscape: Making Whiteness Visible

Whiteness is not a personal attribute, but a cultural construction that persons are persuasively invited to participate in in different ways. Historical examples can be used to demonstrate that whiteness is not something one is, but something one does. The project of interrogating whiteness is not one of figuring out which individuals to blame, but rather of figuring out what forces to resist.—Patrick Bruch

[Whiteness] is premised on the centrality of romanticized property in capitalist thought and develops through the primacy of capitalism as the economic base of a system of government defined by white property owners.—Jon-Christian Suggs

...the sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other.... There is no science but tells a different tale, when viewed as a portion of a whole, from what it is likely to suggest when taken by itself, without the safeguard, as I may call it, of others.

Let me make use of an illustration. In the combination of colors, very different effects are produced by a difference in their selection and juxtaposition; red, green, and white change their shades, according to the contrast to which they are submitted. And, in like manner, the drift and meaning of a branch of knowledge varies with the company in which it is introduced to the student.—John Henry Newman.

The state of whiteness studies today reminds me somehow of how rhetoric must have been before Aristotle formalized it. The same amorphous feel I get of rhetoric when I read the opening chapters of the Poetics is what I get as I read more and more literature on the subject of whiteness. In my introduction I relate a narrative about my own childhood experiences and how I see those experiences shaped by what I called there, “whiteness”. I put whiteness in quotation marks here to emphasize my ambivalence about its ability to be defined as anything beyond a multi-signifying term. Like Postcolonialism, some rudiments of which I discuss in this chapter, whiteness studies is a product of Post Modernism and indeed seems to *belong* to Post Modernity, eliding, by definition it seems, definability. Yet the objective of this chapter is to ask—and suggest tentative answers to—the question: what is whiteness? And by extension, what is literary whiteness?

Patrick Bruch's statement above suggests a way of approaching these questions and anchoring whiteness to something concrete. That is, Bruch's statement implies a way of understanding motives—social, cultural, and ideological—that are shaped and organized by something having to do with Eurocentrism and what is referred to, perhaps wrongly, as white skin privilege. This “something” motivated and affected Mr. Waite's actions, the actions of the South African security forces and my own father's actions as I suggest in my introduction. Bruch's notion that whiteness is a cultural construction, and his further suggestion that it isn't a personal attribute, but rather a force to be resisted, begins, I think, to disconnect “whiteness” from “white” people and allows us to see its more ideological features; the features that motivated my father, for instance. Indeed, Bruch not only suggests that whiteness is ideological, but also that it is cultural; manifested in many aspects of our daily lives.

Argument and Method

In this chapter I examine five texts and posit them as representing five different but interrelated disciplinary approaches to whiteness in an attempt to articulate a theory of “whiteness” with an emphasis on the ways in which it is implicated in literature. It goes without saying that I have not tried to give a complete picture of whiteness, literary whiteness, or the disciplines I discuss here. I have selected the texts I use to make some rather specific points. These points lie in the realm of cultural rhetoric and literary analysis.

I first discuss the relationship between whiteness, colonialism and postcolonial theory through Ashis Nandy's The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism. In my discussion of this text I examine how power functions through

various notions of identity. The constructed nature of gender and differing perceptions of childhood are specifically examined. I then discuss Western culture's construction of whiteness through the presentation and representation of "white" bodies using Richard Dyer's text, White. I examine Dyer's thesis that there are linkages between cultural representations of white people and a Christianized, racialized and politicized notion of the "normal". I then discuss how a social group, en masse, *becomes* white using Karen Brodtkin's How the Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America. This text traces the experiences and decisions of Jewish immigrants during early and mid-twentieth century New York City and its suburbs to illustrate how aspects of Jewish culture became part of white mainstream, middleclass American culture. This occurred, Brodtkin tells us, partly through a juxtaposition of Jewishness with a constructed and servicing African-American identity. I then discuss whiteness and American law through Cheryl Harris's article, "Whiteness as Property," to show how legal definitions of property are problematized by notions of humanity and race when whiteness is imbricated into the narrative of American law as has been the historical evidence in America. Through Harris I demonstrate that whiteness often means the right to exclude nonwhites from full participation in civic life and democracy thereby setting the bounds and meaning of freedom itself; not only for blacks but also for certain groups of whites as well. Lastly, I discuss Toni Morrison's Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination which articulates a theory of whiteness in literature specifically. Morrison's text focuses attention on the "Africanist presence" which, according to her, pervades—is even central to—American literature. However, she fails to adequately account for notions of social class which I believe are central to the role the African has

played in American culture and literature alike. These texts define whiteness differently because they approach the phenomenon of whiteness from within the boundaries of their respective disciplines. These boundaries are, however, contested spaces, and therefore by no means autonomous or exclusive of one another.

It is because whiteness functions variously depending upon context that I introduce the passage from John Henry Newman above. In The Idea of a University, Newman suggests that a true liberal arts education may be best acquired by the juxtaposition of several disciplines so as to comprise a circle of knowledge. In this arrangement each discipline is contingent upon the others to establish meaning, epistemological ground, and definition. The borderlines between disciplines are always contested spaces, subject to geographic, historical, spatial, temporal and other variables. A construction of whiteness, then, if we follow Newman's lead, may be revealed through an examination of what can be seen, interpreted or apprehended through a consideration of these various texts representing, as they do, various disciplines.

This chapter, then, hopes to begin a mapping of literary whiteness as an interdisciplinary epistemology through a palimpsest; a putting together of various disciplines to determine what kinds of questions and, indeed, what kinds of answers are possible when juxtaposing a notion of "whiteness" with the literature I examine. Put another way, by examining these texts, and identifying how power, race and class are figured and configured in each, an epistemology of literary whiteness may be revealed.

Given this project the significance of the passage from Jon-Christian Suggs becomes apparent. It suggests a way of setting the terms of whiteness as it is manifested in the United States. Like Harris's "Whiteness as Property," Suggs points to the idea that

social class structure is important to an understanding of whiteness since it limits and configures the very construction of knowledge. In that sense, what we can extrapolate from Suggs and Harris is that whiteness as a discipline is not only contingent upon other disciplines, but also that there is still yet a larger structure of social class that gives these different contingencies shape, and ultimately, meaning.

Also significant is Newman's example—that of colors and their varying shades when contrasted one against the other. The example is both instructive and constructive. Not only does he suggest a methodological approach to the study of whiteness, but he also points to one of this chapter's objectives. Newman's notion that our perceived reality shifts and alters depending upon what the background or contrasting color may be implies a distinction between a perceived reality and truth. He goes on to say:

...to give undue prominence to one [color] is to be unjust to another; to neglect or supersede these is to divert those from their proper object. It is to unsettle the boundary lines between science and science, to disturb their action, to destroy the harmony which binds them together (47).

Here Newman suggests that to privilege, or make central any one color is necessarily to be "unjust" to another. It both unsettles the boundaries of the sciences, and throws the whole into disorder. The excerpt above and the example Newman uses invite us to question the centrality and configuration of the "white" subject, the background, against which all other shades of humanity seem to depend for definition. This chapter implicitly argues that while this phenomenon may be an apparent reality, it is by no means truth.

Postcolonial Theory and Whiteness: Reality, Gender, and Age

Many of the arguments constructed to describe mechanisms of colonization by Western colonial powers in Asia, Africa and elsewhere are equally appropriate for describing mechanisms of colonialism in North America. This should not be surprising since many of the British officers who served to maintain control of the thirteen American colonies were promptly dispatched to India, the new jewel in the British Imperial crown, once it became clear their cause was lost on the American continent and thus brought with them to the East their ideas of colonialism and imperialism the nascent American people had been so keen to rebuff. Indeed, as Lerone Bennett points out in his book, The Shaping of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African-Americans, 1619 to the 1990's, the connections between colonialism, whiteness and slavery are complex and multifaceted, yet strikingly similar wherever it appears. He says:

In America, as elsewhere, the colonial system elaborated the same mechanisms to attain the same end: the exploitation of the labor power and resources of the colonized. And the American system of colonialism, like its counterparts in other areas, followed the traditional pattern, changing its skin at crucial junctures in order to protect its essential content. (208)

Bennett's choice of words, "changing its skin," is perhaps as much ironic as it is symbolic. It not only suggests that colonialism's formulation in various parts of the world accounted for different cultural, social and political realities, but it also suggests the idea that while in India, Asia and elsewhere the colonial project set about colonizing brown and dark brown people, the result was invariably exploitation of these colonized groups. What he does not say—but what he clearly implies—is that the colonizer in these various places invariably had white skin. That is to say—following Suggs's lead—

the class and color against which these groups were juxtaposed was bourgeois, white and European. They were the white background against which all colonized people were persuaded to define their identities.

The “essential content” Bennett speaks of is the system of exploitation that is colonialism. In this regard, colonization practiced in America may be seen as a version of what was occurring in many other parts of the world, and in many cases by precisely the same individuals. There is no doubt that differences existed between the forms of colonialism having to do with differing cultural formations, and the needs of the colonial powers, but in their essential content they were virtually the same.

Colonialism, Whiteness and Reality

The nature of “reality” and to some extent “truth” is the first idea Ashis Nandy interrogates in The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism. The text is divided into two essays the first of which, “The Psychology of Colonialism: Sex, Age and Ideology in British India” is discussed here. The text itself, as Nandy says, “...is primarily an enquiry into the psychological structures and cultural forces which supported or resisted the culture of colonialism in British India” (xvi). While Nandy points out that his project deals specifically with British India, the ideas he articulates that I make use of are equally relevant to other colonized groups as I hope to demonstrate.

The colonial enterprise creates a Manichean world of binary opposites. Nandy uses the historical example of Mohandas K. Gandhi to illustrate not only how this theory is constructed, but also how it might be practiced. Gandhi’s philosophy illustrates that by reciprocating the violence inherent in colonialism, the best one could hope to achieve is the reversal of the terms along the binary axis of colonized/colonizer;

masculine/feminine; good/evil; white/black. In essence, the colonial condition would still exist. Gandhi's recognition of this and his subsequent approach to non-violence stems, in part, from his experiments with Satyagraha, which means "holding on to truth or truth force" (Kumarappa 3). Satyagraha was both a philosophy and a movement started by Gandhi himself. Its guiding principle is the notion of universal Truth. "It excludes the use of force because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish" (Kumarappa 3).

As the title of Nandy's text suggests, he approaches colonialism utilizing his formal training in psychology. The text, largely considered foundational to postcolonial studies, is a theoretical exploration of how identities are formed and informed under colonialism. Nandy argues that colonialism takes place first and primarily in the mind of both the colonizer and the colonized (2). His rationale for this is, in part, that while colonialism could be characterized by the search for economic and political advantage on the part of the colonizer, the enterprise is pursued without concomitant real economic or political gains and sometimes even with economic and political losses (1). Nandy suggests that colonialism is not only a material reality for the colonized, but also a psychological category. This formulation is useful for my purposes since it attempts to understand the mechanisms through which culture and ideology are informed under a system of colonialism, and therefore begins to address the approach to whiteness Bruch leads us to suspect is central to an understanding of it.

As indicated above, Nandy begins his essay by first questioning the *reality* of the colonized world constructed by colonial powers which he suggests posits the West as a single political entity. He argues that this is not an essential "truth" though it is a reality

(xiv). This begins to explain, for example, the tendency to see all white people as a single homogenous group without accounting for differences in social class and political power. This point is certainly an important subtext in E. M. Forster's A Passage to India, for instance, where one could reasonably argue that a central theme in that text is the development of Dr Aziz's consciousness toward a disaggregation of the several white individuals that he encounters into various classes and, indeed, approaches to India and Indians.

Another text set in India, though written by an Indian and not a Westerner, is Mulk Raj Anand's Coolie. This text presents us with an example of the homogenizing of both the white colonizer and the brown colonized. Coolie is a novel set in British India in the 1920s and depicts events in the life of Munoo, a young hill boy who leaves his village in the hopes of finding work and seeing the world. The narrator, while following Munoo, gives us insight into life in British India through vignettes which depict Munoo and several other characters. One character we meet is Mr. England who is "the chief cashier of the Sham Nagar branch of the Imperial Bank of India" (48). Another is Babu Nathoo Ram, an Indian man, as the title "Babu" suggests, who was some twenty years Mr. England's senior and is the man in whose house Munoo is hired as a servant boy.

Babu Nathoo Ram works as a sub-accountant in Mr. England's office and "was a rich man. He had forty thousand rupees's worth of shares in the Allahabad Bank and was surely a trusted ally of the Government, which owned most of the banks" (49). Mr. England, however, was working-class until his move to India where he literally changes social class and status. He is pestered into going to tea at Nathoo Ram's house in a vain attempt on Nathoo Ram's part to gain favor with him. On his way there walking between

Nathoo Ram on one side and Prem Chand, Nathoo Ram's doctor brother on the other, Mr. England:

...wondered what Nathoo Ram's house was going to be like. Would it be like his father's home in Brixton, a semi detached house on the Hay Mill estate which they had furnished on the hire-purchase system with the help of Mr. Drage and where he had occupied the maid's room when he was a clerk in the Midland Bank, before he came here [to India] and suddenly became the chief cashier? (52)

What is noteworthy about this excerpt for our purposes is how it is revealing of the culture of colonialism with respect to whiteness and, of course, social class. Given Mr. England's class position in England, which Anand clearly presents to us as firmly entrenched in the working-class since he lives with his parents in a semi detached house furnished with items that could only be acquired using hire-purchase, there could be no other reason for him to leave a bank job in England where he is a clerk for a bank job in India where he gets an immediate increase in rank, and presumably salary. Indeed, Mr. England's going to India speaks to the great appeal of colonialism on the part of working-class whites in England. He becomes the symbol of power, authority and status in the bank in India not only because he is *from* England—as his name aptly underscores—but also because he is *white*. It is his whiteness that serves as the signal of power and authority which is the only qualification, apparently, that is needed to go from clerk to chief cashier *in* India. In India his whiteness trumps his education, and training and is the mechanism by which his social class may be elevated. Perhaps just as importantly, it trumps the education, training and social class of the Indians who surround him as the

walk to Babu Nathoo Ram's house suggests. Mr. England remains the center, from which both Nathoo Ram, and Prem Chand, his doctor brother, are defined though Nathoo Ram is older than Mr. England and, as we discover, has had years on the job in the office where he works and Prem Chand has far better formal education since he is a doctor. If this explanation of the forces driving Mr. England and Nathoo Ram are as I have stated, then we have to accept the conclusion that whiteness and representations of whiteness are the text and subtext respectively of colonial encounters.

Another example of reality eliding truth is illustrated in Blood on the Forge by William Attaway discussed at some length in chapter five of this study. Big Mat, the eldest of the Moss brothers in that text, at every stage of his development is motivated by the reality imposed upon him by systems of economic and social organization both in Kentucky and in the steel mills of West Virginia that consistently dehumanize him. What he does not successfully grapple with is the reality that both social and economic systems are dependent upon the exploitation of his labor. The racial dimensions of his agricultural life are historically clear; he, along with his wife and brothers, live a hand-to-mouth existence as share croppers. While he is ostensibly working for wages, his relationship to Mr. Johnston, the owner of the land upon which the Moss brothers live and work, is such that he is never able to get out of debt. Attaway represents these dimensions forcefully in a scene where Big Mat is accosted by Mr. Johnston's riding boss who insults Big Mat's mother who died ploughing one of Mr. Johnston's arid fields and was dragged by the plough mule. A fight ensues and Big Mat brutally beats him.

What is more significant, however, is how the economics of Big Mat's industrialized life is also racially based. In the steel mills his labor is equally exploited

since he, along with his two brothers, Melody and Chinatown, are unable to secure any more financial independence than they had when they were in Kentucky and, in addition, they are in considerably graver physical danger because of the nature of the work they do. Indeed, it is because he fails to understand his racially signified economic class position vis-à-vis his social relationship to whiteness that he gets into the altercation with the riding boss, and later in the text while in the industrialized north, is involved in the strike episode where he is killed. Throughout the story, Attaway gives clues to the construction of whiteness by articulating aspects of the racially constructed world of identity that underpins the plot and action.

An example of this is illustrated in the scene where Big Mat strikes the riding boss. After killing the plough mule that had dragged his mother's dead body across the farmland, Big Mat asks Mr. Johnston for another mule which Johnston duly gives him and which is duly added onto the Moss's debts owed to Johnston. As big Mat goes to get the other mule the riding boss approaches:

“What the hell you doin’ to them mules, boy”

It was the riding boss. Galloping up to the fence, he held a short quirt ready in his hand.

“It was a sweat bee,” said Big Mat.

“Be damned to that!” said the riding boss. “Git on back to your work.”

“Work all done.”

“Well, git on home.”

“Mr. Johnston said I could have a mule.”

The riding boss turned red in the face. His neck swelled. Stiff legged, he dismounted. He walked up to Big Mat.

“Maybe you don’t know who you talking to, boy—

Givin’ me short talk.”

Big Mat did not answer.

“Say ‘suh,’” ordered the riding boss.

“Yessuh.”

The riding boss started to turn away.

“Got to keep steppin’ on you niggers, or you git outa hand—forgit jest who you talking to.”

“Nosuh, I ain’t forgot,” said Big Mat. “Us used to play together when your folks was sharecroppin next to mine.”

The riding boss turned and slashed the quirt across Big Mat’s face. He felt like he had struck unfeeling, dead flesh. (27)

The end of this interchange is particularly important because Big Mat reminds the riding boss that they had once shared identical economic status, and indeed, had played together as children. In this light the riding boss is not unlike Mr. England in that both take on social roles as a result of their relationship to racialized Others. The riding boss’s response, however, illustrates his desire to impose the reality of white supremacy that now separates them in the face of historical lived- experience to the contrary. His violent outburst signals his attempt to impose his will, and the primacy of whiteness through—to use Nandy’s term—hypermasculinity. That is to say, like key aspects of colonialism, white supremacy is dependent upon the maintenance of an unjust racialized reality through physical violence and force of human will.

Colonialism, Whiteness and Gender

Under a system of colonialism the male colonizer assumes an identity that is coded hyper-masculine, while the male colonized assumes an identity that is coded feminine. Nandy calls the gendered identity of the colonized “femininity in masculinity”. This is the most undesirable identity for a man to hold because it epitomizes what colonialism will allow within its narrow framework of identities as powerlessness.

The excerpt above from Blood on the Forge as well as illustrating how whiteness is implicated in the construction of social reality is also illustrative of how the male colonized is feminized. The rhetoric of the riding boss, replete as it is with commands and demands to “work” and to be called “suh” also prevents Big Mat from both establishing a position from which his voice might be heard as a speaking subject, and establishes him as an inferior to the riding boss. This inferiority is gendered because it is through the threat of physical force and violence that the riding boss maintains control over Big Mat. It is the point at which the riding boss strikes Big Mat, early in the text, that his name “Big Mat” seems both ironic and telling as he becomes the epitome of femininity in masculinity.

When Big Mat talks back to the riding boss it is first by using Mr. Johnston’s words, “Mr. Johnston said I could have a mule.” The riding boss is both embarrassed and shown the limits of whiteness as a category of social identity at this point as his reddened face indicates. Big Mat establishes himself in an unmediated relationship to Mr. Johnston, removing, for the moment, the riding boss’s immediate class position. It is the exposure of the riding boss’s power through whiteness alone that compels him to strike Big Mat since he has gained access to Mr. Johnston. Only white people are supposed to have that power. Color in this instance is supposed to trump class but apparently does not.

Big Mat’s move to talk back to the riding boss also establishes him as an intellectual and, crucially, reflecting human being capable of constructing and using his lived-experiences to acknowledge and expose the riding boss as an equal without reference to the power of whiteness. That is to say, it is the threat to the riding boss’s

hyper-masculinity status, metaphorically connected to the position of the colonizer in a colonial setting, established through his whiteness that causes him to lash out and strike Big Mat.

The exposure of whiteness as a reality but not truth is poignantly revealed as the exchange between the riding boss and Big Mat comes to a climax. Big Mat exercises a hypermasculinity that exposes the inherent weakness in the white masculine identity the riding boss has assumed. However, Big Mat is first forced to apologize for talking back to the riding boss, surmising to himself that it is better to apologize than to not get use of the mule to plough before nightfall. His apology is met with the searing insult that results in their fight:

‘If Mr. Johnston got good sense you won’t never git nother mule... You’d be run off the land if I had my say. Killin a animal worth forty dollars, ’cuse a nigger woman got dragged over the rocks—‘

The riding boss fell to the ground, blood streaming from his smashed face. He struggled to get to his feet. A heavy foot caught him in the side of his neck (28).

Big Mat’s use of violence against the riding boss again exposes the violence inherent in a world view organized around white supremacy. It is this act of hyper-masculine violence on the part of Big Mat that forces the Moss brothers to leave Kentucky for the steel mills of West Virginia.

Another example of how gender is configured through whiteness is revealed in Ernest Hemingway’s short story “The Battler”. Here the black character, Bugs, is portrayed as a feminized helpmate for Ad Francis, the aged and deformed white prizefighter whom Nick Adams has an altercation with.

As cook and caretaker for Ad Francis, Bugs, as Toni Morrison says, is “a disturbing nurse” (Morrison 83). Morrison uses this term to describe both the stereotypical presence of blacks in literary texts and the fear present in whites associated with that presence. Morrison also notes that Bugs is described as “mothering” Ad Francis, whom he follows around the Midwest, by at least one Hemingway scholar (83). The specifically gendered words to describe Bugs suggest that a deep-rooted connection between racialized and gendered oppression exists in western culture. It also suggests a deep-rooted connection between forms of masculinity having to do with the force of human will and whiteness.

Colonialism, Whiteness and Age

According to Nandy the West, having established itself as the pinnacle of history through a linear notion of history that privileges a particularized notion of progress and as the paternal guardian of all other civilizations, also creates an ideological dichotomy between notions of childhood and notions adulthood. Nandy says, "Colonialism dutifully picked up...ideas of growth and development and drew a new parallel between primitivism and childhood" (Nandy 15).

To clarify his theory of age Nandy points to Philippe Aries, the French historian, who he says argues that the modern conception of childhood is a product of the seventeenth century. Although Aries recognizes that the child was seen as a smaller version of the adult before the seventeenth century, he does not, according to Nandy, fully realize that the child became an inferior to the adult also (14). As Nandy points out, this cultural shift in the West correlated well with their civilizing mission during this historical period.

Nandy continues, "The new concept of childhood bore a direct relationship to the doctrine of progress now regnant in the West" (Nandy 15).

In Nandy's formulation the Colonized is either coded "childlike" or "childish". When coded childlike he is innocent, and ignorant but masculine, similar to the notion of the "noble savage". He represents femininity in masculinity, and corrigibility. The childlike colonized is considered reformable by colonial consciousness and is therefore able to be Westernized. He becomes a partner in one fully homogenized cultural, political and economic world of Westernization (16). The description of Babu Nathoo Ram as a sycophant always eager to please Mr. England in order to gain favor with what—and whom—he sees as power would be an example of the childlike colonized. It is because of his childlikeness that Nathoo Ram invites Mr. England to tea after much fanfare and preparation, and is not at all displeased to be seen with Mr. England on the street as they approach his house.

The alternative to the childlike subject position for the Colonized is childishness where exactly the same end of a "stable" society from the point of view of the colonizer, is achieved. From this point of view, the childish colonized is ignorant but unwilling to learn, ungrateful, sinful, savage, unpredictably violent, disloyal and thus incorrigible. The colonial response is repression by controlling rebellion, providing tough administration and rule of law and ensuring internal peace. Consequently, the result is, as I have stated above, the fate of the childlike colonized: they become a partner in one fully homogenized cultural, political and economic world (16).

An example of this theoretical formulation may be illustrated in the excerpt from Blood on the Forge above. Notice, for instance, the first words the riding boss says to

Big Mat, “What the hell you doin’ to them mules, boy” (27). Here, Big Mat is referred to as a boy; an arbitrary assignment attached to him for the singular purpose of indicating his inferior position with respect to the riding boss. At this point in the text Big Mat is looked upon by the riding Boss, and by extension, white culture generally, as childlike and unwilling to express or exert a will of his own. It is for this reason that the riding boss commands Big Mat to go home and to call him “suh” since Big Mat is viewed by the riding boss as innocent, ignorant, corrigible but nevertheless masculine.

To speak back to the riding boss as Big Mat does—even when using Mr. Johnston’s words—and also to strike the riding boss is, in the eyes of the whites, to demonstrate childishness; ignorance, an unwillingness to learn, ungratefulness, sinfulness, savagery, unpredictable violence, disloyalty and thus incorrigibility. One of the reasons Big Mat leaves Kentucky is because he knows vengeance will be swift, merciless and violent.

Colonialism, Whiteness and Age: The White Working Class

In the previous section I show how identities are formed and shaped not only by the structure of colonialism itself, but also by the deployment of whiteness as a signal of social power, and a willingness to confront physical danger. I demonstrate how whiteness is specifically used to construct the contours of identity within a colonial context. Very similar patterns of identity may be identified in working-class culture without, significantly, the prominent dependence upon whiteness.

In John Dos Passos’s novel Three Soldiers, for instance, Dan Fuselli, one of the three main characters in that text, has a decidedly childlike demeanor toward those whom he feels are more powerful than himself, namely his superior officers.

The novel is set during World War I, and expresses Dos Passos's savage demurrals against that conflict. It also illustrates Dos Passos's recognition that it was primarily an episode of class exploitation in which the working class was sacrificed in a war that did little to better its social and material well-being.

Fuselli is symbolic of the working class in the text and is completely taken with the idea of upward mobility² that he believes is achievable through the army. Outside the army, Fuselli could look forward to nothing more than a job as a store clerk. In this respect, Fuselli is remarkably similar to Mr. England in Mulk Raj Anand's text, Coolie. Both are in search of upward mobility away from a social order they perceive to be limited and limiting. In the army, however, Fuselli sees an opportunity for escape impossible to imagine at home and therefore accepts the norms of army life without questioning or attempting to understand them. Fuselli's story, then, turns out to be one less about the relative power of whiteness, as in the case of Mr. England, and more about the power of social class. There is no colonized other against which he can posit a usurping white self. He then has to be a colonized, not a colonizer with the hope of upward mobility, not the promise of it.

It is in his desire for upward mobility that Fuselli begins to perform the identity characteristics ascribed to colonized people by Ashis Nandy. Put another way, the function of whiteness in colonial settings is mirrored by the desire for upward social mobility in the white working class of America. The effects on Fuselli's consciousness and the subservient position and identity he is persuaded to assume are almost identical to

² The relationship between the white working class and their desire for upward mobility demonstrated by the character of Dan Fuselli in Dos Passos's Three Soldiers helped me understand Mr. Waites's actions. It is also a theme I discuss in some detail in chapter III of this study.

those assumed by Babu Nathoo Ram, a colonized individual in a colonial setting.

Consider, for example, the following passage:

Fuselli wrapped the blanket around his head and prepared to sleep. Snuggled down into the blankets on the narrow cot, he felt sheltered from the sergeant's thundering voice and from the cold glare of officers' eyes. He felt cosy like a little kid. ...He must remember to smile at the sergeant when he passed him off duty. Somebody had said there'd be promotions soon. Oh, he wanted so hard to be promoted. It'd be so swell if he could write back to Mabe and tell her to address her letters to Corporal Dan Fuselli. He must be more careful not to do anything that would get him in wrong with anybody. He must never miss an opportunity to show them what a clever kid he was. (17)

Here we see Fuselli not only searching for a more permanent position in the very structure which seeks to destroy him and others like him, but he ascribes the term "kid" to himself. Dos Passos uses language and imagery of child-likeness suggesting, not a relationship of equality between Fuselli and those he serves—the officers—but rather one of a child to an adult. Once Fuselli has assumed this posture it is not difficult to see why his goal of upward mobility and becoming a corporal is never achieved and why the possibility of achieving this goal can be used as a constant lure by those who have the power to grant it to him.

What is critical for our purposes here is the similar construction of identities for both working class whites and colonized or racialized Others. The only thing that is different is the substitution of class for racially Other in Dos Passos. Note, however, that

whiteness is common in both texts; it signifies differently, however, in each. In America class and/or race takes the place of subalternity (colonized submission of the “Other” to the dominant and dominating subject colonizer). For Fuselli, the problem is doubled; he is “colonized” by class and wants to use the army to turn himself into the colonizer as Mr. England effectively does with the bank. In Great Britain, England would still be Fuselli. His whiteness would be no protection for the ravages of class.

If Fuselli can be considered childlike in demeanor, then Chrisfield, the second soldier we meet in Three Soldiers, may be considered childish. However, as with Fuselli, the key element is not whiteness as in the colonial example illustrated above, but rather disillusionment with the enforced machine-like order of the army. Like the childish colonized subject, Chrisfield is sinful, savage, unpredictably violent, disloyal and thus incorrigible. Indeed, as Robert Rosen points out in John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer, “He [Chrisfield] embodies the kind of violence the army wants to arouse and channel” (17). His childishness will be harnessed and transformed.

The project of rendering Chrisfield “stable” from the point of view of those with power—the officers—is realized in two places. First, by his encounter with a German soldier who has committed suicide, and second, by his own murder of a fellow American, Anderson. Linda Wagner notes in her book, Dos Passos: Artist as American, “With the third part [of the novel], ‘Machines,’ Dos Passos gives us Chrisfield’s murder of Anderson, complete with what justification is allowable, that Chrisfield has now become a machine” (Wagner 21). John Rohrkemper in his essay “Mr. Dos Passos’s War,” supports Wagner’s position with, “This sudden confrontation with the reality of death, of war is more than Chrisfield can stand. He becomes, as a defense against the horror, a

hollow killing machine" (44). Even the language after the killing of Anderson and the suicide of the German soldier reflects Chrisfield's re-socialization:

Chrisfield looked straight ahead of him. He did not feel lonely any more now that he was marching in ranks again. His feet beat to the ground in time with the other feet. He would not have to think whether to go to the right or to the left. He would do as the others did. (190)

Chrisfield is now a part of the machine and social order that he initially reacts violently against but he is a mutated part, twisted, unpredictable and dangerous. As I will show, Big Mat in Attaway's Blood on the Forge is also re-socialized but for him race and not social class is the mechanism used for his manipulation. Like Fuselli, Chrisfield is controlled and manipulated into conforming to a social order that does not represent his best interests. This is strikingly similar to the ways in which African Americans and other colonized groups conforming to an "alien" social order ensuring their own exploitation. However, it is important to note that with Fuselli and Chrisfield, whiteness, while present, is present in them *and* their oppressors and is therefore not used as a principle mechanism of their control. Class here stands in for racial difference.

The Culture of Whiteness: Myth, Spirit, and the White Body

Richard Dyer's book, White, is principally concerned with photographic and cinematic representations of "white" people of Western Europe in Western culture. For Dyer, "whiteness" is how white bodies are presented and represented by a constellation of cultural practices. That is, he is concerned with the form and structure of representations which he argues contribute to the cultural registers of whiteness (14). Dyer further illustrates how this representation of whiteness connects being "white" with

being “normal.” He seeks, then, to question the white background of culture in ways implied by John Henry Newman’s illustration of colors discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Dyer approaches the representation of white bodies through what he sees as three elements of its constitution: Christianity, ‘race,’ and enterprise/imperialism (14), the first two of which, Christianity and race, are discussed here. While the focus of Dyer’s study is the film industry, I am most concerned with how his theory of whiteness might illuminate our understanding of literature.

A Theory of Origins: Christianity

Dyer argues that the film industry reflects the effects of Christian symbolism in medieval Europe, and has also borrowed Christian symbolism’s ability to reproduce whiteness. According to Dyer, the imbrication of whiteness in representations of white bodies comes about in medieval Europe because of how Europeans regarded their “dark” adversaries during the crusades.³ Dyer suggests that these darker-skinned people came to be seen as evil, immoral and allied with the devil. They were a “dark” force. The crusaders believed they had morality on their side. This is an idea which gets cultivated into the notion of a “spirit” residing in whites⁴. The notion of whites having a spirit that nonwhites do not comes out of a confluence of ideas having to do with European

³ For a formulation of whiteness consistent with Dyer’s with respect to origins (that is, to coin Theodore Allen’s term, psycho-cultural) see David Roediger’s [The Wages of Whiteness](#). Dyer’s formulation is not uncontested. For an alternative and perhaps more compelling theory (socio-economic—to borrow from Allen again) on the subject see Allen’s [The Invention of the White Race](#) and Lerone Bennett’s [The Shaping of Black America](#). Dyer’s formulation is, however, useful here as it is consistent with the mythology of whiteness prevalent throughout much of late nineteenth and early twentieth century informing American culture—a time, not incidentally, rife with pseudoscientific notions of race. In short, Dyer’s theory of whiteness may be considered a reality, but not an incontestable truth.

⁴ My explanation of the rationale by which whites are said to have a certain ‘spirit’ that nonwhites do not is highly simplified. For further study in this often contradictory process see George L. Mosse’s [Toward the Final Solution](#), and Leon Poliakov’s [The Aryan Myth: The History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe](#).

expansion into territories outside of Europe up to the sixteenth century. It was elaborated into pseudoscientific notions of 'race' in the eighteenth and nineteenth century which flourished by virtue of their political efficacy. This culminated in imperialism in the European context and as part of the process of establishing North American identity in the context of the United States (Dyer 18-19). Dyer continues:

White genealogy has focused on the Aryans or Caucasians. The former are posited as the ancient inhabitants of what is now North West India and Pakistan. The term, which came to prominence in the early nineteenth century, is taken from a Sanskrit word meaning 'of noble birth', and the Indian ancestors of the Aryans (when acknowledged at all) were identified as the Brahmins, the highest caste in Indian society. It was posited that the Aryans had emigrated to the West and been the founding people of Europe. The Caucasian [genealogy]...was a variant of this theory, since it was through and from the Caucasus mountains that the Aryans came to Europe. The Caucasian variant both stressed the Caucas mountains themselves as a determinant factor on white racial formation and enabled the Aryan myth to be severed, most notably at the hands of Nazism, from its Asian associations. (20-21)

The Aryan/Caucasian model of origins for the white spirit shares a common association with mountains. As Dyer goes on to note:

the higher reaches of the mountains had what was considered a number of virtues: the clarity and cleanliness of the air, the vigour demanded by the cold, the enterprise required by the harshness of the terrain and the

climate, sublime, soul elevating beauty of the mountain vistas, even nearness to God...and the presence of the whitest thing on earth, snow. All these virtues could be seen to have formed the white character, its energy, enterprise, discipline and spiritual elevation, and even the white body, its hardness and toughness...its affinity with (snowy) whiteness.

(21)

Whites, then, are characteristically and intrinsically separated from nonwhites because of their genealogy which both brings them closer to God and makes them more sturdy beings as a result of their experiences through the Caucasus Mountains. They are also separated from nonwhites in terms of their biology. While biological approaches to race tend to focus on nonwhites more than whites—since to locate whiteness in the body would suggest, like nonwhites, that they are no more than the body—there was nevertheless an attempt to use biological and scientific methods to identify specifically white characteristics. This, however, was accompanied by a countervailing discourse which suggested that whites have that little something more that made them different (Dyer 23).

This idea of a “something more in whites” is articulated by George Mosse who illustrates its manifestation in the linkages made between the German people and the Aryan race. He observes that a principle architect of Nazi Germany’s theory of race was Houston Stewart Chamberlain whose contribution, the “...famed *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century (Die Grundlagen Des XIX Jahrhunderts, 1899)* ...cannot be underestimated” (Mosse 105). Mosse argues that Chamberlain founded his theory on Emanuel Kant who:

...postulated an essence of things beyond reason and pragmatism. This essence was the 'German religion'...which was a monopoly of Aryan 'race-soul.' Such a soul made Germans honest, loyal, and industrious; thus middle-class morality became...a quality of the German race. Moreover, Chamberlain believed in the Aryan stereotype, and here he accepted anthropological and cranial measurements. But as not all Germans possessed the outward appearance proper to Aryans it seemed best to retreat to the race-soul which they did share. (105-06)

White (men), then, have an extra something about them, "what we might call 'spirit': get up and go, aspiration, awareness of the highest reaches of intellectual comprehension and aesthetic refinement" (Dyer 23) which amounts to what I call "will" in their bodies, but which is not of the body.

The notion of *grace* is also connected to this idea of spirit or will. Christianity, Dyer argues, proceeds along the relationship between mind and body where the latter is often seen as inferior or even evil, yet is nevertheless the vessel for the former. Both Mary and Christ whose bodies were pure provide models to which ordinary humans may aspire. In women passivity, expectancy, receptivity, a kind of sacred readiness, among other qualities, constitute a certain purity and state of grace. "In men the model is of a divided nature and internal struggle between mind (God) and body (man) and of suffering as the supreme expression of both spiritual and physical striving" (16).

From these two models we can theorize a notion of femininity in masculinity, following Ashis Nandy's lead as discussed above in the section on colonialism, as might be applied to the white male when faced with imminent defeat against an adversary or

when faced with death, namely *grace under pressure*. The grace in this construction would be derived from the effeminate position—receptivity, sacred readiness—in defeat, while to withstand the pressure itself (with grace) exemplifies both spiritual and physical striving. Whites, then—white men—may not be colonized in ways nonwhites can be since the essential nature of whites makes them poor colonial subjects. This notion also allows for the idea of incarnation since even in defeat it is the spirit within white bodies, but not of white bodies, which lives on; the body may be defeated, but not the spirit. It is this spirit residing in whites that gives them enterprise, and eventually helps to provide a rationale for imperialism (Dyer 15).

Ernest Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" helps to illustrate some of these prevailing notions of the origins of whiteness in literature. In that short story, the way Hemingway describes and constructs the protagonist, Harry Wilson, accounts for the inner spirit and will Dyer suggests is central to white bodies. In addition, the idea that there is some life after death, some heavenly place preserved for the spirit which resides in whites in the way that the spirit of the Christ was preserved through his ascension may be seen as an important structural element of the plot of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro."

In Dyer's representation of whiteness in film, this heavenly place to which the spirit ascends is caught on camera by fading out all other colors and replacing them with an over-whelming white screen. Whiteness may also be illustrated by the use of "light[ing] between white men and women...with the connotation of dark desire for the light..." (Dyer 139). *Broken Blossoms* with Richard Barthelmess and Lillian Gish (1929), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* with Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur (1936), and *The Big Sleep* with Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart (1946) illustrate good examples of this (Dyer

134-137). In Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Harry Wilson ascends into the heavens and into brilliant whiteness after the airplane that has come to rescue him circles near the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, enabling the narrator to describe the last, highly symbolic scene Wilson imagines just before he dies "...all he could see, *as wide as the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro.* And then he knew that there was where he was going" (56; italics mine).

This last scene of Wilson's life captures the blank whiteness of Dyer's screen with the "unbelievably white...square top of Kilimanjaro" and ties it to Wilson as a white man. This scene occurs at a point in the text that seems to synthesize his real life experiences—those which culminated in his trip to Africa with his wife, Helen—and those of a life wished for, but not lived or experienced. That life of adventure and enterprise was always desired but never lived because Harry had succumbed to the material trappings of his wife's wealth.

The setting of the story is the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Wilson, who has been on a hunting tour with Helen, his most recent wife, has had an accident and is near death due to his rotting gangrenous leg. Indeed, the entire text may be seen as a description of the dissolution of Wilson's body in preparation for another more heavenly place as the very first line of the text seems to suggest with, "The marvelous thing is that it's [the injury] painless" (39). Our introduction to Wilson, then, not only suggests that he has begun to lose touch with his five senses, those senses upon which the body is dependent, but also that he has the capacity to exercise grace under the pressure of impending death.

While Wilson's imaginings about an unfulfilled life may be seen as symptomatic

of illness associated with his gangrenous leg, it may also be seen as a kind of middle state or purgatory between his earthly life and his heavenly one. Indeed, the notion of a spiritual purgatory is supported by the fact that in these moments of reflection there are confessions of various sins he has committed against Helen and others. It is at these moments that he is most truthful about the life that he has led, and the people he has hurt and loved. We might see this as a kind of cleansing of the spirit before he ascends.

The first stories Wilson relate are awash with images of symbolic whiteness illustrated by the snows which pervade them. The following story is illustrative:

...No, that's not snow. It's too early for snow. And the secretary repeating to the other girls, no, you see. It's not snow and them all saying, it's not snow we were mistaken. But it was the snow all right and he sent them on into it when he evolved exchange of populations. And it was snow they tramped along in until they died that winter. (42)

Both endless snow and death, two highly symbolic elements of the purity of the spirit, are key ideas that are repeated here. Also established is the idea of death coupled with snow as the last line, "And it was snow they tramped along in until they died that winter" suggests. The idea of life after death is also established later in the vignette as the following suggests, "Those were the same Austrians they had killed then that he skied with later" (42). While the very next sentence retracts this idea, "No not the same." the notion of a reincarnation is established, and the image of this life being pervaded by a wintry white endless snow is inescapable.

The notion of a spirit or will residing in Wilson and other white characters illustrated by these examples is rendered more specific when we consider the structure of

“The Snows of Kilimanjaro.” The story consists of two narratives. One is concerned with the ‘here and now’ and the other is concerned with the flash backs of an imagined and unfulfilled life as discussed above. Wilson emerges as an unaccomplished hero because he is seduced by the trappings of his wife’s material wealth. He is forced to lament his unfulfilled ambitions as a writer through the narrator of the story who becomes the vehicle by which Harry’s heroic stories are related. These stories are drawn from Harry’s experiences—experiences the reader knows only through the narrator’s relating of Harry’s inner-most thoughts. They are focused primarily on Harry’s realization that he had the capacity to exercise his will—as illustrated by the ways in which he confronts his environment in these stories which are replete with danger—but did not. The tension in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” is created, in part, by the differences we find in the willful Harry presented in these flashbacks, and the will-less Harry who is now dying of gangrene.

The will we see in Harry’s flashbacks connect him to the Western tradition of Christianity in particular ways for it is a will or spirit of the Judeo-Christian faith that he exhibits. Judeo-Christian godliness is unique amongst the three principle religions in its attention to the body, or perhaps more specifically, the spirit *in* the body. As Dyer argues:

Christianity’s obsessed with Christ’s body. Yet, rightly, we think of Christianity as an anti-body religion. For all the emphasis on the body in Christianity, the point is the spirit that is ‘in’ the body. What has made Christianity compelling and fascinating is precisely the mystery that it posits, that somehow there is in the body something that is not of the body

which may be variously termed spirit, mind, soul or God. (16)

In Dyer's theoretical formulation, it is this spirit that separates whites from the rest of humanity theologically, and elevates them to a higher order of being. It is because Harry Wilson can imagine, and reflect on his identity, the very identity he is so conscious of creating for himself as he reflects on the unfulfilled life he has led, that makes him fully human. While Harry does not fulfill his potential and live the full life described in his imaginings, what is very clear for the reader is that he has the capacity to do so. By way of contrast, Molo, the only one of his black companions who is named in the text, does not have this will; all of his actions in the text emanate from the will of the dying Harry Wilson.

Race

In Dyer's formulation of whiteness, blacks—the darker skinned opponents of the crusaders—do not have will or spirit. They are only physical bodies which must be defeated or controlled. It is the white man's will that takes responsibility for improving the world, and it is his will that he uses to remain pure. Indeed, the great Christian challenge is to be in the world without being corrupted by it; that is, without being of it. Whites achieve this by the exercise of the will God gave man, but which seems manifest *only* in whites; the darker races are only flesh, creatures only of appetite and impulse. Black skin, then, comes to be synonymous with evil, and immorality, while white skin comes to be synonymous with purity and God. However, Dyer goes on to say:

At the level of representation, whites remain, for all their transcending superiority, dependent on non-whites for their sense of self, just as they are materially in so many imperial and post-imperial, physical and

domestic labour circumstances... the emphasis on whites being distinguished by that which cannot be seen, whether spirit or merely genetically conceptualized intelligence, means that it is complicated to represent white people visually. (24)

Though Dyer here refers to the difficulty of representing whites and whiteness in film—and indeed, a similar difficulty exists in representing them in literature as my present discussion of Hemingway, for instance, illustrates—he also points to the ways in which whiteness tends to symbolize capital as blackness tends to symbolize labor. This is illustrated by his keen observation that whites, in a capitalist economy premised upon white supremacy as Jon-Christian Suggs suggests in the opening epigraph of this chapter, are materially dependant upon the labor of blacks in numerous ways. This observation is also significant because it demonstrates the oppositional nature of whiteness as an aspect of one's cultural identity. White identity comes into being by positing blackness as that which it is not. Without the “Other” in juxtaposition, there is no white identity. This is not only true in terms of material gain, but also true in terms of social and cultural identity as Dyer suggests.

Dyer goes on to argue that whites are unable to see their own particularity and therefore cannot take account of anyone else's. It is in this way that some people come to see whiteness as invisible (Dyer 9). He suggests that whites create the dominant images of the world, and do not see that they thus construct the world in their own image, further arguing that they set standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail (Dyer 9). Cultural Whiteness, then, sets the standard of what is “normal”.

For Dyer, these elements of whiteness create and maintain the equation of being white with being human and secure white people a position of power (9). Michael Omi and Howard Winant in their book, Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's, support Dyer's assertions. They say:

...the seizure of territories and goods, the introduction of slavery through the *encomienda* and other forms of coerced native labor, and then through the organization of the African slave trade—not to mention the practice of outright extermination—all presupposed a worldview which distinguished Europeans, as children of God, full-fledged human beings...from 'Others.' (62)

While Omi and Winant's assertions here point to the specifics of empire, we also see how race and Christianity are linked to create a Manichean world which places whites and the white body at its pinnacle and as divine rulers.

Indeed, Dyer argues that white people have power and believe that they think feel and act like and for all people. Dyer, through the epistemology of film studies sees the ideology of whiteness continuing to function as a mechanism to separate white people from black people through a system of exclusion because of "aspects of the bodies of white people in representation: skin color, aesthetics of lighting, the muscular white male, and deathliness" (14). Black people can be reduced (through this logic) to their bodies and thus to race, but white people are, and have, something else that is realized in, and yet is not reducible to, the corporeal, or racial (14-15). This something else, as indicated, constitutes a kind of "will" or enterprise, which blacks simply lack due to their carnal nature. Whites maintain a certain spiritual connection to God through this will and are in

a sense his chosen people; those for whom Eden was created.

The implications and consequences of this ideology are exhibited in at least two significant places in Dyer's text which are relevant to the cultural epistemology of whiteness. In one instance Dyer discusses how the ruling class in 1920's and 1930's Italy ally white identity with the image of the well-developed body-builder's body. This had a displacing affect on the Italian working class such that their anxieties of disenfranchisement were sublimated onto feelings of kinship to a larger-than-life image of Italian masculinity which they associate with themselves (165).

A similar act of displacement with respect to whiteness occurs in David Roediger's book, The Wages of Whiteness. Here, however, the direction of the displacement is reversed as his analysis illustrates Irish workers in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century putting on blackface and performing minstrelsy (Roediger 117). In this instance, the argument goes, the Irish workers, unable to enjoy the lascivious things of life blacks were said to enjoy outside newly industrialized U.S. society, put on blackface and act out their desires mimicking the lives they imagined blacks to lead. While the two forms of displacement are different in many respects, they both use notions of whiteness to control a disenfranchised working class. In the American context, this control is obviously delineated along racial lines that underscore the idea that black workers and white workers were intrinsically different.

Another example of the imbrication of whiteness into the film industry involves the decision-making process by which arc lighting is preferred to tungsten lighting in film to this day. In this example, Dyer emphasizes the importance of "individuality" and also demonstrates how the industry was materially altered to accommodate and highlight the

features of the white image despite the fact that arc lighting was uncomfortable for actors and actresses to work with and more expensive than tungsten lighting for film studios (92). Dyer argues convincingly that the industry not only participated in privileging the white image on the screen, and therefore whiteness, but also participated in constructing it (122). He goes on to argue that:

Movie lighting valorizes the notion of the unique and special character of the individual, of the individuality of the individual. It is at the least arguable that white society has found it hard to see non-white people as individuals; the very notion of the individual, of the freely developing, autonomous human person, is only applicable to those who are seen to be free and autonomous, who are not slaves or subject peoples. Movie lighting discriminates against non-white people because it is used in a cinema and a culture that finds it hard to recognize them as appropriate subjects for such lighting, that is, as individuals. (102)

Here Dyer argues that the film industry constructs individuality as a function of the image of white people on the cinematic screen. It is also consistent with his formulation of how whiteness correlates with Christianity in Western culture as the idea of individuality and a spirit or will have the same referent—the white subject—though they come from different epistemologies.

Dyer's assertion also seems to support the notion that Molo, the black character in Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," is constructed as less human than function in the text since his only mark of individuality is his name which is in fact a geographic location—El Molo—in the Tanzania/Kenya region of Africa where the story is set. The

fact that Hemingway chose to name the only black character in the text after a place suggests that they, like the land itself, may be dominated. Beyond his name, Molo is as anonymous as the other black baggage carriers in the text, but not inconsequential. He is important because he helps to establish Wilson as special, unique and an individual. This occurs, in part, because Molo is left so indistinct in the text. As we shall see in chapter three of this study, the notion of individuality, while complicated by notions of social class in ways not discussed by Dyer, is nevertheless an important element of whiteness in Western culture, and as I discuss, in the literature of North America.

In this section on whiteness and culture I have tried to show how notions of cultural whiteness are organized around the white body and the “spirit” that is said to reside in the body of whites, but not in the body of blacks. This spirit not only identifies whites as closer to God, but also gives whites the capacity to exercise human will and grace under pressure in ways blacks cannot. Cultural whiteness becomes the worship of white skin in a logic that appropriates racialized Others for the purpose of establishing social and cultural identity. Whiteness in this logic is highly privileged.

Social Formation and Whiteness: How the Jews Become White

Karen Brodtkin’s text, How the Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America, is a historical assessment of the social processes by which an ethno-racial group—in this case, Jewish Americans of North Eastern America—may become white where “white” means something other than skin color. Just as Dyer observes whiteness through the lens of cultural studies and film, Brodtkin observes whiteness through the lens of American Studies. Brodtkin tells us how a juxtaposition of Jewishness with a constructed and servicing African-American identity created a

“whitened” Jewishness. In essence, African-American culture was used metonymically to circumscribe the bounds of a particularized, distinctly *white*, Jewish culture. My own study, however, is informed by a different kind of story Brodtkin tells. Through a detailed historical analysis involving class conflict, political maneuverings and social movements, Brodtkin suggests that *Yiddishkeit*, a particular form of immigrant Jewishness combining cultural threads from several Jewish groups across Eastern and central Europe and cultivated on the Lower East Side of New York City at the turn of the twentieth century allowed poor Jews of the region to become “not quite white” (105).

This “not quite white” status was, apparently, an anomalous phenomenon that provided a simulacrum of whiteness for Eastern European Jews of the North East that let them, over time, through education and an insular form of socialism unique to them, function within the range of whiteness without initially constructing a racially-framed whiteness for themselves by trading on their difference from blacks. This was quite different from the assimilationist history of most middle and upper-middle-class German Jews who had come to America following the political disruptions of 1848.

Yiddishkeit at the turn of the Twentieth Century

Yiddishkeit was not only part of the cultural adhesive that allowed Jews across socioeconomic lines to identify with a single community that was coping with anti-Semitism, but it was also important for establishing an insularity for that community that was independent and in some ways in opposition to greater white North American culture. Its opposition to white America came out of a form of Jewish socialism that was a direct result of their exclusion from greater American culture. It also exhibited a largely working-class anti-capitalist worldview (105).

Yiddishkeit did not eliminate class differences of opinions or create a consistent opposition to bourgeoisie life; rather, it understood itself as different to and even separate from it (136). Brodtkin says, “Yiddishkeit and capitalism’s dislocations combined to break down the class divisions between the wealthy and the learned on the one hand, and the ordinary manual workers on the other” (107). This “not quite white” status, because of its insularity and its self-contained cultural norms that were not immediately connected to mainstream America was unique in that it was not dependant upon the subjugation of blacks to form or inform its identity.

The status of being “not quite white,” also afforded Jews of the North East the opportunity to possess whiteness in that they were simultaneously inside of America, yet culturally independent of its racialized structure. While Jews endured savage racism in the process, they were one of the first Euro-ethnic groups to attend institutions of higher learning around the turn of the century (Brodtkin 31). Though they were in large measure physically indistinguishable from their white Anglo-Saxon protestant classmates, they did distinguish themselves academically. According to Brodtkin, at the turn of the century upwardly mobile Jews used these institutions of higher learning for social class promotion while their Anglo-Saxon counterparts used them largely as finishing schools for social graces, and more importantly, social connections.

Robert Cohn, in Hemingway’s, The Sun Also Rises, is a good example of this approach to social mobility on the part of Jews. Not only is Cohn seen as excelling in sports having distinguished himself as a middleweight boxing champion of Princeton (3), but Hemingway’s identification of Cohn as a Princeton man suggests that he excels

academically as well. Indeed, our understanding that Cohn has published a moderately successful novel reinforces this idea (8).

Post World War II Yiddishkeit Reformulated as White

The fruits of access to elite higher education were ripened after World War II when Jewish Americans were able to take advantage of several government programs set up after the war which were ostensibly for all returning GIs. Through these programs, Jews of Eastern European backgrounds, though “not quite white,” became at least middle class. Their movement into newly developing and all-white neighborhoods was just one of the many ways that Jews elevated their social class, and began to attain social whiteness. This distinctly white American middle-class life, as well as breaking up the traditional Jewish family through an influx of increasingly American cultural norms, effectively ended the insular nature of Yiddishkeit. The process of enculturation into whiteness had been accomplished, for the most part, without the kind of racial “Othering” practiced by the earlier Irish and Italian immigrants.

The movement to become socially white peaked during the twenty years between 1947 and 1967. In that period there was a conscientious movement, at least on the part of Hollywood as exhibited by the film *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947), adapted from a best-selling novel by Laura Z. Hobson, to give Jews a white social identity. This period also saw a rapid influx of Jewishness into mainstream American culture. As Brodtkin says:

... this was a period when white America embraced Jews and everything Jewish and even Jewishness as part of itself. You didn't have to be Jewish to love Levy's rye bread or tell Jewish jokes. Jews could become Americans and Americans could be like Jews... (140)

Jewish phrases such as “schmuck” and “schlep” become standard as did such Jewish foods as the bagel. Barbie and Ken, now icons of American culture, are invented and produced by a Jewish American couple, Ruth and Elliot Handler, and are based upon their daughter Barbie and their son Ken (Brodkin 143). The degree of acquiring “whiteness” achieved by the Handler’s generation is exemplified by the exaggerated “whiteness” of the blond Barbie. Every possible physiological reference to stereotypes of Eastern European Jewishness had been erased. While this new formulation of Jewishness was not the only form of Jewish American identity, it was the most recognizable and the one to which many Jewish Americans responded to and reacted against in the post World War II period (139).

According to Brodkin, this version of Jewishness took elements of Yiddishkeit and reinvented it “as very Anglo-Saxon like” (183). It was mainly constructed by Jewish public intellectuals around:

...a male-centered version of Jewishness that was prefiguratively white...these public intellectuals fashioned an interpretation of the postwar world and Jews’ place in it. Because that interpretation resonated with and also reconciled the discomfort of many Jews’ experiences of upward mobility, it came to be the most widely disseminated version of Jewishness. (139)

This is significant for our purposes because it implicates a desire for upward mobility in the construction of Jewish whiteness. This desire was satisfied by juxtaposing Jews as “model minorities” with a servicing construction of the African American that posited

them as degenerate. It is here that the previously missing element of constructed “whiteness” finally emerges.

The servicing construction of the African American was an indispensable part of the whitening of Jewish life in America. Jewish writers constructed narratives of the African American family against which they juxtapose the Jewish family. This maneuver further integrated Jewishness into mainstream American social structures. The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and the Jewish American writer and sociologist, Nathan Glazer are good examples of how this was achieved. To quote Brodtkin:

Beyond the Melting Pot, a work on New York City’s major ethnic cultures coauthored [by] Daniel Moynihan [and Nathan Glazer], pulls together the strands of this viewpoint most clearly. Although Moynihan is usually thought of as the creator of the myth of the black matriarch, its seeds lay in Nathan Glazer’s chapters on Negroes and Puerto Ricans. Glazer’s contribution to the book—its conception and most of the chapters were his—was a sustained contrast between bad Negro and Puerto Rican cultures and not-so-good Italian culture on the one hand, and Jews as exemplary in their own goodness on the other. (145)

The viewpoint Brodtkin refers to here is her notion that ethnic pluralism gave rise to a new construction of specifically Jewish whiteness by contrasting Jews as a model minority with African Americans as culturally deficient (Brodtkin 144).

By the end of the 1960’s Jews, like the Irish and the Italians as well as other ethno-racial groups before them, began to occupy a white social position. While the

precise mechanism in each case was different they each nevertheless achieved whiteness by constructing similar narratives of themselves in opposition to the African-American.

Effeminizing the Male Other: Constructing the White Self-Made Man

Interestingly, Brodtkin's chapter three, "Race Gender and Virtue in Civic Discourse" reinforces my discussion of Ashis Nandy's theory of the gendered colonized subject. In ways similar to Nandy, Brodtkin suggests that both African Americans and the white working class of the late nineteenth century, largely made up of European immigrants, became effeminized by a particular notion of masculinity and manliness which had at its center the white Anglo-Saxon male. Brodtkin says:

Social Darwinism and similar forms of scientific racism had their counterparts in a turn-of-the-century American civic discourse that also saw white manliness as a product of evolution, a success story of the rise of refined taste, knowledge, intelligence, and 'the manly self-restraint which allowed them to become self-made men.' Not only were African Americans said to be lacking in these traits, but so too were the European immigrants who made up the bulk of the late nineteenth-century working class.

...Stereotypes invented in service of slavery and imperialism [were] rediscovered and recycled to support domination over new groups of proletarians. Thus, nonwhite Asian and Jewish men came to be stereotyped as effeminate, more like "their" women than white men, when they joined the bottom of the labor force, while African American and Polish men were labeled hypermasculine and hypersexual, again, more like 'their' women than white men. (84)

This was significant. First, Brodwin's passage allows us to see that the African American and European immigrant male's assumed lack of "refined taste, knowledge, and 'manly restraint which allowed them to become self-made [men].'" is grounds for his subjugation. The last characteristic they are said to lack is significant because it underscores the idea of a spirit or will residing in whites that was articulated in my discussion of Richard Dyer's White. However, Brodwin's assertion modifies Dyer's claim by suggesting that this whiteness is not unrestricted, but is instead subject to social class structures. We see that under certain conditions, white skin provides no basis for admittance into whiteness when the subject occupies a working-class identity. Thus, white immigrants are also effeminized.

Secondly, while both African Americans and working-class whites are seen as inferior in civic discourse in similar ways, their effeminization is differentiated in terms of gender. This differentiation not only reinforced an essentialist discourse around notions of race, but it also reinforced working-class division along racial lines. This occurs because masculinity in each community is formulated in diametrically opposing ways; to find common cause across cultural lines with these prevailing myths would have been difficult at best.

The African American, then, as well as the working-class European immigrant, must not only be a subjugated version of his white middle-class counterpart, he must simultaneously be feminized in relation to them. The claim to manhood for the white middle-class male is always a function of his claim to whiteness which is mediated by his claim to middle-classness.

Whiteness as Property: Racial Identity and the Law

In the previous section on social whiteness I suggested that Jews of the American North East became white through a juxtaposition of a constructed Jewishness and a constructed and servicing African-American identity which included specific ideas about the African-American family and masculinity. African-American culture was appropriated and used metonymically to create a “whitened” Jewishness.

Cheryl Harris’s “Whiteness as Property” is an attempt to account for the imbrication of whiteness into the narrative and history of American law. It further, as she argues, “investigates the relationship between concepts of race and property and reflects on how rights in property are contingent on, intertwined and conflated with race” (1714).

Harris’s essay is divided into five parts. First is an introduction which situates her own family history—including her grandmother’s legacy of “passing” into the legal history of whiteness in America. Part II traces the evolution of whiteness from color to race to status as property as a historical progression rooted in white supremacy. This part of her essay also demonstrates that whiteness and property, share a similar conceptual nucleus—the right to exclude (1714). Part III examines at least two forms of whiteness as property: status property and modern property. Part IV discusses the persistence of whiteness as property through time, and Part V offers a solution to the property status of whiteness that is rooted in a properly conceived and reconstructed notion of an affirmative action program rooted in social policy and legal doctrine. For the purpose of this study, I will discuss part II, whiteness as property since it provides us with a lens through which to account for the role of whiteness in legal studies, and part IV, the property status of whiteness’s ability to persist through time. This part of Harris’s argument is important as it ties the cultural and social threads of whiteness together as

discussed in Richard Dyer and Karen Brodtkin respectively, and helps to demonstrate whiteness's ability to change its form without substantially changing its potency or content. Put another way, Harris helps us see how whiteness remains a powerful cultural code.

Whiteness and Property Rights

According to Harris the hyper-exploitation of blacks—slavery—may be understood as a conflation of race and property (1716). That is to say, blackness was a symbol of property, just as whiteness was a symbol of rights *in* property. This is a significant formulation when juxtaposed with conclusions drawn from Dyer suggesting that whiteness tends to symbolize capital as blackness tends to symbolize labor. Together Dyer and Harris suggest that the basis of slavery is the property interest in the labor of blacks by those considered legally white. Indeed, as a review of Bruce Levine's Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War by David W. Blight suggests:

...to Confederates the war was all about preserving their “property” in slaves. For example, plantation mistress Catherine Edmondston condemned any attempt to arm slaves because it would ‘destroy at one blow the highest jewel in the crown’ ...and Brig. Gen. Clement H. Stevens spoke for most Confederate officers when he announced, ‘If slavery is to be abolished then I take no more interest in our fight’....fellow southerners would, in the words of a Georgia congressman, ‘give up their sons, husbands, brothers & friends, and often without murmuring, to the army; but let one of their negroes be taken, and what a howl you will hear.’ (Washington Post March 5, 2006)

Levine's book seems to reinforce just how central the idea of owning slaves was to the south's sense of its own identity. This interest in the labor of blacks and its centrality to southern white identity, according to Harris, is accentuated and supported by American law which "has established and protected an actual property interest in whiteness..." (1724). This further suggests a theory of property which extends beyond physical, material possessions. Harris tells us:

Although by popular usage property describes 'things' owned by persons, or the rights of persons with respect to a thing, the concept of property prevalent among most theorists, even prior to the twentieth century, is that property may consist of rights in 'things' that are intangible, or whose existence is a matter of legal definition. Property is thus said to be a right, not a thing, characterized as metaphysical, not physical. (1725)

This conception of property is significant as it explains another way in which whiteness might be separated from white people. More precisely, this definition allows us to consider the contingent nature and uses of whiteness. As Harris goes on to point out explicitly, while whiteness has functioned as self-identity in the domain of the personal and psychological, it has also functioned as property in public and legal realms. She argues that "[a]ccording whiteness actual legal status converted an aspect of identity into an external object of property, thus moving whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest" (1725).

For Harris, then, racial subordination and oppression is not only a product of the racialization of identity in American culture and society as Brodtkin suggests but,

crucially, is also rooted in the origins of property rights in the United States (1716). She argues that “it was the *interaction* between conceptions of race and property that played a critical role in establishing and maintaining racial and economic subordination” (1716).

American Indians and Legal Whiteness

Theodore Allen in his book, The Invention of the White Race, makes a similar assertion. He points out that “...the exiling of thousands of Cherokee people over the trail of tears in 1838 was justified on the grounds that ‘common property and civilization cannot coexist’” (37).

Here Allen points to the fact that the Cherokee had no conception of private property if by property one means the right to exclude. Similarly, Harris points to the role conceptions of race played in determining who could exercise property rights, not only in terms of real estate or material goods—including slaves—but also in terms of property’s more theoretical and abstract definition as in a right in things such as a right to a person’s labor (Harris 1725).

Both the idea of a right to exclude for private property and the right to a person’s labor is dramatically played out in Ernest Hemingway’s short story, “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife”. In this story, the doctor, a white man, is in a dispute with Dick Boulton, a Native American who owes the doctor money for “pulling his squaw through pneumonia” (75). In an attempt to get his money back in the form of Dick’s labor, the doctor asks Dick to chop logs for him. Both the location of the logs and the location of the altercation between Dick and the doctor become important to the nature of their dispute, and significantly, appear to be responsible for disarming the doctor on both legal and moral grounds. At the beginning of the story we are told:

Dick Boulton came in from the Indian camp to cut up logs for Nick's father. He brought his son Eddy and another Indian named Billy Tabeshaw with him. They came in through the back gate out of the woods (73).

As Thomas Strychacz points out in his essay, "Dramatization of Manhood in Hemingway's In Our Time and The Sun Also Rises," the garden the three Indians walk into is separated from the woods by a fence which marks the domain of the doctor's property, which has been appropriated from the Indian land which was once part of the woods from which they appear and, at the end of the story into which they disappear (Dramatization 250).

As we come to discover, the logs themselves have also been appropriated since they belong to the mill works White and McNally; they floated down river and lodged on the doctor's property. In terms of property rights, both the presence of the logs on the doctor's property, and the presence of the Indians inside the fence demarcating the doctor's property which had been appropriated from Indian land presents a set of issues—legal and moral—that are contingent upon notions of whiteness *as* property.

In the first instance, while the logs are on the doctor's property, they remain the legal property of the Mill—aptly named White and McNally. The doctor's attempt to appropriate the logs constitutes an *illegal* act precisely because White and McNally are a white-owned company. Ironically enough, it is this act of illegal appropriation that Dick Boulton uses to prevent the doctor from appropriating his right to Dick's labor. Dick also uses the doctor's willingness to break the law as a means to cross and re-cross the doctor's fenced in land on moral grounds since Boulton accuses the doctor of stealing the

logs which simultaneously and symbolically acts as an accusation of stealing—making private—the land they stand on. In this instance, the doctor is unable to act on moral or legal grounds because Boulton has been able to use whiteness against the doctor by invoking the property rights of White and McNally. He then proceeds to invoke his own rights as an Indian on that which was once Indian land—the doctor’s own fenced in property. The doctor has lost his right in whiteness and is defenseless against Boulton as a result.

African Americans and Legal Whiteness

The awareness of whiteness as property may be traced through many aspects of African-American life and culture, especially through African-American literature. That is to say, African-American literature is an important historical commentary on the genesis and development of whiteness as an external object of property. This commentary is informed by the practice of self-reflection as illustrated by Big Mat in Blood on the Forge discussed earlier, and an acute awareness of the historical narrative of American law.

This particular connection between African-American literature and whiteness is implicated in Jon-Christian Suggs’s book Whispered Consolations: Law and Narrative in African-American Life. Here Suggs argues that American law, as a feature of African American literature, is in fact indispensable. He says:

...the ground of all conscious activity in the African American texts I will mention is the law. It would be hard to overstate how fundamentally law permeates both fiction and ‘nonfiction’ texts, although this importance is not immediately apparent. The grounding presence of the law escapes

notice in the fictions primarily because it is so fundamental, because all these fictions promote, argue, defend, lament, put case for, and premise every action on the question of the legal status of African Americans.

Further, it is upon this constantly contested status that all substantial African American life is based. So even when a novel is not, for a moment, contemplating the law, it is waiting for the next legal moment.

(44)

While the grounding of all conscious activity in many African-American texts is the law as Suggs argues, the foundation is predicated upon a particular kind of self-reflection without which the texts themselves could not be written. This reflection, as noted in the example of William Attaway's Blood on the Forge, speaks loudly and voluminously about the contingent nature of whiteness and how it is intimately related to the practice of American citizenship. While the legal status of African Americans may well be contested space, it is contested precisely because American law appropriated—and continues to appropriate—African-American humanity.

The Persistence of Whiteness as Property

An example of the appropriation of African-American humanity may be seen in relatively recent Supreme Court decisions which suggest that whiteness as a legal property interest persists to the continued detriment of blacks. Harris's discussion of the Supreme Court case involving Regents of University of California v. Bakke (1078) is illustrative of this. In that court case, Alan Bakke, a white medical student who scored higher on his Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) than the black, Latino and Asian students admitted to the program through a special admissions program sued the

medical school for “reverse discrimination” claiming an Equal Protection violation under the fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

While Bakke had been denied admission to other medical schools on the grounds of his age, and while he did not claim Equal protection violations on the grounds of his social class,⁵ he could—and did—claim a violation against his property interest in whiteness. Harris argues:

The court demonstrated its sympathetic concern for his interest in this circumstance by deferring to his vested property interest in whiteness and intervening to reorder the situation to his benefit and in accordance with his expectations. (1773)

The American legal system has been, or desires to be, blind to the depth and the persistence of white supremacy that still haunts it. Under the flag of “color-blind law,” racism permeates all aspects of civil life, including the literature produced here.

Whiteness and Literature: Morrison’s Playing in the Dark

In the previous section on whiteness and the law I suggested that American law protects the property interests in whiteness and those considered legally white. This is achieved by respecting rights in things and a person’s right to exclude. Harris shows us that these rights are contingent upon a person’s race as the Bakke decision demonstrates. These rights also have cultural and social dimensions as illustrated by Bakke’s reluctance to sue the set-aside programs established to protect the children of wealthy donors and alumni. I also suggest that a careful study of African American literature reveals it to be keenly aware of the role the law plays in granting and denying full citizenship contingent

⁵ As Harris points out, neither the well-established bias against older applicants to medical school nor the seats set aside for the children of wealthy donors or alumni was challenged by Bakke (Harris 1773).

upon one's legal claim to whiteness. I further suggest that American civic life has been permeated by whiteness. Indeed, this is a central tenet of Toni Morrison's book, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. Here, Morrison argues that the "Africanist presence" plays a crucial role in the development of American literature and does so through *romance*.

Toni Morrison's term, "Africanist presence," refers to the literal presence of blacks in literature. More significantly, it refers to the symbolic representation of blacks, and embodies the notion of the racial Other. It is important for understanding how whiteness functions in the work of American literature generally and in the work of Ernest Hemingway—as well as Willa Cather and Edgar Allan Poe—specifically. Morrison argues that these authors construct a notion of the self—specifically a racialized white self—for their protagonists against which is juxtaposed an Africanist presence. Indeed, many of the protagonists' identities are both dependent and contingent upon this constructed Africanist presence. The idea of the Africanist presence in literature is similar to the construction of the African-American family presented by Moynihan and Glazer as discussed by Karen Brodtkin in How the Jews Became White Folks. In both instances a constructed African American identity is presented against which an idealized white identity is created. In the case presented by Brodtkin, it is an ethno-racial social group that is created—Jews of the Northeastern United States—at the expense of the African-American family. In the case presented by Morrison it is a white literary identity at the expense of the presentation of black characters who lack the capacity for full humanity.

Romance, White Manhood, and the Africanist Presence

The Africanist presence, as Morrison defines it, also takes on significance as a historical indicator of early white American notions of self through romance. That is to say, African Americans were an essential part of the development of early American identity. When the first Europeans landed on the North American continent fleeing religious persecution and oppression, they were separated from their oppressors by a vast body of water and a great distance. Their anxieties about the new world; its potential to help them re-imagine their lives anew, and the freedom to express that imagination, as well as the fears that propelled them to the Americas—including the fear of absolute freedom—became embodied in the form of the African. The African becomes part of a romantic image and idealized narrative where they play the spoiler, sinful and evil, who must be defeated to restore order and civility, and perhaps most important of all, white masculinity and manhood. Here we see the importance of Brodtkin who articulates this idea vis-à-vis Jewish identity, and also Dyer whose discussion of whiteness and Christianity is implicated here by the reference to good and evil.

This is one way Jon-Christian Suggs understands the relationship between white males, the United States Constitution, African Americans and the narrative of American law. He argues:

...the Constitution assumes the rights of white males to hold citizenship and to exercise its prerogatives, and assumes the referentiality of common law to be always and naturally to white males. The assumptions privilege white males in the text of American positive law as natural beings and so gives them status as situated in a condition extant prior to the law itself. African Americans, on the other hand, are

amendments to the natural narrative of American legal and social reality, and their individuality and collective existences must always be argued rather than assumed. (44-45)

Not only does this reading further contextualize our reading of Harris in that it locates the genesis of the property interests in whiteness at the legal moment of America's inception, but it further posits the African American as "amendments to the natural narrative of American legal and social reality" just as white males are "natural beings" prefiguring the law itself. This reading, according to Suggs, not only reverberates throughout the American legal system and subsequently American civic life, but also contextualizes white masculinity as good, pure, and natural while blacks are seen as their diametric opposites. Indeed, the Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896 establishing the separate but equal doctrine follows this logic. Plessy created, in American law and society, an Eden that could once again be established after the "corruption" caused by Reconstruction and freeing the serpent, the African-American. As Suggs points out, the Plessy decision:

[is a] textualization of the desire to regain paradise. ... '[S]eparate but equal' is an Edenic formulation; it promises an America as the Judeo-Christian God of white people might have made her, that great good place where the evidence of an evenhanded Creation stood in its several separate and equal parts, the site of 'Adamic multigeneity...' (46)

Just as Adam named the "beasts of the field and all the birds of the air" in Genesis 2:19 after God had separated the heavens from the earth, and the seas from the firmament, so, too, did the Supreme Court justices separate white people from black in a court decision

consummating the notion of racial multigeneity. The ruling reestablished the primacy of white masculinity and manhood through the romanticized image of blackness and blacks as inferior beings who circumscribed rather than participated in civic life. The effect was to create a legal and social America as though the Civil War itself had never happened. As Morrison goes on to tell us, Herman Melville recognized this and reasoned that there is no romance free of the power of blackness (Morrison 37).

The Africanist Presence and Racialized Civic Life

The importance of Morrison's work stretches beyond Africans and the presence of Africans in North America and its literature. Eurocolonial encounters with Native American peoples, for instance, while marked by an "Othering" discourse similar to that surrounding the African in that they were seen as savage, uncivilized and inferior, is different in that in the Native-American context the project was always one conducted outside the Eurocolonial community; they were seen as an "estranged Other." Native Americans were only brought inside the community in an often violent attempt to civilize and—more importantly—make white. In many ways the Native American was seen as the childish colonized: savage, uncivilized, prone to unpredictable violence, but ultimately redeemable. The alternative for them was complete annihilation.

With African Americans, the relationship was always intimate. The African, unlike the Native-American Indian, was an absolutely necessary component for the construction of white identity on the one hand, and the slave economy on the other. The African, then, may be seen as an intimate colonized Other. They were seen as childlike—innocent, and ignorant but masculine representing femininity in masculinity and corrigibility, but the danger that they would become childish—and therefore subject

to violent and unpredictable behavior—was always present. The Otherness presented by the African was *appropriated* to be part of the making of white subjective identity in the United States, while the Native American Indian's Otherness was not appropriated for that particular purpose.

Morrison's work suggests that although the first settlers in the new world were fleeing religious persecution in Europe, they were not immune to its powerful ideology, and indeed brought much of it to the new world with them. What this early period of European settlement in North America provides us with is a glimpse of how these early Euro-Americans viewed the world, and how this worldview was organized, in part, around a distinct white identity circumscribed by, and dependent upon, the Africanist presence.

Morrison, however, does not articulate the crucial role that social class formation played both in the early formative years of the Republic, nor as an aspect of the Africanist presence. When juxtaposed with the work of the other texts discussed here, particularly Nandy's, Brodtkin's and Harris's, Morrison's notion of the Africanist presence is revealed as a mechanism of social control and social-class division as much as it is an intrinsic element of American literature.

The Africanist Presence and American Literature

Morrison gives many examples of the Africanist presence in Playing in the Dark. She implicitly asks two questions: how is the Africanist presence configured in American literature and what affect has the Africanist presence had on white authors and the development of American literature? Morrison illustrates the Africanist presence in

literature and answers these questions using several examples from authors and texts of the American literary canon.

One of the first texts Morrison discusses at some length is Willa Cather's Sapphira and the Slave Girl. While it was largely considered a novelistic failure, it nevertheless illustrates Morrison's theory of the Africanist presence. Indeed, Morrison argues that it is *because* of the novel's attempt to reconcile the Africanist presence with what turns out to be the "sycophancy of white identity" that the novel fails (Morrison 19).

Sapphira and the Slave Girl is a novel set in 1856 and follows the pained struggle of Sapphira Colbert, an aging aristocratic woman in her sixties, to maintain control of her life, and those around her. After suspecting that her husband, Henry, is sexually attracted to Nancy, a slave girl in her household, she plots to have Martin Colbert, Henry's lascivious nephew, come and seduce or rape her and thereby end what she mistakenly believes to be Henry's love interest in Nancy. Nancy escapes to the north with the help of Rachel, Sapphira's abolitionist daughter. After hearing nothing of her daughter for some time, Till, Nancy's mother, breaks her silence, revealing herself to be in possession of the human quality of motherhood—a capacity slaves are not supposed to have—by asking "You ain't heard nothin'?"

Morrison argues that this statement from Till represents a rupture in Cather's narrative. Since nothing in the text to this point has prepared the reader for Till to come to life as anything other than a slave—and thus more believable to the contemporary audience—Cather tries desperately after this point in the novel to avoid the consequences of race by representing the Africanist presence as it has been constructed in and represented by society—without the capacity to reason, with no will, and natively dead.

With Till's words, however, describing as they do the natural human instinct of motherhood, Cather is forced to confront a social, political and historical contradiction in America thereby upsetting the narrative balance of the novel since Till's function is ostensibly a servicing one for the character of her slave mistress, Sapphira.

Another text Morrison discusses illustrating the configuration of the Africanist presence in American literature and its connection to whiteness in literature is Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. In this text it is the slave, Jim, who provides the moral propulsion of the novel, and it is the question of his freedom that is the motivation of the plot and narrative frame along—and along with—the Mississippi river. The question of Jim's humanity serves as a backdrop to illustrate and develop Huck's character and show him as human. This is illustrated in Huck's ability to not only romanticize as the numerous escapes he plots and the very notion of "adventure" suggest, but crucially, in his ability to reason and feel guilt at the prospect of sending Jim back into slavery. Huck is most human when he confronts the social and political norms of his society and chooses *not* to conform to them, thereby rejecting his American citizenship—his place inside of a community that would have slavery. It is important to note that Huck's dilemma is hinged upon the Africanist presence that Jim represents, and further, the nature of his presence in the text as a runaway slave. Huck, though he chooses not to return Jim to slavery, nevertheless understands his own identity by what he considers himself not to be: a slave like Jim.

Morrison argues that whiteness becomes a controlling force which motivates the author, and subsequently the characters he or she creates. She demonstrates this with her discussion of Hemingway's novel, To Have and to Have Not. In that text the protagonist,

Harry, a white man, is instructing a passenger on his fishing boat. A nameless, genderless, nationless African is at the helm and sees promising fishing waters. Instead of giving the African character voice, assertiveness and imagination, Hemingway goes out of his way as an author to channel the sighting of the fish through his protagonist, Harry. Hemingway constructs the following sentence, “The nigger was still taking her out and *I looked and saw that he had seen* a patch of flying fish burst out ahead.” (13 italics mine) In this case, the black character—the Africanist presence—is strategically placed to serve, and propel the protagonist, Harry, forward. Morrison calls this literary trope Metonymic Displacement. Color coding and other physical traits become metonyms that displace rather than signify the African characters. In the Hemingway case cited above, the word “nigger” is a metonym for the specific character we come to discover is named Wesley. He remains, however, nationless, speechless—except to aid Harry—and a two-dimensional character. In short, he fails to exhibit those qualities we generally associate with being human, a capacity for agency, will, and imagination in order for Harry to demonstrate these same qualities.

In this section on whiteness and literature I suggest that the presence of Africans in literature—the Africanist presence—has been, according to Toni Morrison, an important element in the construction of the American literary canon. So central is it that it almost goes completely unnoticed as an aspect of the literature. Part of its centrality is related to its intrinsic role in the creation of white American male identity. Significant to note is the absence of the role social class plays in the construction of the Africanist presence.

Summarizing the Landscape

We began this chapter with a passage from Patrick Bruch in which he argues that whiteness is not so much a personal attribute as it is a cultural construction that people are persuaded to participate in in different ways. His further claim that whiteness is not something one is, but rather something one does provides a useful frame for us to think about how whiteness functions as a multidimensional interdisciplinary epistemology. As such, whiteness seems to be implicated in both the personal and the public sphere; it might be considered personal actions informed by—and having implications for—the public sphere.

Whiteness as a cultural and ideological force to be resisted personally is, in fact, the essence of Mike Hill's essay, "Vipers in Shangri-la: Whiteness, Writing, and Other Ordinary Terrors." Published in 1997, Hill's essay introduces a collection of essays by scholars who treat the subject of whiteness critically. His theoretical frame borrows heavily from lessons learned in the late 1970's and early 1980's by the feminist movement, postcolonial studies, and materialist theory (Hill 4). In particular, he critiques Marilyn Frye as a feminist who addresses white women's issues, and also addresses the issues and criticisms of black women who argued that white feminists did not critique their own racism even as they examined the incisive ways that sexism is endemic to North American culture. This, according to Hill, amounts to white women "want[ing] what [their] oppressor has and in so wanting, reproduc[ing] him as [themselves]" (Hill 5). Hill's rationale and assessment of Frye's position here is very similar to Gandhi's rationale for rejecting violence as a method of achieving colonial independence in India since, according to Gandhi, the most that could be achieved is the reversal of the relative terms along the binary axes of colonized/colonizer, masculine/ feminine, good/evil. That

is to say, going back to Hill, white women, instead of critiquing and seeking to change the structural frame of a system which oppresses them as women, end up merely seeking to occupy the position of relative privilege—positions held by men—within that oppressive structure. The relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed has not fundamentally changed, only those who would be in these relative positions.

Frye, then, calls for a disassociation from and disloyalty to whiteness (Frye 118, 126). While she further argues that a disaffiliation with whiteness by a personal act of will or by any personal strategy alone is not adequate or even possible because of the inherent politics of living in a white supremacist society (127, 118), she nevertheless encourages her readers to “think it thinkable” (127). Hill sees Frye’s response to this dilemma in the following way:

Particularly striking about Frye’s statement is that the “disaffiliation” she speaks of is also a move toward identifying herself as white and, therefore, “in trouble.” Rather than shoring up white hegemony, Frye’s encounter with race “trouble” submits whiteness to a labeling process on someone else’s terms. Her desires reveal both a radical ambition and a rare humility. Frye struggles not to posit a naïve distinction of otherness as the mere opposite of whatever white identity is. Rather, the intimacy by which otherness addresses her comes from a certain plurality that adds to race matters the mediating presence of gender and class and does so without collapsing one category into the ideal opposite of the other. (7)

The disaffiliation Hill speaks of here comes about because as Frye recognizes whiteness as an aspect of her personal identity because racism is so systematic and white

privilege so impossible to escape (126), she simultaneously rejects it. Hence, she both accepts whiteness as a contingent aspect of her identity even as she simultaneously strives to disassociate herself from it. Instead of creating a defensive posture against others who critique her whiteness, Frye accepts their criticisms on their terms. She says, "...as a white person one must never claim not to be a racist, but only to be antiracist" (126). She comes to empathize with them through her own oppression as a woman, while making sure that her oppression is not resolved into another's oppression as a racialized Other. This is done while calling for a white critique without assuming that doing so will totally free her from the ego supports of whiteness she wants removed (Hill 7).

Hill goes on to intimate that the essence of whiteness is wrapped in its material rewards. As he says himself, these rewards are "arguably central to it" (10). As this chapter suggests, I agree with Hill that there are clear interconnections between the formation of class society in the United States, and the formation of whiteness. While his essay and his assessment of Frye's position is useful for understanding how whiteness might be resisted personally, the optimism of Frye's position his essay betrays is ultimately balanced by his frank assessment that class inequality is racially coded and not only personal, but also public and political. In some ways, this formulation of whiteness is very similar to how we read and write literature in that they are both at once intensely personal and at the same time intensely public activities for the reader and the writer.

While Frye provides an important theoretical frame for how whiteness might be confronted on personal terms, the forgoing analysis of the five texts representing the five disciplines under discussion here suggests that whiteness is also public; it is contextual

and fluid. The texts presented above, when taken together, reveal whiteness as a persistent locus of power contingent upon the discipline or arena in which it is present. These arenas construct whiteness differently because power and privilege are constructed differently in each. The disciplines these texts represent also suggest codes of whiteness we might expect to be present in the literature we read.

Our reading of Morrison's work in literature is nuanced and sharpened when juxtaposed with that of Nandy, Dyer, Brodtkin, and Harris. These texts, particularly Dyer's because of its insistence upon revealing the mythology of whiteness, suggest a way of articulating questions, and exposing tropes of whiteness in literature. Dyer, for instance, teaches us to look for how power is organized around the ideas of human will, grace under pressure and, by implication, confronting danger. Nandy teaches us to look for how power is organized around notions of identity connected to gender and age while Brodtkin teaches us to look for whiteness's dependence upon a constructed and servicing notion of black identity. Harris, as well as demonstrating the tenacious nature of whiteness to persist in many aspects of American life, also demonstrates its dependence upon a system of laws, the American legal system, which remains (apparently) incapable of seeing and accounting for it. This incapacity has not escaped the critical gaze of black literary figures, and as early African American texts show, much of their creativity has been devoted to a dramatic articulation of how whiteness works to secure socio-economic and political inequality.

As well as contextualizing the cultural milieu within which American canonical Modernist texts were written in (and responded to) chapter three of this study articulates some of these inequalities and shows how they relate to a notion of literary whiteness

informed by all five of the texts discussed here, and especially by the ideas of human will, grace under pressure, and confronting danger which, perhaps, pervades them all.

Chapter Three

Toward Individualism: Literary Modernism and the Spectre of Whiteness

Hemingway was alert only to Twain's technical discoveries—the flexible colloquial language, the sharp naturalism, the thematic potentialities of adolescence. Thus what for Twain was a means to a moral end became for Hemingway an end in itself. And just as the trend toward technique for the sake of technique and production for the sake of the market lead to the neglect of the human need out of which they spring, so do they lead in literature to a marvelous technical virtuosity won at the expense of a gross insensitivity to fraternal values.

...when I read the early Hemingway I seem to be in the presence of Huckleberry Finn who, instead of identifying himself with humanity and attempting to steal Jim free, chose to write the letter which sent him back in to slavery. So that now he is a Huck full of regret and nostalgia, suffering a sense of guilt that fills even his noondays with nightmares, and against which...he seeks protection through the compulsive minor rituals of his prose.—Ralph Ellison

The early Hemingway texts Ellison speaks of are typical of the literature written by American Modernists of the twentieth century—writers for whom American industrialism and urbanization signaled a national crisis both in terms of cultural and social identity. The guilt Ellison attributes to Hemingway, manifested in his prose, seems to account for the absence of blacks, or racialized Others, not just in Hemingway, but in much of the literature of this period. As Ellison suggests, for all of Hemingway's ambivalence toward Modernity, the highly refined and technical elements of his prose style—mirroring as they do the relationship between production and the market—suggests at least an ironic response to a new and emerging industrial America, and the identity—personal and national—that this new America, by its sheer scope and magnitude, forced into literary consciousness. In many respects the reaction against America's industrial modernization is the bedrock of literary Modernism which in the case of Hemingway is characterized by cultural rather than political nonconformity. The image of America these writers often created in their fiction, even in their most labor-conscious works such as Clifford Odets's Waiting For Lefty, or John Steinbeck's, The Grapes of Wrath, often reinforced an American identity that was organized along racial

lines. The inability of most American writers to imagine the black American as part of the community of humanity, within their vision of democratic equality, or as part of a community of workers, limits the terms, conditions, and potential of the freedoms their literature was presumably written to articulate. This fiction, however, may have only reflected an American reality, without ever even attempting or approaching an objective truth.

Argument and Method

This chapter first examines specific moments and trends in North America's industrial, labor, and immigration history in order to better understand the historical and cultural milieu within which North American literature was produced. I argue that several significant developments occurred during early Modernism (roughly 1918 to 1939) in literature having to do with issues of labor and race which had a profound affect on how racialized Others—specifically African Americans—would come to be viewed in the literature of the period. My argument is primarily framed by Ralph Ellison's essay, "Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity". Here Ellison ponders why African Americans are so patently absent from the literature of the Modernist period, and suggests tentative answers having to do with a move toward individualism and away from community and democratic ideals. I elaborate and extend Ellison's argument in order to trace and define literary whiteness.

Historical Background

Lerone Bennett (76) and Theodore Allen (16) offer examples of how class division along racial lines is observable as early as the middle of the seventeenth century. They trace the roots of American racism, and indeed the invention of the white race itself

to the plantation aristocracy's need for a "buffer class" of erstwhile poor whites between themselves and the black slave. Both Bennett and Allen point out that the social position of the "buffer class," while providing relative privilege for poor whites in relation to blacks made class-based revolt increasingly unlikely and allegiances based on the notion of race increasingly more likely. Indeed, whites in the buffer class helped to support a social and economic system that was at fundamental odds with its own best interests.

Seeds of the Literary Landscape

As I have suggested, the idea of the American Dream is a very powerful one in American culture and, like labor, is intimately connected to the history of race. In Playing in the Dark Toni Morrison, traces the relationship between young America, the American Dream and race relations. She says:

Young America distinguished and understood itself to be pressing toward a future of freedom, a kind of human dignity believed unprecedented in the world... A whole tradition of 'universal' yearnings collapsed into the well fondled phrase 'the American Dream' (33)

Morrison's reference to "Young America" may just as easily apply to the United States, the nation, as it might to a literary and political movement of the 1830s, 1840s and early 1850s by the same name. This movement, according to Edward Widmer's comprehensive study, Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City, may be divided into two very different groups which he has identified as Young America I and Young America II, which are linked in that John O'Sullivan was influential in both. Young America I was far more intellectual than political, and praised "democratic" authors like Tom Paine and William Leggett (Widmer 14-15). This early movement,

organized around the influence of John O’Sullivan’s magazine, *Democratic Review*, and Evert Duyckinck, its literary editor, understood itself to be heralding in a new generation of Americans whose point of departure from the older generation was both being born after the revolutionary war of independence, and their reaction to the panic of 1837—precipitated by falling cotton prices, climbing unemployment and suspension of specie payments by banks—that gripped the American economy. As Widmer, points out:

The Panic . . . galvanized Americans to take sides, defining themselves both politically and in a generational sense. Whigs and Democrats bitterly blamed each other for the disaster. But for many young Americans, the panic of 1837 exposed the bankruptcy of all American politics, and an older generation conducting its affairs selfishly (5).

The manifestation of the Young America movement (Young America I) attracted many writers and literary types, most notable, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman who believed in the movement’s ability to ignite young Americans to spread true democracy and equality. However, by 1852, just as Duyckinck moved away from the organization, a new version of the group emerged, Young America II. It was more political than intellectual, and was composed chiefly of southern and western expansionists. The two groups were divided on questions of the Mexican War, the Wilmot Proviso, and ultimately, slavery (Widmer 15). With ideological shifts in the movement of tectonic proportions, the intellectual writers of Young America I were caught arguing for causes they diametrically opposed. As Widmer points out, “If Young America I strove for the flowering of democracy, promoting cultural ideas, Young America II stood for its deflowering, misleading people through empty promises and

slogans designed to steal land and treat human beings like chattel (15).

The differences in the two groups symbolized the contradictory definitions and uses of the term “Manifest Destiny” first coined by John O’Sullivan in an 1845 editorial published in *Democratic Review*. While Young America I understood the term to signal a whole new democratic ideal of freedom and republicanism, similar to that alluded to by Morrison, Young America II understood a narrower definition of democracy and freedom signaled by their support of military expansionism and slavery whose ideological underpinnings were secured by white supremacy.

The “well-fondled phrase” Morrison alludes to in the passage I cite refers to the ways in which the American Dream has been used to describe and justify the attraction and possibility America held for the masses who have historically left Europe for the New World and for the economic potential with which America was increasingly associated. We may see elements of the American Dream in the construction of the buffer class plantation owners created between themselves and black slaves. Whites in this buffer class were encouraged to see themselves as upwardly mobile in occupying this particular social position above blacks. We may also see elements of the American Dream in the desire for white labor in the 1820s and 30s being unwilling to make common cause with black labor whom they saw as permanent labor. Morrison continues:

The flight from the Old World to the New World is generally seen to be a flight from oppression and limitation to freedom and possibility...

constraint and limitation impelled the journey. All the Old World offered these immigrants was poverty, prison, social ostracism, and, not infrequently, death. Whatever the reason, the attraction was of the “clean

slate” variety, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity... (34)

This new world would seem all the better because of the memory and the trauma associated with the memory of the old world left behind. Morrison continues:

With luck and endurance one could discover freedom; find a way to make God’s law manifest...The desire for freedom is preceded by oppression; a yearning for God’s law is born of the detestation of human license and corruption; the glamour of riches is in thrall to poverty, hunger and debt. The habit of genuflection would be replaced by the thrill of command. Power—control of one’s own destiny—would replace the powerlessness felt before the gates of class, caste and cunning persecution. (34-35)

The casting of the New World as a place where one’s life may be literally remade, and where endless possibility and potential exists for the individual, is highly romantic in the sense that it projects an imagined reality onto a place and people, Native American Indians, and Africans, who were merely available for such imaginings, not in any objective way akin to them. The new immigrants’ sense of purity was informed by their own desire to flee what they thought to be the incarnation of evil and licentiousness, the ruling classes of Old Europe, controlled by the various royal families.

The appropriation of racialized Others in the New World signaled the beginning of the conflation of reality and truth and what Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright, several generations later, would identify as the psychological, rather than spatial distance between white and black Americans arising from the latter’s experiences and the former’s unwillingness to recognize those experiences (Shadow and Act 26).

The attraction of America has always been the opportunity to step back into a kind of Eden, the ability to remake one's self; a new opportunity to correct one's past life. This move was not without a significant amount of fear. Morrison herself says of the literature that was produced in this early period, "For a people who made much of their "newness"—their potential, freedom, and innocence—it is striking how dour, how troubled, and how frightened and haunted our early and founding literature truly is" (35). The African—the slave—provided a highly romantic canvas upon which all the fears that accompanied the new immigrant could be played out; the notion of the American Dream cannot be properly understood apart from an understanding of the integral role slavery itself played in making it possible. Indeed, Morrison articulates at some length the extent to which these fears are embedded in the fabric of American literature, and American life itself offering the startling conclusion that "[n]othing highlighted freedom—if not in fact created it—like slavery" (38). This realization suggests just how appropriate the title of Morrison's book, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination truly is. It is the American Dream, cast as it is in the history of class division along racial lines that has both historically impelled new immigrants to America and seduced the white working class to support and fight for social and political ideas that were not in its self interests, although because of the appeal to whiteness they appeared to be.

As discussed in chapter two, a remarkably similar phenomenon takes place in Italy during, and in the wake of, Mussolini's fascist dictatorship in the 1940's and 1950's respectively. This phenomenon helps to illustrate the intimate and complex relationship that exists between whiteness and social class. It also illustrates the mechanics of whiteness as a material reality. In a carefully articulated examination Richard Dyer, in

his book, White, shows how cultural whiteness in the form of images of the well-built white male body-builder harkening back to classical Greek and Roman art was used both by Mussolini and the Italian ruling class after him to create a sense of national identity and cultural pride.

Dyer shows how Mussolini had used the image of the bare-chested white male, and its connection to a Roman Empire that was physically present in the form of the white marble statues which are evident in Italy to this day, to galvanize the Italian people in nationalist unity before his failed attempt to colonize Ethiopia. Dyer examines photographs of Mussolini during this period, bare-chested against the backdrop of a natural and pristine landscape of snow-covered trees and mountains to illustrate how Mussolini used these images to convey his purity and whiteness (and by extension the purity and whiteness of the Italian people) in distinction to those who would be their conquered subjects (Dyer 173).

After Mussolini's removal from power, Dyer points out, the Italian ruling class also used similar images to pacify an Italian working class at a time of rapid industrial change and in the wake of a period of nationalist and racist political fascism that had promised the Italian working class so much (165). This, according to Dyer, had a displacing affect on the Italian working class such that their anxieties of disenfranchisement were sublimated onto feelings of kinship to a larger-than-life and culturally inherited image of Italian masculinity which they came to associate with themselves and their historical period.

In both the example of the American Dream and the example of Italian nationalism of the 1920s through the 1950s a national and cultural identity was created

that was deeply embedded in notions of whiteness. In Italy, the whiteness was primarily physical. The white male body was idolized and glorified as a national and cultural symbol of strength, power, and enduring human will. In the United States of the 1920s and 1930s, the idealization of whiteness while pervasive, and deeply embedded in cultural ideas of the American Dream and rugged individualism, was at least partly literary.

The White Worker

Another example of the fissure in the American working class along the fictitious and dubious axis of race may be illustrated by W.E.B. Du Bois's historical examination of American labor in Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880. In chapter II, "The White Worker," Du Bois discusses the social, political and economic milieu that shaped the attitudes and political interests of white workers in the United States just before the Civil War, and in turn helped to shape racial attitudes well into the twentieth century. He argues that white labor's interests tended toward identification with wealthy capitalists and away from common cause with slaves and emancipated black labor from the 1830s forward. Central to my purposes here is Du Bois's recognition that white workers, both those who came as new immigrants and those established in the United States, were unwilling to regard themselves as a permanent laboring class. Indeed, he says ". . . it is in this light that the labor movement among white Americans must be studied" (17).

According to Du Bois, white labor in the nineteenth century held varied and contradictory positions with regard to Negro slavery and common or unskilled labor generally. Du Bois explains that the successful, well-paid American laboring class that formed a petty bourgeoisie was eager to join capital in exploiting common labor, white

and black, foreign and native (17). The idea of social mobility on the part of this segment of the white working class was a powerful and motivating one which also influenced the most energetic and thrifty segment of the nineteen million immigrants from Europe who arrived in the United States in the nineteenth century. There was a real belief in “the American idea of the son rising to a higher economic level than the father; of the chance for the poor man to accumulate wealth and power. . .” (18). This belief simultaneously made the European doctrine of a working class fighting for the elevation of *all* workers less desirable, and even less possible (18).

These workers first came to oppose slavery for economic reasons fearing their own labor value would be reduced by the presence of and competition with slave labor. Indeed, slave labor did keep white labor out of the labor market in the south, and threatened wages and stability for whites in the north (19). They also opposed slavery because of the desire to become industrial capitalists themselves. That is to say, the upward mobility they craved was premised upon the exploitation of the labor force they saw as beneath them. This idea is captured well by Du Bois who quotes Abraham Lincoln:

‘I want every man to have his chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he can better his condition—when he may look forward and hope to be a hired laborer this year and the next, work for himself afterward, and finally to hire men to work for him. That is the true system’ (qtd. in Du Bois 18)

Obviously, the presence of slavery would not make it possible to achieve this version of the American Dream, partly because of the scarcity of free labor that would exist under a

slave economy. As our discussion of Cheryl Harris's essay in Chapter two implies, one cannot both be owned by a master, and be owned by oneself.

Gradually, however, white labor in the north changed their attitude toward slavery and began to support it as increasing numbers of immigrants were thrown into competition with black emancipated and fugitive slave workers pouring into cities like New York and Philadelphia with low standards of living, and an attendant low cost of labor. A series of riots from 1829 until after the civil war between the white laborer on the one hand and free Negroes and fugitive slaves on the other was the result.

In the 1840s came a different class of immigrants from England and Germany who arrived armed with Marxian notions of the reorganization of industry through trade unions and class struggle. They, too, were initially opposed to slavery on principle arguing that it was a phase of wage slavery. However, the land that lay to the west represented a way out of direct competition with blacks free and slave. By moving westward and occupying the vast and rich land resources there, they had in America the material backing of land that was not available to them in Europe. In moving West, they could regulate the terms of their own labor and restore the industrial balance ruined in Europe by the expropriation of workers from the land (19). Thus, northern white labor came to oppose the expansion of slavery westward, but not challenge its existence in the south for a confluence of reasons having to do with a belief in upward mobility, and a desire to separate itself from permanent labor, that is, the black and emancipated slave. The attitude of the west toward the Negro became sterner since the threat of an expanding slave system threatened their livelihoods. Indeed, even free Negroes were to be discouraged and on this point southern poor white immigrants insisted (19).

Simultaneously in the 1830s and 1840s there was a movement to abolish slavery in America on the grounds that it was “at fundamental variance with the American doctrine” (20). Indeed, the demand for the end of slavery had been continuous since the Revolution. This resulted in the gradual freeing of all Negroes in the north, a group whose numbers were swollen by fugitive slaves from the south. As Du Bois points out this impulse to free the slaves came primarily out of a moral imperative stretching back to a philosophy of freedom located in the eighteenth century which insisted that freedom was not an End but an inseparable means to the beginning of human progress and that democracy could function only after the dropping of feudal privileges, monopoly and chains (20).

While white labor sympathized with this philosophical and moral movement lead by abolitionism, and personified in the figure of William Lloyd Garrison, they saw in the fugitive slave competition for their own jobs. What they failed to see, as Du Bois points out, “was that the black man enslaved was a far more formidable competitor than the black man free” (20).

Two labor movements, then, arose out of pre-civil war industrialization. One came out of a broad humanism that had its roots in the notion of freedom for all humanity. This group, the abolitionists, sought a minimum legal status for black workers which would give them the right to sell their own labor; in essence, to become part of free labor. The other movement proposed to raise the wage and better the conditions of the working class in America largely composed of European immigrants by expanding westward and leveraging the ability to do so in an effort to control the price of their own labor. Leaders of white labor during the 1830s and 40s never found common cause with

those supporting the end of slavery since they saw free black labor—that is, free from chattel slavery—as unwelcome competition. On the other hand, the abolitionists seeking the rights of blacks to sell their own labor, did not understand the plight of white labor, especially the skilled and semi-skilled worker. White labor, then, had an apparent investment in viewing the issue of labor through the dubious signifier of race.

Du Bois's articulation of race and labor provides strong evidence that common cause between white labor and black labor in the United States was difficult to imagine much less achieve on a broad and sustained scale since white labor was unable to see the negative long-range effects upon their own interests under a slave system (20-21 Du Bois). As Du Bois continues to assert, "The abolitionist did not sense the new subordination into which the worker was being forced by organized capital, while white labor did not realize that the exclusion of four million workers from the labor program was a fatal omission" (25). In ways not unlike the buffer class in the eighteenth century, emerging industrial labor held a position that was at fundamental odds with its own best interests. This position was held because, as Du Bois argues, they were unwilling to be part of permanent labor which for them was symbolized by the black worker, hence a reality made a truth.

While Du Bois traces the unwillingness to identify with black labor on the part of white labor generally from the 1820's, the idea of racialized class division itself has its roots deeply embedded in the history of race and class formation in the United States.

Class Division and Literature

It is in light of this historical fissure in American labor, fueled as it was at various points in early and pre-industrial America, that Modernist literature of the 1920s and

1930s can be seen as speaking to, and on behalf of white labor in ways it did not, and indeed, could not speak for black labor. In ways similar to the stark, vividly colored and contrasting images that are the creative and artistic elements of Imagist poetry of Modernism, American Modernist writers of fiction constructed literary whiteness through stark contrasting rhetorics of racial identity, nationalism and racialized labor that excluded blacks, and encouraged white readers to think of themselves as American through their identification with a growing cultural individualism and white identity.

In many of Hemingway's short stories the conspicuous absence of racialized others suggests at least his ideological understanding of the class-based fissure between races in the United States, and his guilt at assuming an unconventional, even questionable, moral stance in this regard as suggested by Ellison above. He also appears less concerned with issues of labor than he is with a national, and in particular, a personal identity. While the construction of this identity obscures questions of labor and race it is nevertheless deeply influenced and shaped by both.

Hemingway, through his rhetoric, creates a kinship between himself and his audience that invites its members into his experience as though it were theirs. This seduction of his audience through strategies such as minimalist writing and a highly refined and technical rhetoric, not in the service of some social or moral cause, but instead in the service of individualism and the "self" as ideological principles, reinforces an idyllic, almost Edenic American identity to which whites, including white labor, because of its predisposition toward the idea of the American Dream and the prospect of achieving it, was particularly susceptible.

Hemingway's rhetoric signaled literary whiteness with cultural implications, but without the idealized physical characteristics of fascist and post-fascist Italy. Rather, the characteristics were psychological, needing "a clean well-lighted place," and a morality that was both unconventional and individualized. As influential in literary circles as any other author of his time—in many ways more so—Hemingway's work brought to life a literary trope in the figure of the *Hemingway Hero*, with which white readers could identify. Informed by a highly stylized rhetoric that, like his hero, is free of traditional moral, or social moorings regarding issues of labor, race, equality—or to use Ellison's term, humanity—Hemingway's work provides a symbolic American identity during a period of great social, economic and political change. This identity is, as we shall see, built on romantic assumptions about race which are so ingrained in the culture that Hemingway cannot avoid them.

Indeed, Ellison connects the struggle over the nature of reality to the larger struggle over the identity of "the American," a struggle that he saw, in 1946 when the essay was written, as yet to be resolved. According to Ellison it is out of the tension between America's oldest whites, the Anglo Saxons, and her newest immigrants as well as America's minority groups, that American character, and identity would be born (26).

In order to understand how Hemingway's work provides a symbolic American identity, we need to first understand what kind of Modernist figure he was. Hemingway's short stories suggest a particular kind of America, one represented by expatriate writers of the time about whom two things were true: first, they saw themselves as ambassadors for an America they understood as an extension of Western European culture. Indeed, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and H.D., the principle architects of

high Modernism, saw themselves as bringing the United States into the larger context of European culture. Second, these were the writers for whom the growing influence of the city as the center of American life with all of its ethnic and cultural intermingling represented a dilution of what they considered finest about America: its claim to Western civilization; a civilization implicitly and historically white.

It is in this sense that Hemingway can be said to represent America and also to be presenting America with a particular kind of identity since the America that he portrays is absent any explicit reference to the very conflicted place America is at the time he writes in terms of culture, race, and labor. The conflict in Hemingway is primarily internal, concerning the psychology of his protagonists. Indeed, his texts can be defined as Modernist in that they, like much of Modernist writing and art in general, draw attention to certain ideas and features in the text because of what is absent from it as much as for what is present in it. In this sense, the reader is an important collaborator in meaning-making with regards to the text. Absence in Hemingway's work, then, is significant to the tension between labor and race precisely because these elements appear to be so absent. As Jacques Derrida and others teach us, language, and the ideology embedded in it, may be seen as a system of opposites.

Language or "texts" are not natural reflections of the world; rather, they structure our interpretation of the world with the minor term in the system of opposites being a corruption of the superior term. In this sense, *woman* might be seen as a corruption of *man*, *evil* a corruption of *good*, and *black people* as a corruption of *white people*.

Hemingway's focus in many of his texts seems romantic in that he is concerned with presenting an idyllic, pristine almost Edenic America where the signs of industry are

evacuated and almost invisible, reflecting little evidence that Modernity changed the nature of rural America in ways as profound as it changed urban centers. This seems romantic because it is nostalgic and makes use of nature. However, it is profoundly unromantic in the conventional sense for where the Romantics of the nineteenth century find recompense within nature itself, Hemingway uses nature as a stylistic backdrop in his work so as to find recompense within the consciousness of his protagonist, which he sees increasingly as the center of an ever changing, ever unstable America.

The moral imperatives concerning humanity that give rise to literary devices in Mark Twain, to whom Hemingway admits stylistic indebtedness, disappear in Hemingway. In “making it new,” to use Pound’s phrase concerning literature, Hemingway made it profoundly and qualitatively different.

This qualitative difference, as Ellison suggests, implies a stylistic and “technical virtuosity, which, just as the rapid development of industrial America signaled production for the sake of the market, was won at the expense of a gross insensitivity to fraternal values” (35).

An Example from Literature: Hemingway’s “Soldier’s Home”

The ways in which this attention to technical style and the absent presence of racialized others affects Hemingway’s work can be demonstrated in his short story “Soldier’s Home”. The story is set in 1919 and focuses on the individual consciousness of Krebs, a returning World War I veteran. While suggestive of Hemingway’s own return from war in 1919, “Soldier’s Home” also demonstrates an insistence on ignoring the acute and evacuated sense of the plight of labor. The last sentence of the first paragraph of the story is significant in this regard, “He enlisted in 1917 and did not return

to the United States until the second division return from the Rhine in the summer of 1919” (111).⁶ This line places us very specifically in Kansas during the summer of 1919. A period in Kansas’s history, indeed, in American history, of intense industrial friction over the status of American labor.

During that summer in Kansas, the statehouse was bombed by supporters of the State legislators who were, almost to a man, members of the Ku Klux Klan. This bombing was part of an all-out and successful attempt to remove the anti-Klan Governor J.C. Walton. At the climax of the story when Krebs, the protagonist, has to reconcile his growth and maturity from war with the naiveté of his hometown represented by his mother’s desire for him to find work, and his youngest sister’s childish admiration for her older war veteran brother, he is handed *The Kansas City Star*, “and he shucked off its brown wrapper and opened it to the sporting page” (114). Again we see that in this story, Hemingway centers the narrative conflict around the inner workings of the protagonist mind and seems intent on completely eliding the reality taking place in the world that was available to him, not least by the newspaper that he has placed in Krebs’s hand.

Hemingway’s prose, then, gives at least literary affirmation to the desires of whites to pursue their American Dream and upward mobility. “Soldier’s Home” supports this notion through its explicit focus on individualism expressed through the individual focus on Krebs’ consciousness which is absent any meaningful social engagement.

The domination by the will of the character, and in the case of Krebs, the centering of the narrative on the consciousness of the protagonist, is crucial to literary whiteness since this trait is denied racialized others in American literature. That is to say,

⁶ All references to the Hemingway short stories are from *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*: The Finca Vigia edition, New York: Scribner. 1997

racialized others are differentiated from white characters in American literature and in American attitudes toward race in general by their inability to express human will. In this way, Hemingway creates a landscape against which he can only grant white characters agency. Hemingway's construction of masculinity, for instance, is always realized in white protagonists because in American mythologies of race in Hemingway's time whites and whites alone are capable of taking risks. The danger in the stories themselves is the context for the exercise of will, of willful action. Unless one confronts the possibility of total loss of life, which in Hemingway stands in for the myth of freedom as expressed in the idea of the American Dream, one is not a man or a white American. In American literature, as in American society, no black character faces that risk—the loss is simply and preemptively, assigned to him. Blacks cannot be seen as masculine risk-takers because they lack the will and the capacity for choice that must precede risk.

Similarly, the presence of will and the capacity for willful action predetermines the absence of industrial labor in the texts. Modern industrial life reduces the necessity of will and reduces the worker to machine. Prior to industrialization, the only will-less workers were slaves who, according to case law such as Forsyth v. Nash and Adelle v. Beauregard (Suggs 124-25), carried the status of slave in their very person. This is so, as Jon-Christian Suggs points out in his book, Whispered Consolations: Law and Narrative in African American Life, because “for most whites, blacks were recognized as beings without agency and without desire—only appetite” (Suggs 77). The absence of blacks and workers proceeds from the same basic condition, the romantic definition of the American subject as the white male in possession of pure will.

The Author, Ideology, and the Audience

In the stories set in the Midwest literary whiteness is also produced through Hemingway's treatment of the landscape and the relationship that is created between it and his protagonist. This relationship raises significant questions about Hemingway's authorial audience. I take the term "authorial audience" from Peter J. Rabinowitz's book, Before Reading. Rabinowitz suggests that this term defines the audience the author has in mind when he or she is writing:

Artistic choices are based on these assumptions—conscious or unconscious—about readers, and to a certain extent, artistic success depends on their shrewdness, on the degree to which actual and authorial audience overlap. (21)

Rabinowitz's definition of this term is useful for the study of Hemingway's work because, perhaps more than most authors of the Modernist period, audience is crucial to the success of his writing. Hemingway's style is very personal and appears to draw heavily on the work of the Imagist poets since concrete images and the subjective feelings and emotions of the protagonist are privileged in stark contrast to the other characters and the scenery around them. These ideas concerning authorial audience can be used to interrogate, as Rabinowitz says, "beliefs, engagements, commitments, prejudices and stampeding of pity and terror" (26) in the author. By implication, these ideas concerning authorial audience can also be used to interrogate issues of nationalism, identity and labor.

What assumptions can Hemingway, for example, depend upon when constructing his authorial audience? What can he be relatively certain about with respect to issues of American-ness? During the 1920s, when many of these stories were written, what could

he be sure of in terms of middle, and upper middleclass notions of America, identity, and labor?

Hemingway's treatment of the American landscape is connected to elements of industrialized labor and also to the author's own authorial intention since this treatment fulfils a social function despite its inherent individualism. These stories are *about* his protagonists, usually Nick Adams, and the internal conditions of his personal psyche, which motivate him. These internal conditions produce, and indeed are, agency in these stories. This agency is an aspect of literary whiteness as it only reflects idealized, naturalized characteristics granted to whites both in literature and in American society through cultural myths like social mobility as in the American Dream and geographical mobility to move around a landscape as the protagonist does. The focus on these naturalized idealized characteristics granted to whites as part of the American Dream and individualism, constitutes the author's participation in a failure of moral imagination and an inability to address the central moral question of his time: the legal relegation of black Americans to the status of not-white and therefore, at least in their presentation and representation in the literary texts, not quite human. In order to understand how such a conclusion may be drawn about Hemingway, indeed, how such a conclusion may be drawn about much of the white Modernist literature written in the years between World War I and World War II, we need to consider in more depth Ralph Ellison's essay from which I take the epigraph that opens this chapter.

Ellison's "Twentieth Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity"

The essay itself, "Twentieth Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity," is an analysis of twentieth century fiction focusing on several themes having to do with the

role of the artist in society, the nature of reality, the demise of morality and humanism in Modernist fiction, and perhaps most important for my purposes here the ways in which the African American is conspicuously absent in that literary movement. Ellison argues convincingly that this absence is due to a move away from a tradition of humanism which has historically been a central catalyst for the artists' creative imagination towards a new tradition of individualism which not only robs the artist of moral power from which all great art springs, but also aligns the artist with rapidly developing industrial capitalism which is also dependent upon the primacy of the individual and subsequently individualism. Also relevant to my argument is Ellison's conclusion that this literature had a profound affect on its readers since it encouraged them to be aligned with social irresponsibility as a basic practice rather than with the ideals of humanism which would have encouraged common cause with blacks and extended the very definition of freedom through which all Americans, white and black would have benefited. Ellison also suggests that it was the artist's (and he chooses Hemingway as representative) clamor toward individualism, rather than humanism that created much of the artistic genius of the age, and was also responsible for the unflattering view of the Negro. In the nineteenth century, however, the Negro was both image and symbol of humanity and freedom. Hemingway's inability to see the black American as symbolic of humanity and freedom is Ellison's rationale for why Modernism is characterized by notions of despair, decline and individualism.

Race and Reality in Literary Analysis

The first section of the text focuses, in part, on the nature of reality, and especially the nature of reality as presented through the *word*, which Ellison sees as a powerful tool,

not just in its ability to suggest, manipulate and foreshadow action and beliefs, but also in its ability to provide a window into the psychology and ideology of the writer. As I indicated earlier, Ellison argues that the experiences of the black American and white America's failure to identify themselves with them cause a psychological distance to exist between blacks and whites in America. Indeed, he quotes Richard Wright saying "There is in progress, between black and white Americans a struggle over the nature of reality" (Ellison 26).

The ignoring of blacks and the reality they represent by many of America's great writers in the twentieth century is mirrored by many of America's literary critics. Morrison argues that in a wholly racialized society there is no escape from racially inflected language. She goes on to argue that writers go through a great deal of effort to "unhobble" or hide the racial demands of the language when doing academic work (13). This may be seen as one literary expression of the distance between black and white Americans. Morrison goes on to conclude that many critics of American literature themselves have never read African-American literature, and are proud to say so (13).

Ellison closes the first portion of the essay by posing the following questions: why, Ellison wonders, does America's naturalistic prose become so suddenly dull when confronting the Negro? Here Ellison specifically references John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, and especially Ernest Hemingway. Why has the Negro been drawn as if drained of humanity? (26). We might also add here a central question for my study: why is the Negro so patently absent, or if present, so "unfree" in works such as Waiting for Lefty by Clifford Odets, Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck, or the several short stories of Ernest Hemingway written during the 1920s and 1930s? Further, how is this absence

and unfreedom connected to labor exploitation and literary whiteness? Ellison argues that the answer to his questions, and by implication, mine, lies “beyond the word simply functioning as verbal segregation and lynching;” rather, he suggests, it has much more to do with the very nature of American culture itself. Something not only lying deep at the core of twentieth century literary forms, but also processes that mold the habits of the mind, the cultural atmosphere and traditions of Americans dedicated to democracy, but blind to the undemocratic treatment of their fellow citizens (27).

The Social Role of Literature

Ellison argues that white literary forms are false to reality because they do not present Negroes as fully human or they otherwise fail to present them at all. Rather, he asserts, they are aspects of an internal symbolic process through which the white American prepares himself to fulfill both a social and a personal role. That role is not only social having to do with the desires of ruling-class society to control political and economic realities, but is also personal having to do with the creation of stereotypes and symbols to justify the author’s own emotional and economic needs. Whatever else the Negro stereotype might be in the social realm, Ellison argues, it is a key figure in the rite by which white Americans seek to resolve the dilemma arising out of their democratic beliefs and certain undemocratic practices; between the belief that all men are created equal and the treatment of every tenth man as though he were not (28).

Ellison’s pointing to the economic imperatives embedded in his rationale, though he gives it short shrift, is central to my claim that whiteness, in all of its forms, including that which is connected to literature, has as a primary foundation social class dynamics. Indeed, as Barbara Foley points out in her book, Spectres of 1919 which itself is a study

of race, class, and nation during the 1920's and 1930s in America, the red summer of 1919 and its aftermath “. . . marked a moment . . . when issues of race and class were so closely linked that they could—and can—be separated only through a perverse act of will” (vii). She later argues that one of the aims of her book is to demonstrate the necessity of understanding leftist politics if one is to understand U.S. Modernism (76). Foley's use of the word “will” here is significant since it both points to Morrison's critique of literary criticism as willfully ignorant of the racial demands of literary texts and to a critical faculty—human will—which is denied blacks both in American culture and in American literature.

Ellison presents twentieth-century fiction as the decedent of certain features of nineteenth-century fiction. He chooses Mark Twain as his representative author from the nineteenth century and argues that just like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, Twain was sensitive to the moral dilemma the Negro presented for America, and it is through the character of Huck Finn that this dilemma is best presented.

The importance of Huck Finn as a character, for my purposes here, as well as for Ellison, is revealed when we understand the nature of the dilemma presented to him. As Ellison points out, at a crucial point in the novel, Huck is faced with the option of returning Jim, the run-a-way slave back into slavery, or “stealing” him free. To return him to slavery, Huck would endorse the abstract, inhuman market-dominated relationships fostered by the rising middle-class, which Ellison points out was already compromising dangerously with the defeated slave south by Twain's time. In stealing Jim free, Huck would endorse the primacy of human relationships. Huck, as we know, steals Jim free. In so doing, he realizes Jim's essential humanity expressed through Jim's

own desire for freedom. Indeed, Huck is able to make his own bid to be free of the conventionalized evil taken for civilization by the town. Jim, then, is a symbol of both freedom and humanity for Huck, and Twain (32).

Ellison points out that Twain, because he allowed the two major conflicting drives operating in nineteenth-century America—individualism and humanism—to argue dialectically in his work was as highly moral an artist as he was a believer in democracy and suggests that humanism may be seen as a response to a society a person accepts just as individualism may be seen as a response to a society a person rejects. It is in this light, and through these considerations that Ellison treats Hemingway (34).

Ellison reminds us that it was Hemingway who said all modern American literature stems from one book: Huckleberry Finn. He also argues that by the 1920's when Hemingway is writing the element of rejection that was a part of Twain's work, individualism, was so deeply embedded in the culture of American Modernity, that Hemingway missed the importance of the novel even so far as to suggest that the part where the boys, Huck and Tom, steal Jim back to freedom ought to be left out. Ellison points out that without this portion of the text, the novel is meaningless (34).

In some ways what Ellison identifies as meaningless in the novel, the end that Hemingway would see as some how more real, reflects the sense of loss and decadence that was so much a feature of literary modernism. T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," for instance, may be seen as a highly technical, highly refined work within which notions of morality, social stability, ideas of right and wrong are part of a complex web of historical myth-making that has a wholly internal logic. What the reader brings to the text, conventional categories of literary analyses, and the struggle for meaning and

comprehension, is as much a part of the artistic intention as the words themselves. What the reader takes from the text is a profound sense of isolation, and literary confirmation of the ideology of individualism. Socially, this writing conditions the reader to accept the values of the society, and it serves to justify and absolve the writer's and the reader's social irresponsibility (40).

We might recall here Du Bois's claim that white labor had no intention of becoming part of permanent labor in the United States. This claim by Du Bois, when coupled with Morrison's that we live in a wholly racialized society where there is no escape from racially inflected language, and Ellison's that the trend toward production for the sake of the market mirrors literary technique for the sake of technique suggests at least literary affirmation that Hemingway's readers had a predisposition toward a literary style that would underscore their deepest desires for upward mobility at the expense of both recognizing the African American in literature and society, and African American freedom.

Ellison also suggests that the presence of rites and rituals in works by Hemingway are borne out of the artists' rejection of society, as well as the affirmation of individualism. That is, the rejection of society creates a tragic mood in the artist which becomes a feature of Modernism itself.

Modernism, Individualism and Race

According to Ellison, then, it is through the execution of particular rituals expressed through his writing that elements of tragic guilt are worked out both for Hemingway and his reader. For Ellison, ". . . the work of art, like the stereotype, is personal; psychologically it represents the socialization of some profoundly personal

problem . . . from which he [the artist] seeks transcendence” (38-39). It is not with human guilt that the Modernist writer reproduces as was the case in the nineteenth century and before, but rather with guilt sublimated onto animals so that, as Ellison says, the artist is “gored with the bull, hooked with a fish impaled with a grasshopper on a fishhook” (40). Through this ritual the artist of the Modernist period is absolved of guilt constituted by ignoring any moral dilemma, in this case, the positioning of the black American outside of the community of humanity and democratic notions of freedom.

This feature of Modernism is reflected in Hemingway’s technical perfection of the literary art form, and is used in his work to provide him with what Ellison identifies as “the questionable personal freedom which served to enforce the “unfreedom” of the reader” (38). Ellison uses the term “unfreedom” here to indicate that the work of art is by its very nature social, and to a certain extent is out of the control of the author once it is published. He also suggests that the reader is encouraged to embrace individualism which is at fundamental odds with human community and equality, and therefore to a greater or lesser extent, with the reader. The irony of the lost generation is that while disavowing a social role, their art performs a social function (38). This is certainly true of Hemingway who in some ways was seen as a traitor to the cause by other writers who rejected an overt social role because he had achieved such a great degree of success in a society which he ostensibly rejects. Hemingway’s highly stylized and technical writing, as well as his guilt, and the “unfreedom” readers come to embrace when they read his work perforce has a bearing on the social consciousness of his readers, but it also serves psychological purposes as well.

Ellison's reflection on Hemingway, then, ultimately signals his recognition that the American Modernist is separated from writers who precede them in that early modernists such as Hemingway lost their ability to present real fraternal, democratic, human values. This, Ellison argues, is because of the inability to resolve the problems symbolized by the Negro. Therefore, as Ellison points out, Hemingway's anti-war rhetoric against the tragic loss of life during World War I exposes a profound "blind spot" in the moral consciousness of the Modernist artist, and indeed, American life. So torn is Hemingway from the reality of the Negro and so completely ignorant of the moral division in American society that the Negro symbolizes, that he is completely blind to his undemocratic treatment of them. When the Modernist artist, in whom Ellison finds Hemingway to be an exemplary figure, did not "conjure" with the major problem of his day—the status of the Negro—he was defeated as a manipulator of profound social passions (36).

What Ellison does not elaborate on in any great depth, but clearly recognizes is that the inability to resolve these problems produce works of art in which blacks are either absent or, if present, present only as partially realized figures of the landscape, not as human beings as subject agents.

In creating white male characters whose exercise of will by standing up to physical danger marks them as romantically realized subjects, and by eliminating black subjectivity, Hemingway through his protagonists illustrates a version of literary whiteness in which all conflict is personal, individualized, and physical. The actual social world of labor and commerce has vanished. The two characters in the narrative of American life that have no romantic status because they cannot exercise will are absent:

the white industrialized worker and the Negro. Replacing them are the artist, the hunter, the bullfighter, the sailor; figures of solitary magnificence because they can will order on the world or die trying. They require no social structure with its moral complexity and ambiguity (and thus we have, for example, oppression yet democracy) to frame their manhood. All of these figures in European and North American culture were white as far as Hemingway could see. Their confrontation with the simple moral dilemma of the individual dispels the fear and guilt of the white American and allows him, as Ellison says “to be at home in the vast unknown world of America” (41).

Ellison’s text does not address in any great depth the social class position Hemingway, and indeed many other white expatriate Modernist figures like Pound, Eliot, HD, and Stein occupied. That is to say, the ability of these writers to be sincere critics of America on the grounds of morality and notions of freedom is limited by the fact that they are the product of a class structure and a cultural tradition responsible for the shaping of American society from one based on an agrarian economic system to one based on industrial exploitation. While they did not agree with the direction America was taking in terms of its culture, they had little disagreement with its political direction concerning issues of labor or social equality on a broad scale. One could reasonably argue that their disillusionment with America had more to do with the corruption of what they might have considered pure American Anglo-Saxon culture than with the idea of the market driven ideals of twentieth century capitalism.

The minimalist writing of Hemingway is, as Ellison says, fact without myth. That is, fact without the vital social myth to organize it. The Negro stereotype and the symbols which represent him in works by Hemingway and Modernists like him are really

images of the unorganized irrational forces of American life. In a culture corrupted by infusions of ambiguity and racial purity, Hemingway, Eliot and others turn to one of two directions. Eliot to the mythic past, and Hemingway to the demythic present, where by the act of the artist's will he can impose a clean, well-lit, unambiguous world in which his white male protagonist can act.

Morrison argues that a romantic myth based on fear was projected onto the image of the African and the Native American Indian in early America who were available for such imaginings, but not intrinsically connected to the myths or the imaginings. To recall Ellison, we would say that these narratives were myths without facts. These "mythic" identities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became the "facts" of the twentieth century. Twain saw through that misrepresentation but as Ellison notes, Hemingway does not. Those stereotypical identities drive his depiction, minimal as it is, of race.

Chapter Four

Rhetorics of Whiteness: Identity and Labor in the Short Stories of

Ernest Hemingway

Art critic Patrick Heron is...enchanted by 'the white areas which lie scattered thick as archipelagoes' across Cezanne's water colors: 'I would almost say that in them expression is at its most intense; that it is precisely the white patches that are the most potent in form.... White is where he dared not tread: the vital node of every form, where false statements would destroy the whole. White is the unstateable core of each coloured snowstorm of definitions; and its potency derives from the fact that every slanting stroke at the perimeter throws definition inwards, adds meaning to the white!' Hemingway's theory of "omission" has seldom been better stated—Kenneth G. Johnson.

Johnson's essay, "Hemingway and Cezanne: Doing the Country," from which the above is taken follows closely the link between Paul Cezanne's artistic craft in painting and Ernest Hemingway's artistic craft in writing. He argues convincingly that Hemingway was so influenced by Cezanne's art work, specifically "L'Estaque," "Farmyard at Auvers-sur-Oise," and "The Poplars" which were all on display at the Luxemburg while Hemingway was in Paris, that his writing took on a qualitative change after he studied them (Johnson 30). Johnson notes that Hemingway wanted to do with writing what Cezanne did with painting. Both Johnson and I agree that he achieved considerable success. In this success, however, Johnson implies a certain appeal to whiteness. For Johnson this appeal has to do with Hemingway's artistic rendering of the landscape and his minimalist style where the white space—the absence—is invested with powerful meaning. This minimalism to which Johnson refers appears to be dependent upon Hemingway's ability to mirror in writing Cezanne's "coloured snowstorm of definitions...its potency deriv[ed] from the fact that every slanting stroke at the perimeter throws definition inwards, adds meaning to the white!" Johnson's observation is important to this chapter not only because it points to the power of contrast and omission as central components of Hemingway's writing style, a significant element of the theory

of literary whiteness I articulate here, but also that contrast and omission are intrinsically connected to a meditation on the *white space* that is not defined directly, but is rather revealed through a circumscription and manipulation of what it is not. This, as Heron says, adds meaning to the white. This white space, connected as it is to landscape, place, lifestyle—even life itself for Hemingway—may also be seen as a meditation on the whiteness of Hemingway’s own upper middle-class American identity.

The premise of this chapter rests upon the presence of white characters and their subsequent dependence upon the absence and circumscription of black characters. What I am really interested in here are the absences and marginalizations, which I believe exposes a studied literary whiteness in Hemingway’s short stories.

Argument and Method

Like many white American writers, Ernest Hemingway was in search of the “Other,” the contrast, against which to posit his white American identity. A note here about my use of the word “against” is necessary. I use it comparatively to point to those identities through which Hemingway can posit a meaningful self. Characters such as Anderson in “The Killers” and Wilson in “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” would be examples of such characters. I also use it as a term of exclusion to point to those identities which are rejected as unsuitable Others through whom Hemingway may posit an identity to give his protagonists’ lives meaning. Characters like Sam in “The Killers,” and Molo in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” who are in the service of the protagonist to highlight these protagonists’ own identities, would be illustrative. That they are black and the protagonists white is the salient point. Toni Morrison understands this when she exposes Hemingway, Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather and

others whose works reveal a dependence upon a racialized Other (Morrison 13-14).

Morrison's discussion of Cather in which she points out that "Nancy [who is the slave girl in Sapphira and the Slave Girl by Cather] is not the only victim of Sapphira's evil, whimsical scheming" (24) is typical of the argument. Morrison continues:

She [Nancy] becomes the unconsulted, appropriated ground of Cather's inquiry into what is of paramount importance to the author: the reckless, unabated power of a white woman gathering identity unto herself from the wholly available and serviceable lives of the Africanist others. This seems to provide the coordinates of an immensely important moral debate. (25)

Morrison's literary claim here is consistent with the historical claim she makes later in her text about white freedom being predicated upon black unfreedom (38). That is, black unfreedom circumscribes and defines white freedom. Indeed, Morrison's assertions provide an important link between morality and its connection to freedom and individualism. She also demonstrates here the dependency that whiteness has on blackness in social, political and economic contexts.

The defacto definition of the "Other" as both white and non-white, as both esoteric and not American becomes influential in both shaping Hemingway's notion of the authentic "American" and in excluding blacks and working-class whites.

Hemingway's "Others" are foreign non-whites, Spanish sub-alterns or white romance heroes. They are not blacks or working-class whites; they are omitted, giving way to and exposing the white space.

The circumscription of working-class whites—but especially blacks—in his early fiction suggests to us the difficulty Hemingway had managing the ongoing discussion of

maleness, whiteness and Americanness that permeates his fiction. For the purposes of this chapter, I will examine a collection of his short stories that explore this difficulty and demonstrate the function of danger and its connection to industrial labor and race in his texts. As I will show, danger is the context for the exercise of will, the central element of grace under pressure, and it is this will that the industrial worker and its most potent symbol, the black American, is incapable of expressing. Without the capacity for will, hence grace, these two American identities can find no place in Hemingway's texts of American male self-realization. Hemingway elides this contradiction in his writing by focusing on the internal workings of his protagonists' mind and positing a version of the self that has no connection to the realities of the outside world. Indeed, the rugged individual in the natural landscapes of the Midwest provides the ideal setting for the idealized isolated self unencumbered by an increasingly industrialized America.

The first group of stories I discuss are those set in Africa or various parts of Europe such as "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "The Undefeated," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "The Capital of the World," and while not set in Africa or Europe, "The Killers". In these stories, physical danger is the context within which American male identity emerges. While the majority of American males in the first three decades of the twentieth century lead lives forcibly defined by alienated and exploited labor, Hemingway's white "heroes" in these texts sought self-definition in natural arenas far removed from the factories of Detroit, Chicago and Gary. Danger in these texts also exposes the racialized coding employed by the writer which invests the protagonists with a force of human will that dominates the text and which no black character possesses.

The other group of stories are those set mostly in the great American outdoors of the Midwest, stories such as “The Battler,” “Big Two-Hearted River Part I,” “Big Two-Hearted River Part II,” “The End of Something,” and “Soldier’s Home” (discussed earlier) which, while not set in the American outdoors, nevertheless focuses the readers attention on the inner workings of the protagonists’ mind in contrast to the landscape of his home town in Oklahoma and, like the others in this group, is representative of an evacuated and diminished sense of labor. The glimpses of labor we see in all of these stories suggest rather than explicitly center on the external reality of the world the characters themselves occupy.

These ten works taken from Hemingway’s first forty-nine short stories, then, will serve here to define the role of literary whiteness on the one hand, and its connection to industrialized labor exploitation in Hemingway’s short fiction generally on the other. Read together these texts suggest not only a studied categorization and deployment of racialized difference based on the degree to which characters express human will, but also presume a white male audience with whom, along with the always white, always male protagonist of the text, the narrator shapes and constructs meaning.

The division I create in the Hemingway stories between those set in the great American outdoors and those exhibiting physical danger usually set in Africa or Europe constitute the two predominant settings for all of Hemingway’s short fiction material, and much of his longer work as well. The correlation between the landscape of the great American outdoors and the inner workings of the protagonists’ mind in the one set, and physical danger and the plight of black Americans and industrialized labor in the other provides tacit support for a reading of Hemingway’s texts that demonstrates not only a

complex relationship between his notion of acceptable white identity and the rejected otherness of white industrialized workers and blacks, but a studied rationale for their rhetorical placement or omission from the texts. This suggests both an important and central role for whiteness in Hemingway's fiction, and also in the shaping of early literary modernism.

Whiteness and Physical Danger

“The Killers”

In the Hemingway stories presenting physical danger whites are always risk-takers and possess agency. Agency in Hemingway comes into being through the subjective consciousness of the always white, always male protagonist. This is observable in “The Killers” where Sam, the black cook, is objectified as fearful, a person who exhibits a lack of will, and who demonstrates the absence of grace under pressure. These character traits highlight their mirror opposites in the protagonist, Nick Adams, who exhibits fearlessness, will, and grace under pressure.

The story begins with two men walking into a lunch room that they know is frequented by Anderson, the man they intend to kill. The men are presented in Hemingway's crisp, clear minimalist style as gangsters typical of the 1920's and 30s.

[The man called Al] wore a derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest. His face was small and white and he had tight lips. He wore a silk muffler and gloves. [Max] was about the same size as Al. Their faces were different, but they were dressed like twins. Both wore overcoats too tight for them. They sat leaning forward, their elbows on the counter. (215-16)

Hemingway's vivid drawing of these characters and the movie-like quality he gives to them as well as the dialogue throughout the text are no doubt reasons for the story's enduring popularity. Hemingway highlights the whiteness of Al's face by deploying an imagistic rhetoric created by the contrast with his black coat. The deployment of this kind of imagery is consistent throughout the story, and rhetorically underscores the ways in which Nick and Sam, the cook are juxtaposed. The two men soon have George, the manager of the lunch-room, Nick, and Sam, the black cook, hostage as they wait for Andreson to enter. Nick is tied up with Sam in the kitchen while the details of the plot are revealed through the terse dialogue between George and Max. Andreson doesn't show at his usual time, and the gangsters leave. George unties Sam and Nick and points out that Andreson should be warned that killers are looking for him. What is interesting here, and what my argument turns on, is who that person turns out to be as it is Nick who *willingly* does what Sam will not: face danger by going out to warn Andreson that killers are looking to kill him as the following excerpt illustrates:

The cook felt the corners of his mouth with his thumbs.
 "they all gone?" he asked.
 "yeah," said George. They're gone now."
 "I don't like it," said the cook. "I don't like any of it at all."
 "Listen," George said to Nick. "You better go see Ole Andreson."
 "All right."
 You better not have anything to do with it at all," Sam, the cook said.
 "You better stay out of it."
 "I'll go see him," Nick said to George. "Where does he live?"
 The cook turned away.
 "Little boys always know what they want to do," he said. (220)

Notice that it is Nick alone that George speaks to when contemplating the idea of warning Andreson. Notice also that while Sam expresses fear that he directs toward Nick, Nick ignores him and speaks directly to George. No one speaks to Sam. It is as

though he were not present, and therefore functions as the embodiment of the unwilling. When Nick ignores him he simultaneously and conversely endorses Sam's opposite: willfulness. The last words Sam say, "Little boys always know what they want to do," are of course highly ironic since Nick's actions are not those of a boy, but instead are intended to demonstrate his developing manhood, that which Sam cannot do. Indeed, Sam in this scene is the child, not seen or heard, and he knows what he wants to do: keep himself safe and away from danger.

Sam seems to serve two functions in the text. On the one hand he is merely the cook. His function as worker or laborer puts him in the lunch room in the first place. It is through this function as a source of labor, then, that we see him at all. Next, he is used as a rhetorical device to highlight what Hemingway appears to be most concerned with, Nick Adam's experiential and psychological development into a man. Sam's positioning as will-less, and fearful, makes it possible for the reader to understand all the more readily what Nick's positioning as willful and fearless is. Sam, to recall Johnson's critique of Cezanne's influence on Hemingway's craft, is the brushstroke that is at the perimeter and throws definition inwards, in this case onto Nick Adams, and in so doing adds meaning to the white.

This circumscription is similar to the treatment of blacks in other authors of the Modernist period like John Steinbeck and Clifford Odets, and begins to explain the absence of significant black characters in Modernist literature of which, for the purposes of this study, Hemingway and to a lesser extent, Odets and Steinbeck are representative.

Marginality and Circumscription in Steinbeck and Odets

The marginalization of blacks in Steinbeck and Odets's texts contributes to our understanding of literary whiteness by displacing blacks as fully human and making them metonyms, or signals for permanent labor. This is clearly seen in the way both authors use the very brief images of blacks in their texts.

For both Steinbeck and Odets, white labor—and the injustice leveled at white labor because of the contradictions inherent in early industrial capitalism—is constructed in the absence of black labor. This has the effect of making their white working-class characters appear separate and distinct from an apparently invisible permanent laboring class, and therefore “free” to pursue the myth of upward mobility and participate in a particularized American democracy that did not include blacks. When white freedom is occluded, both Odets and Steinbeck appeal to the immorality of a system that would create such conditions for white labor, but crucially never point to white labor and black labor's differential treatment as causal. Ironically, then, the marginalization of black characters in the literature also limits the boundaries of freedom that can be imagined by their audience to the boundaries of social and economic whiteness. The literary canvas of Steinbeck and Odets simply could not accommodate the darker colors of humanity.

“Nigger” or reference to black people is mentioned three times in Grapes of Wrath. The first occurrence is by a truck driver who picks up Tom Joad at a roadside restaurant where we first meet him in the second chapter of the book as he makes his way home from prison. The truck driver recites a poem about “niggers,” common to the community of truck drivers, to break the ice between the two of them. The part of the poem which is related in the book is as follows: “An' there we spied a nigger, with a trigger that was bigger than a elephant's proboscis or the whanger of a whale” (14).

Steinbeck's inclusion of the poem, and the subsequent introduction of metonymic blackness the poem signals, is instructive. First, the poem clearly has sexual overtones which harkens back to the appropriation of black male sexuality during slavery. Next, the poem is used by the truck driver to create a kinship between himself and Tom, largely on the basis of their perceived shared white identity. This last point is emphasized by the fact that the truck driver initially recited the poem in order to generate conversation between them; he seems to be saying that truck drivers have a tough job, but at least they're not "niggers."

The second time the term nigger is mentioned is also important. Tom Joad, after the truck driver leaves him near his family's home, "experiments" with the poem he has just heard the truck driver recite, but can only remember, "There we spied a nigger" (Steinbeck 17). The irony, of course, is that blacks or any other racialized group, remain completely absent throughout the entire journey the Joad family take across thousands of miles of American country from Oklahoma to California.

The first scene, which really marks the beginning of the drama in the book, mirrors the third scene where blacks are mentioned, is almost at the end of the novel in chapter twenty-seven. Here, the Joads have reached California to discover nothing more than more poverty, and worse, severe exploitation which together has squeezed almost every drop of humanity out of them. The chapter begins with a fellow worker who is picking cotton, and relates a brief story about "...a lady back home, won't mention no names—had a nigger kid all of a sudden" (407). He goes on to tell the others in the field, "Nobody knowed before. Never did hunt out the nigger. Couldn't never hold up her head no more" (407). Steinbeck seems to be using this scene to suggest that everything

after this point in the novel is below even black life whatever his reader *imagines* that to be. The trajectory of the family is, of course, downward until they become sub-human with the last act of Rose of Sharon giving her milk that was supposed to be for her new born (new life) to an old dying malnourished man (spent life).

Both the beginning of the book, then, and its end are circumscribed by black metonymic characters that mark the bounds of the white working class that Steinbeck wishes to dramatize. The black masculine sexuality we see in the beginning is closed off by the miscegenation we observe at the end of the text, and which throws the white woman out of whiteness, and subsequently out of the circle of humanity. By using black metonymic characters as the marker for the bounds of white life in this way, Steinbeck, as if his page were a Cezanne canvas, throws definition inward upon the whiteness of the Joad family and other poor whites. Steinbeck, then, marks the bounds of freedom to the plight of the Joads, never making the wider ideological connection to show how blacks, and other racialized groups are connected to the plight of the Joad family as fellow citizens and workers. Black life, then, marks the bounds of freedom that can be imagined. So, then, whiteness is created by way of marking where black life is, though not really saying so.

Similarly, Clifford Odets's protest play, Waiting for Lefty, vividly constructs white working-class life, and the oppression leveled at it by the ruling class. He only mentions blacks twice in the entire play, once in the character of Fayette, the industrialist who says "I like sobriety in my workers...the trained ones, I mean. The pollacks and the niggers, they're better drunk—keeps them out of mischief" (14). Fayette, the character Odets sees as representing the industrial capitalists the play was ostensibly written to

critique shared a and common view of blacks. Had this not been the case, Odets would have presented not only white working-class life, but also black life in a way that unified working-class American life. The second time is in a scene Odets deletes from his first 1939 collection of plays. In this scene, the black character is neither seen on stage nor heard. Indeed, it is the status of blacks as permanent labor that frees Odets, and Steinbeck to petition against the economic crisis the white working class suffers, and that they are exclusively concerned with.

It is through Hemingway's Sam, then, as the symbol of labor in his text that the issue of labor is present in "The Killers" and is hidden behind its symbol, Sam. He is used by Hemingway to underpin a particularized and idealized white masculinity that elides any connection to industrialized labor. Nick's own white masculinity, then, is discovered through its absence in Sam. In rejecting Sam, Hemingway not only rejects the African American as a suitable identity against which to posit an idealized self, but also rejects the laborer as self as well, since Sam is its signifier. Ironically, in Robert Siodmak's 1946 film adaptation of the story, Nick and Andreson work together at a gas station and mechanic shop where Andreson is a mechanic and Nick pumps gas. This modification to the original Hemingway story not only adds elements of industrialized America into the story that my reading of Hemingway would find problematic since Hemingway shies away from representations of industry in his short stories, but also suggests that Siodmak *had* to do so because of the inherent differences between film and text that required these changes to make the film reflect a readily recognizable world for its audience. This change, then, further emphasizes Hemingway's interest in focusing the

reader's attention on the development of the protagonist's masculinity, as opposed to the reality that the outside world represents.

After Nick asserts that he will go to warn Andreson, he leaves Henry's lunch-room and:

Outside the arc-light shone through the bare branches of a tree. Nick walked up the street beside the car-tracks and turned at the next arc light down a street (220).

The imagery created in this scene, and the rhetorical use of the arc lighting as both navigational points for Nick in the story and mechanisms that force the reader to see the whiteness of his face without the benefit of specific details is significant as arc lighting was an important feature of the film industry during that industry's nascent years in the 1920s and 1930s, just as "The Killers" was being written by Hemingway (Dyer 92). As discussed in chapter two of this study, the decision-making process by which arc lighting is today preferred to tungsten lighting signaled the imbrication of whiteness into the film industry. The industry was materially altered to accommodate the white image despite the fact that arc lighting was uncomfortable, hot, and more expensive than tungsten lighting to use.

This decision appears to defy the logic of economics. However, arc lighting's ability to render white skin in a particularly favorably way for film signals an example of what George Lipsitz calls "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness." In his book by the same name he articulates how the possessive investment in whiteness *forces* white people to make decisions, daily, based on their investment in whiteness, or, as he says, white privilege (Lipsitz 7). Hemingway focuses the attention of the reader on this contrast

between Nick's white face brightened by the arc lighting and the contrasting dark night, further emphasizing Nick's particular masculine whiteness relative to the character of Sam who never leaves the safety of Henry's eating house. While Hemingway gives us no indication of the lighting in the lunch room, the cinematic qualities of the text, indicated by the tone, imagery, and action suggests brightness not unlike that created by the narration of Nick walking to Andreson's house. Indeed, Siodmak's film of the story supports this. In the movie, all the lights in Henry's lunchroom are switched on creating a brilliant daylight scene even though it is after dark. This brilliance, of course, highlights Sam's blackness, and in so doing Nick's whiteness. This contrast is dramatically heightened when, in the movie, key changes are made to the Hemingway text including having Sam tied up on the floor without Nick, who is tied up by himself seated on a chair above Sam. Sam is made childish and inferior, and Nick's dramatic rhetorical accomplice in his quest toward masculinity.

In both the Hemingway text and the movie when Nick sees Ole Andreson he discovers that Andreson already knows that killers are after him and he has accepted his fate. Andreson follows the characteristics of a Hemingway code hero in that he displays grace under pressure in the presence of danger. He exhibits no overt emotion, and after Nick explains what he has experienced and the gravity of the situation to Andreson he asks if there is anything he can do to help. Andreson says, "No. I'm through with all that running around.... There ain't anything to do now" (221).

While Nick declares he will leave the town because he "can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it" (221) he nevertheless learns from Andreson elements of the Hemingway heroic code. It is not incidental, either, that

Andreson is identifiable as a European immigrant by his name, and is indeed called the Swede. This further underscores Hemingway's inability to posit willfulness in blacks or the American white working-class. It is in Andreson, then, that Nick finds a suitable identity against which to posit his white male identity. He is separated from Sam now not only in the exercise of his will demonstrated by going to warn Andreson, but also in that through this exercise, he has been educated and learns things about ideal white masculinity Sam could never understand. This is underscored by the last line attributed to Sam as Nick walks back into Henry's eating house and Sam hears his voice. "I don't even want to listen to it,' [Sam] said and shut the door" (222). Here Hemingway indicates that such forms of masculinity, will, and action, are completely alien to Sam, and are in the domain of a white identity that does not have to be articulated, only demonstrated in contrast to Sam. Sam, then, helps to create the unnamed whiteness Nick possesses.

Morrison's logic of invisibility is useful for a further articulation of literary whiteness in "The Killers" because it provides a way of understanding the construction of white agency and its dependence upon the circumscription of blackness represented by Sam. Whiteness—literary and otherwise—requires an agent that is dependent upon a form of the Africanist presence. This presence is often not visible as possessing fully human qualities or capable of risk-taking. Whiteness, as illustrated in "The Killers," is enabled or visible because of the presence and inscription of Sam the racialized Other and symbol of labor in the text. It is Sam as coward and discourager that is a hidden or invisible coordinate that is rejected by Nick. Put another way, blackness is an indispensable and contrasting element of white identity. Had Nick not been bound to

Sam by the would-be killers earlier in the Hemingway version of the story, and had Sam not demonstrably refused to have anything at all to do with helping Andreson, Nick's actions would not, indeed could not, have had the same dramatic, and artistic effect in the text. The film version of the story supports quite nicely, rather than challenges this interpretation of the text since Sam's seated position at Nick's feet dramatizes the interdependency that exists between the server, Sam, and the served, Nick. Nick's position of privilege is reinforced by his seated position with Sam at his feet in child-like fashion. The dramatic elements of this scene are repeated in the film shortly after Andreson is killed. Both Sam and Nick are in a police station looking at mug shots. Nick is seated with the book of mug shots held in his hands, while the significantly older Sam gazes at the book from over Nick's shoulder cap in hands with bent back, again reinforcing his childlikeness and servitude. Sam is soon asked to leave since he is of no help identifying the killers while Nick is asked to stay and is questioned in more depth.

“The Short Happy life of Francis Macomber”

Another example of literary whiteness expressed through physical danger and the eliding of labor is presented in “The Short Happy life of Francis Macomber”. However, Macomber is noteworthy not as much for his growth and development toward white masculinity as for the display of cowardice which disqualifies him from attaining it permanently. His disqualification and inadequacy is contrasted and heightened by the white, masculine figure of Robert Wilson who embodies it.

The story begins in Africa where Macomber is on a safari with his wife, Margaret, and Wilson, their white hunter and guide. Also with them are several black men who are hired laborers brought along to carry their gear and supplies. The story opens after

Macomber has "...just shown himself, very publicly, to be a coward" (6). This is so because he not only broke one of the tenets of the Hemingway code here in displaying emotional weakness, but in the face of danger, he ran. The text also opens shortly before Macomber is "carried to his tent from the edge of the camp in triumph on the arms and shoulders of the cook, the personal boys, the skinner and the porters" (5). This is significant since the ostensible reason for Macomber being commended is the slaughter of the lion from which he ran. However, it is not he, but rather Wilson who killed the lion.

Macomber, in breaking the Hemingway heroic code, allowing himself to be praised for an act he did not perform, by people who know better, in a sense becomes one with those who falsely carry him. He becomes "black." The act of carrying Macomber can be seen not as congratulations on the defeat of the lion, but rather as an ironic welcome into the ranks of the will-less blacks who carry him. The blacks here are will-less because they are laborers and not guides. They follow instructions and directions, not give them. Macomber's embarrassing act of cowardice as he bolted away from the injured—and therefore dangerous—lion (Macomber 8), not only signals his exclusion from whiteness but also posits his gendering as feminine or at the least, un-masculine. This is underscored by Margaret's actions as she refuses to take Macomber's hand during the trip back to camp, and also in her slipping out of their tent to sleep with Wilson on the very night following the event. It is Wilson who is what Macomber is not, demonstrating as he does white masculinity by confronting death and killing the lion, and it is Wilson whom Margaret rewards with a kiss on the mouth as they travel back to camp after the embarrassing event, in full view of her husband, Macomber (17). Macomber's act of

cowardice and the subsequent response to it by Wilson and Margaret have the effect of isolating Macomber in the text. Margaret and Wilson now comprise a white universe of values that Macomber, no matter what he does from this point onward, can be no part of. Instead, he is recognized and celebrated as one of the blacks who carry him.

As Wilson says to Macomber in a statement that comments on the ironic ending of the story as well, “... no woman ever misses her lion and no white man ever bolts” (8). Wilson’s statement here feminizes Macomber and makes him womanly. This is so because Macomber, while he does miss his lion, as Wilson indicates ironically that a woman may do, Wilson makes the kill for him as he would do if he were hunting with a woman. The statement also gives unvoiced support to the idea that whites alone are capable of possessing a willed masculinity since the will and courage necessary to face the danger represented by the lion are inside the essential nature of masculine whiteness, hence no *white* man ever bolts, the implication being, of course, that the racialized Other does.

Macomber does not confront the possibility of the total loss of life, which in Hemingway stands in for democratic notions of freedom as suggested earlier by Ralph Ellison through his discussion of early twentieth century literature and the artists’ democratic ideals (Ellison 40). We will remember also that Morrison makes a similar argument in her analysis of the myth of the American Dream, and her reading of early American fiction which she accurately describes as troubled, frightened and haunted as indicated by the gothic, romantic, sermonic and puritan styles which dominated early American literature (Morrison 35-36). Here, fear is intimately intertwined with one of the most enduring symbols of American Freedom, the American Dream. Macomber,

then, cannot be seen as a man through whose own courageous actions has achieved freedom, and therefore he cannot be seen as a white male American worthy of the American Dream.

Indeed, the same rhetorical relationship that exists between Macomber and Robert Wilson exists between Sam and Nick in “The Killers” since it is Macomber’s lack of will that highlights Wilson’s masculinity for Margaret and for the reader. The blacks in “Macomber,” like Sam in “The Killers,” are not seen as men or masculine risk-takers. They are preemptively assigned a position similar to that which Macomber has taken by his choice to run since white men have the capacity for choice, and his lack of will. This is illustrated by the interchange that takes place between Macomber and Wilson after the lion has been wounded. Macomber, frightened by the prospect of going into the tall grass to finish off the lion asks if they can send in beaters to flush out the lion, Wilson responds:

‘Of course we can...but it’s a touch murderous...somebody bound to get mauled.’

‘What about gun bearers?’ [Macomber asks]

‘Oh, they’ll go with us. It’s their *Shauri*. You see, they signed up for it.

They don’t look too happy though, do they? (15)

This interchange is significant because the beaters, facing the prospect of death would go into the tall grass to flush out the lion. However, the decision to go in does not rest with them. It is not *their* will; it rests with the white hunter, Wilson, whose force of will and implicit power is stronger even than their fear of death.

Similarly, the gun bearers' non-verbal cues indicate their unwillingness to confront the lion on Wilson's orders "the gun bearers looked very grave. They were silent now" (14). However, they are powerless to confront Wilson. Both the beaters and the gun bearers have no voice of their own, but rather are presented to us only through the consciousness of Wilson and Macomber. They are, in effect, will-less machines to be manipulated, not capable of manipulation themselves, nor capable of controlling their own lives. Indeed, Wilson's character is partially defined by the beaters and the gun carriers in ways not unlike Sam who helps to define the character of Nick in "The Killers". Macomber, then, demonstrates a form of otherness within whiteness that Hemingway rejects, and is placed outside of the white American masculinity Hemingway champions.

Macomber, however, is *white* and therefore possesses something in appearance at least that the blacks do not. We may then read "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" as a story about the discovery and acquisition of Macomber's white masculine identity. Although his eventual "successful" encounter with a water buffalo buoys Macomber's spirits and provides the basis for Hemingway's ironic title, that masculinity is nevertheless rejected by Margaret, Wilson, and Hemingway himself. Indeed, this provides one plausible interpretation of the very last scene of the story when Margaret shoots Macomber. As Wilson tells us early in the story, "a woman never misses her lion." While this may be interpreted, as illustrated above, to mean that even though a woman may miss her lion, the white masculine hunter is always there to make the kill for her, Margaret's shooting of Macomber may also be seen as a white woman

always knowing where white masculinity is located, and eliminating as choices those who do not possess it or those who possess it in ways that threaten their status.

While it can be argued that she intended to kill the water buffalo that she presumed threatened her husband—the text reads, “Mrs. Macomber had shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Mannlicher as it seemed about to gore Macomber” (28)—Hemingway’s irony here can not be over stated. The development of the plot suggests just as easily that she intended to kill Macomber as a result of recognizing his femininity then new-found masculinity. While in his own mind Macomber is redeemed due to the fact that he kills the first water buffalo they encounter, and fearlessly pursues its mate, and even felt a new man after the kill (as indicated in the text, he “felt a wild and unreasonable happiness that he had never known before... ‘something did happen to me,’ he said. ‘I felt absolutely different’”) (25), in the eyes of Margaret and Wilson Macomber can *never* be a white man in their universe of ideas after having bolted. He forfeits all masculinity forever. What Macomber fails to understand is that masculinity is constructed out of both another’s and the Other’s response to one’s actions. Margaret’s fear that the water buffalo would kill Macomber is consistent with her understanding of Macomber as feminized and not of her and Wilson’s universe of values. Indeed, Macomber’s actions provide motivation for Margaret to see him dead since life with the newly confirmed feminized Macomber would be unbearable for the flirtatious and willful Margaret. Her husband’s identity constitutes a self not dependent upon her good looks, the thing that kept Macomber wedded to her both legally and physically, but rather upon his own sense of masculinity which is incongruous with Margaret and Wilson’s white world, a world that he can never occupy. Macomber’s identity in the eyes of others has

changed as a result of the polar opposites within which he must exist, Wilson on the one hand, and the blacks who carry him at the beginning of the story on the other. Margaret recognizes Macomber's isolation and the end of their marriage which this isolation signals. Indeed, Wilson also realizes it and says, "[h]e *would* have left you too" (28). The shooting, then, signals Margaret's and Hemingway's total rejection of Macomber's particular form of masculinized whiteness.

"The Undefeated"

"The Undefeated" presents us with a different kind of Hemingway protagonist. Manuel Garcia is an old bullfighter who is the image of the Hemingway code hero. His life is marked by the idea of grace under pressure, not just in terms of personal loss, but also in confronting danger in the bullring under less than ideal circumstances. In so doing, he confirms his masculinity and manhood.

In Hemingway, the idea of grace under pressure emerges as a function of will. However, in Christian theology, "grace" *cannot* be willed. It is a gift from God. The opening chapter of Norman Mailer's An American Dream illustrates a good rendering of "unwilled grace" quite succinctly. Here, Steven Rojack, our first person narrator, describes a battle scene during World War II where his company is pinned down on either side by German machine gunners protected by knolls. Recognizing they are in a hopeless crossfire Rojack is inspired to attack both German machine gun posts simultaneously. Just before he leaves his position he says:

I could nonetheless feel danger withdraw from me like an angel, withdraw like a retreating wave over a quiet sea, sinking quietly into the sand, and I

stood and then I ran, I ran up the hill into the isle of safety I felt opening for me..." (3).

Later, after he has thrown grenades into each machinegun post and shot three of the four German soldiers he kills he describes his encounter with the last of them:

I started to rise. I wanted to charge as if that were our contract and held, for I could not face his eyes...eyes that go all the way back to God is the way I think I heard it said once in the South, and I faltered before that stare...and suddenly it was all gone, the clean presence of *it*, the grace, *it* had deserted me in the instant I hesitated, and now I had no stomach to go, I could charge his bayonet no more. (5)

This scene is ironic since it suggests a specific relationship with God where "Amazing Grace" is responsible for willed action. The human being is a vessel for the exercise of will that suggests divinity resides inside of the human agent. This clearly invokes the opening chapter of Richard Dyer's White where he argues that white people and white people alone are invested with this something else that is realized in, and yet is not reducible to, the corporeal (14-15). According to Dyer, this something else constitutes a kind of "will" or enterprise, which blacks simply lack due to their carnal nature. Whites, Dyer suggests, maintain a certain spiritual connection to God through this will and are in a sense his chosen people, those for whom Eden was created (Dyer 15).

Hemingway's treatment of will, then, connected as it is to notions of manhood and masculinity can be seen as both an extension of Dyer and Mailer's treatment of it and an ironic complication. For Hemingway God is "Nada," a kind of nothingness; instead, we have an idealized masculinity and manhood which produces will. Grace, then, is not

a gift, but is rather a product of one's own making. Not residing in white masculinity, but an intrinsic element of it.

Thomas Srychacz, in his essay, "Dramatizations of Manhood in Hemingway's *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*," argues that men are made or unmade in the bullring (Srychacz 245). He continues:

The physical characteristics of the ring shape the rituals enacted there, providing necessary boundaries within which potentially chaotic action may reveal a comprehensible structure. The presence of the audience, in particular, is crucial for the transformation of space into arena. Acting as an agent of legitimation for ritual gestures made in the ring, the audience assimilates all action to the performance and invests performance with value. Part of the audience's function is to appraise rituals of manhood and bestow praise or condemnation on the protagonist. But such moments of evaluatory watching are not confined to the bullrings: they pervade *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*. An audience may comprise only one other person or even the protagonist watching himself. Many symbolic spaces in this [*In Our Time*] early work—houses and hotels, bedrooms, camps and clearings—take on the characteristics of a ceremonial arena (246).

Srychacz's reading of the bullring, and other settings in Hemingway's short stories generally, is consistent with Ellison's reading of Hemingway in that both see the audience as key, even if that audience is only the writer himself. This understanding of audience is illustrated in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" in that Macomber

does not understand the relationship between audience and his own white masculinity. Ellison asserts that the act of writing itself was ritualistic for Hemingway; an act that absolves the author of the moral contradictions inherent in his treatment (or absenting) of the Negro (Ellison 27). It is also a psychological drama of guilt where the author “seeks protection through the compulsive minor rituals of his prose.” Manuel Garcia, the protagonist in “The Undefeated,” goes some distance in demonstrating this psychological drama. It is illustrated, for instance, in the very first scene of the text when he enters the office of Don Miguel Retana, a bullfighting promoter, and is confronted with skepticism and a lack of faith as evidenced by the look on Retana’s face, and just above Retana on the wall behind him, the face and head of the stuffed bull that had killed Manuel Garcia’s brother, “the promising one, about nine years ago” (183-184). Manuel Garcia’s brother, in terms of Srychacz’s reading of the bullring would not have been unmanned though he was killed since his death comes about as a result of confronting physical danger. It is the manner of death; the grace under pressure exhibited for the audience that becomes significant. The danger associated with the bullring, then, is implied in almost every element of the opening scene of “The Undefeated,” especially in the stuffed bull in which, we are told, Manuel Garcia felt “a certain family interest” (183). It is this information, as well as Retana’s skepticism that creates the context for the exercise of human will Manuel Garcia demonstrates at the ending and climax of the story.

Indeed, it is upon Manuel Garcia’s will that the entire text is hinged, as well as the relative weakness of his picadors; no one else, no picador with any skill would agree to work with this matador who is past his prime. Much of the story revolves around Manuel Garcia negotiating the terms of his bullfight with Retana, including the picadors and the

cuadrillas or bullring assistants. What we learn through the text that is of importance for our purposes is that Manuel Garcia is not motivated to fight by money as he has to pay for the cuadrillas out of his own small pay to be given an opportunity to fight. Here we see clearly that Manuel Garcia literally exchanges his labor, in the form of his pay, for the opportunity to fight in the ring—to perform for an audience who can evaluate his worthiness and his honor. This is significant since money is a sign for labor in most Marxian frames of reference. Manuel Garcia, then, is posited on the side of capital in the capital-labor dichotomy, but it is not capital used for material profit. Rather, it—and the labor it purchases—is used for the singular opportunity to exercise his will. One could reasonably argue, then, that the bullfight is a capitalist relationship being acted out in the symbolic space of the bullring. In this relationship, wealth is counted in terms of honor, grace, masculinity, and the exercise of will, not in money.

For Manuel Garcia bullfighting is not only a matter of honor and respect, but is also a matter of guilt, life, and death. It's a matter of honor and respect because it is through his skill as a bullfighter that Manuel Garcia and his family name are distinguished in the text. It is a matter of guilt because, as indicated above, his brother, “the promising one” was killed in the ring. He can only restore honor to the family by confronting death, risking his life and claiming victory by his sheer will. It is also a matter of life and death because it is the bullfight, his actions inside of the ring and the audience's appraisal of that action, as we discover in the text that gives meaning to Manuel Garcia's life. Hence, the last words he utters in the story, after he is gored by the bull asks for assurance from Zurito, his trusted friend and picador, that he acted honorably, “‘Wasn't I good, Manos?’ he asked for confirmation. ‘Sure.’ Said Zurito.

‘You were going great’” (205). Manuel Garcia represents one aspect, then, of Hemingway’s approach to race and masculinity. The masculinized other from which the reader/author learns may not even be “black” except, as with Sam and the African porters, as examples to react against. Nevertheless, as we will see in The Sun Also Rises, many whites are not acceptable either. But the brown races, the swarthy Spaniards, the Indians, the Italians, all people of some color can be—and in most cases are—sites of honor and “grace”.

“The Capital of the World,”

Paco, the young and inexperienced protagonist in “The Capital of the World,” is like Manuel Garcia’s brother, killed through his confrontation with physical danger. Paco nevertheless retains his honor. “The Capital of the World” has not enjoyed great critical attention, perhaps because of the apparent futility of the ending. The young Paco, after just arriving from the Castilian country to the big city of Madrid is eager to join the ranks of the matador for whom he has a boyish admiration and childish delusions of grandeur. Paco dies in the dining room of the hotel where he works after playacting at a bullfight with his coworker, Enrique. While Paco does die in this show of naiveté, his death as a playacting matador is best seen in light of the three actual matadors we see in the short story who bear the name *matador*, but lack the requisite characteristics of a matador and subsequently, the Hemingway code. The first matador is past his prime and does not draw the people’s attention, the second one is chronically ill and incapable of fighting, and the third is a coward.

While Emily Hoffman, in her essay “Tradition and the Individual Bullfighter: The Lost Legacy of the matador in Hemingway’s ‘The Capital of the World’” argues

convincingly that Paco's death is in part due to a "generational rift, one that threatens to do irreparable harm to Spanish culture . . . because he has no one with experience to dispel his illusions about the bullfight and teach him a more adequate approach to craft" (91), and while David Sanders argues that the characters we see in "The Capital of the world" are emblematic of the state of Spanish politics vis-à-vis the fight against fascism, a struggle that Hemingway vigorously supported (Sanders 138), it is just as likely—and indeed consistent with both critics—to suggest that Paco dies attempting to exercise his will, and confronting danger. That is to say, Paco is best seen as a Hemingway code hero in that he willingly confronts danger. In this sense, he is similar to Nick Adams in "The Killers" as Nick in that story is also young, willing to confront danger, and has the rhetorical equivalence of the three ineffective matadors in the figure of Sam, the cook. The difference, of course, is that in "The Killers," Nick's masculinity is juxtaposed and indeed shaped by Ole Andreson who serendipitously teaches him and in whom he finds a suitable identity against which to posit a meaningful self, and also in the sense that Sam is without the capacity for the exercise of will whereas the matadors, due to their profession, should.

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

Unlike Paco, the protagonist in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Harry Wilson, has both the experiences and knows intimately people who exhibit the traits of the Hemingway code hero. However, Wilson emerges as an unaccomplished hero because he is seduced by the trappings of his wealthy wife's lifestyle and material goods. He is forced to lament his unfulfilled ambitions as a writer through the narrator of the story who, in a deft rhetorical maneuver by Hemingway, becomes the vehicle by which

Wilson's heroic stories are related. In her essay, "Reading and Writing as a Woman: The Retold Tales of Marguerite Duras," Marilyn R. Schuster correctly points this out, showing that the author/narrator in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" has privileged access to Wilson, that his wife does not. However, Schuster fails to accurately account for the role that race plays in Hemingway's text and therefore does not see that it is not Helen, Wilson's wife, as gendered female that is the principle reason she is not considered by Wilson to be a worthy listener of his stories, but rather Helen as *white* that she is even considered as a potential listener in the first place even though she is ultimately dismissed. Schuster convincingly argues that:

In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" the passing on of Harry's legacy is possible only through the lucid, presumably masculine bond between the omniscient narrator, the central character, whom he knows like a second self, and the reader. The gender of both the narrator and the reader are assumed because "the woman" has been dismissed as an unworthy listener. (51)

Here Schuster refers to an elaborate *paraleipsis* comprised of stories that Harry tells himself throughout the main story set in Africa at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro and related through the narrator. These stories are not part of the *here and now* story in Africa which ostensibly centers on the impending death of Harry and his wife's vain hope of rescue. Rather, they are drawn from Harry's experiences—experiences the reader knows only through the narrator's relating of Harry's inner-most thoughts. This element of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" would be justification for including it in the second set of stories centering on the inner-workings of the protagonist's mind. However, the stories

Harry tells himself are focused primarily on the exercise of his will, and the ways in which he confronts his environment in these stories which are replete with danger. The tension in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” is created, in part, by the differences we find in the willful Harry presented in these stories, and the will-less Harry who is now dying of gangrene. Indeed, much of the narrator’s attention—and subsequently the reader’s—is spent watching Harry lament that these stories will now never become the subject of his writing that would give his life meaning since he knows he faces imminent death. The paralytic element, of course, is that the stories *are* told, as Schuster points out, precisely because of the relationship that exists between the character Harry, the narrator, and the reader.

While Schuster points out that Helen is dismissed as an unworthy listener on the basis of her gender, my reading of the text both extends and complicates her analysis. Gender contributes to the rhetoric and narrative structure of the text as Schuster suggests, but Helen’s gender is subordinate in the text to her wealth, and her whiteness. Indeed, Helen’s wealth and whiteness are responsible for the setting, climax and tension of the text since it is because of what her wealth can afford them that they are in Africa in the first place. Of course, wealth coupled with whiteness is what guarantees the particular social status they enjoy while there.

How both race and class are implicated in Hemingway’s assessment of the elite is consistent and pervasive throughout his work and is clearly illustrated in his treatment of whiteness in The Sun Also Rises. Daniel S. Traber argues in his essay, “Whiteness and the Rejected Other in The Sun Also Rises,” that several figures, ultimately including Robert Cohn, represent for Hemingway a rejected white identity (235).

Traber's thesis raises interesting and probative questions about Hemingway's racial coding, his rhetorical style and their connection to social class not unlike those questions raised by Kenneth Johnson in his essay connecting Hemingway to Cezanne. Hemingway's original American identity as expressed in his literature was in the first place upper middle class, mirroring closely his own social class in Oak Park, Illinois. According to Traber, Hemingway—whose values he sees expressed through the narrator, Jake Barnes—searches for an “Other” against which to posit this white American self in order to give his life meaning. However, he rejects most of them, specifically those that are white and “unauthentic.” Traber argues that Hemingway/Barnes rejects the homosexuals he meets at the Bal Musette night club in Paris. He also rejects Bill, his traveling companion from Paris to Pamplona, not for sexual inversion but for his poseur stance on life. For Hemingway, this stance on life captures the spirit of the lost generation and his treatment of Bill in the novel is a not-so-veiled comment on that group. That generation, including the Bal Musette homosexuals, according to Traber's reading of Hemingway, are unauthentically white, because they are not true to themselves and more importantly, because they break the rules of Hemingway's code hero.

Also significant for my purpose here is where the most likely source for the Bal Musette—or workmen's dance hall—in The Sun Also Rises comes from. Hemingway's first lodging in Paris, with his new wife, Hadley, whom he married the year before, was at 74, rue du Cardinal Lemoine, a plebeian street that wound up from the Seine near Pont Sully (Baker 84). This location was *beside* a Bal Musette that the Hemingways often visited during their residence in Paris. This is significant as Hemingway clearly had available a working-class culture from which to fashion the reality he lived in Paris.

However, he rejects it. When the Hemingways moved in on January 9, 1922, he would write his friends that he lived in “the best part of the Latin Quarter” (Baker 84).

Apparently, Hemingway not only had little interest in accepting working-class people into the reality he lived as he reported it, but had little interest in presenting or representing working-class people in his fiction as his texts show.

The Bal Mussette homosexuals, because of their homosexuality, and Bill because of his poseur and laid-back stance on life are disqualified as viable identities against which Hemingway/Barnes can posit his desired, authentic white Americanness. Traber suggests that Hemingway organizes and evaluates these forms of otherness “according to a rejected notion of centered whiteness” (235) represented most forcefully in the text by Lady Brett Ashley not only because she shares Bill’s outlook on life, but also because she is Hemingway/Barnes’s unconsummated (and unconsummable) love interest. Jake Barnes is distinguished from Lady Ashley, Bill, and “the lost generation” they represent primarily because of his war wound and the implicit lived experiences that accompany it. This wound identifies Barnes as one who has faced danger by going to war, and signals the exercise of human will that neither Bill nor the Bal Musette express since they do not go to war as Barnes/Hemingway did. Hemingway also rejects the “otherness” represented by Robert Cohn because Cohn isn’t true to himself. As a Jew he tries to mimic and “pass” as one of the leisured and elite of European and American class represented most vividly for Cohn (and for the reader) by Lady Brett Ashley.

We might then argue that Hemingway sought a non-threatening, that is, not so close to home, example of the “Other” against which to posit his “self” or identity in order to give his world meaning. In The Sun Also Rises, he ultimately finds that figure in

the “romanticized Spanish subaltern” situated sufficiently outside and within the center (Traber 249). By “center” Traber appears to mean Europe. By being a marginalized group in Europe the Basque peasants are neither the decadent lost generation of the elite Hemingway/Barnes ultimately rejects in the novel, nor are they blacks who Hemingway cannot even draw as three-dimensional human characters due to his inability to see them as participants in American democracy and citizenship. The Basque, sharing no linguistic ties to either French or Spanish, and having preserved a certain purity of culture as well as being fiercely independent becomes the figure of an ideal identity against which Hemingway may posit a meaningful self since he actively seeks the very qualities they possess having left the United States largely because of its trend toward Modernity. Hemingway, then, appropriates the Basque peasantry, not so much because of who they are as because of who they are not. Put another way, the task of the Hemingway white male figure is to adapt “colored” masculinity. Hemingway posits such masculinity in Latin figures but *not*, crucially, in blacks or working class men—the dark sources or models are never Negro. While Traber correctly points out that there are problems associated with Hemingway’s appropriation of the Basque peasants in this way, (Traber 249), he does not articulate what they might be. For my purposes here it is enough to illustrate that the Basque function in ways not possible for blacks, and to suggest that the exclusion of blacks is best understood as, following Ralph Ellison’s lead:

a projection of processes lying at the very root of American culture and certainly at the central core of its twentieth century literary forms . . . [having to do] with processes molding the attitudes . . . that condition men dedicated to democracy to practice, accept and, most crucially of all, often

blind themselves to the essentially undemocratic treatment of their fellow citizens. (26-27)

The Basque, then, adds definition to Hemingway's literary craft in Cezanne-like fashion while blacks do not even get onto his canvas. Other figures emerge as examples of the "Other" against which Hemingway can, and does, posit a self. The hunter in Africa and the bullfighter in Europe are only two who, while confronting physical danger, were nevertheless less threatening for Hemingway than other available types. Indeed, it is through danger and the spectacle danger creates that Hemingway confronts the guilt associated with the contradictions of his democratic ideals and his practices both as a writer and as an American; practices which at the very least are amoral, and at best are undemocratic.

From an authorial point of view Jake Barnes's relationship with Lady Ashley in The Sun Also Rises is a variation of Helen's relationship with Wilson in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro". The major difference arises from the fact that Barnes continues to live—though forced to do so because of his wound—by the Hemingway code signaled by grace under pressure and, most significantly for my purposes here, the exercise of his capacity for human will. He also bears the scars of his confrontation with danger which serve as his legacy, and institutes a crucial element of the novel since it is because of these scars that he is unable to consummate his love for Lady Ashley in the story.

Wilson, however, has no war wound as a testament to his confrontation with danger, and has been seduced by the wealth of the elite which he has always despised, but could never resist. He has demonstrated a complete inability to exercise his human will. Indeed, had it not been for Jake Barnes's confrontation with danger—the symbol of his

white identity celebrated by Hemingway—his fate may well have been similar to Wilson’s in that he would have similarly been seduced by Brett Ashley as the text intimates in several places including, and in particular, the closing lines where his sexual impotence is heightened by the image of a police officer seated on his horse raising his baton as Lady Ashley is pressed against Barnes by the slowing motion of the car. Lady Ashley utters the words “Oh Jake...we could have had such a damned good time together” to which Barnes replies “Yes ... isn’t it pretty to think so” (247). Barnes may also have become like his travel companions, Bill, Cohn, and Mike, Lady Ashley’s fiancé, and been indistinguishable from Harry Wilson in that he would have epitomized the lost generation Hemingway so consistently critiques. Wilson, then, is tempted by Helen in ways Jake Barnes cannot be tempted by Brett Ashley because Wilson does not carry with him the physical affliction which marks his body as well as his experiences in the form of a wound. While Jake cannot “will” his body to perform with Brett Ashley because of his physical wounds, he does exercise human will in facing danger in the first place and it is the physical scars that are the most compelling evidence of the experiences. Wilson, however, has no such scars and no such lived-experiences.

Marilyn Schuster’s privileging of gender in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” is further complicated by Molo, one of Harry and Helen’s black companions who is not female, and therefore, given Schuster’s reading of the text, should be, but is not, a worthy listener and transcriber of Wilson’s stories. That he *is* excluded causes us to seek a reason. One plausible, indeed almost inescapable one is his Africanness—his race, his color. While Helen is excluded on the basis of her gender, Molo’s exclusion suggests she is considered a worthy listener in the first place, only because she is white. Molo is

not even considered for the task while Helen at least is, though she is ultimately rejected. This reading of the text suggests that gender difference alone is not sufficient to argue Helen's dismissal as a worthy listener of Harry's stories. Indeed, this reading of Shuster's analysis suggests that Harry and Helen together form a white universe of ideas and beliefs that exclude the racialized other in ways similar to that exhibited in "The short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" discussed above.

While Schuster carefully articulates the rhetorical strategy used by Hemingway in the narrative to exclude Helen, she never articulates the essential difference between the Harry that we meet dying of an infected leg in Africa and the Harry presented in the stories he tells himself (and the narrator) as centering on the respective differences in willfulness and the ability to face danger through this willfulness. Indeed, this difference explains why Helen, and for my purposes here, Molo, are excluded as worthy listeners of Harry's stories. The Harry presented in the main story set in Africa resents and regrets a life wasted because he did not exercise the full extent of his capacity for will as a white man as demonstrated by his self-representation in the stories he tells himself:

She shot very well, this good rich bitch, this kindly caretaker and destroyer of his talent. Nonsense. He had destroyed his talent himself. Why should he blame this woman because she kept him well? He had destroyed his talent by not using it, by betrayals of himself and what he believed in...

(45)

Here we see Wilson's realization that it is precisely because he has made the choice not to use his will that he does not fulfill his potential. Even in his failure as an apparently

ideal heroic figure, Wilson nevertheless acknowledges his capacity to be one. In this way he confirms his whiteness.

Consciousness, Landscape, and the Eliding of Labor

My analysis of the second set of Hemingway's short stories is dependent, in part, upon my reading and analysis of the first set of stories I discuss above. I depend, for instance, upon the idea that only white characters are granted the capacity for the exercise of will. I also depend upon Hemingway's codification of whiteness and social class in such a way that his protagonists are able to posit an identity to give their lives meaning in only specific cases closely related to his own white middleclass identity. Further, I depend upon the idea that the racialized other and the white working class are preemptively assigned social and rhetorical positions that fall outside of the universe of whiteness—and subsequently humanity—that Hemingway and his protagonists embrace.

This last point is implicitly connected to the issue of labor that the stories in this second set elide. Indeed, these stories present an evacuated and diminished sense of labor which simultaneously creates an imagined idyllic reality which has little bearing on the reality of the outside world. That is to say, they provide us with glimpses of labor that suggest rather than explicitly center on the external reality of the world the characters themselves occupy and focus instead on the inner workings and needs of the protagonist's mind. This is achieved with the tacit compliance of the reader who becomes most concerned with the action and the development of the protagonist's character.

I begin my discussion of the second set of stories with “The Battler” because in many respects it captures characteristics of both sets of stories while adding its own complexities to the themes I explore in both.

“The Battler”

To begin with, “The Battler” is a story about Nick Adams confronting physical danger in various ways similar to what we find in the first set of stories. In particular he confronts danger in the form of a train brakeman who throws him off of a train. He next confronts danger in the form of Ad Francis, a white ex-prizefighter turned drifter and his black companion, Bugs.

Before he meets Ad and Bugs, however, he meets the brakeman who throws him from the train and, like Ad Francis as we discover later, he is bruised and scraped (97). Nick gets to his feet, washes his scraped hands clean in a stream and as the narrator declares, is concerned about the fact that he “must get somewhere” (97). He follows the tracks heading toward the next town, Mancelona, a northern Michigan town which is east of Grand Traverse Bay off of Lake Michigan. The story, from beginning to end is hardly without a scene where Nick’s disorientation is made prominent or where the spectre of physical danger or violence doesn’t seem imminent. It is because of the spectre of danger and violence that the story may be placed in the first set of stories I discuss above. However, it is Nick’s response to the various kinds of danger we see in this story that is significant and which lends itself to the second set of stories where landscape and social class are central. For instance, Nick’s encounter with the brakeman leaves him intent on getting back at him (98). The brakeman, who had feigned friendship with Nick to get close enough to him to throw him off the train because Nick had jumped on without

paying, had taken advantage of Nick's youthful eagerness to make friends. In this bout with physical danger, our narrator chalks Nick's injuries up to worldly inexperience telling us, "What a lousy kid thing to do have done. They would never sucker him that way again" (97). This encounter with danger and violence is similar to those we have discussed above in that Nick learns something about how to be a man.

However, this story also fits the second set of stories because the landscape mirrors closely the protagonist's inner most feelings and his own tentative and disoriented consciousness. The following passage is illustrative:

Now he must be nearly to Mancelona. Three or four miles of swamp. He stepped along the track, walking so he kept the ballast between the ties, the swamp ghostly in the rising mist. His eyes ached and he was hungry, He kept on hiking, putting the miles of track back of him. The swamp was all the same on both sides of the track.

...He came up on the track toward the fire carefully....Nick waited behind the tree and watched. (98)

Notice that the descriptions of the landscape put Nick in swamp land, and with only the railroad tracks as a guide to get him to Mancelona. Notice also how the imagery and the tone of the text is eerie, mysterious and enigmatic. This is achieved with the use of words like "ghostly" and "rising mist". Also notice the tentative way Nick approaches the campfire which he comes to discover belongs to Ad Francis and bugs. While we might be tempted to argue that Nick here is showing prudence, especially since he has just encountered physical danger in his encounter with the brakeman, it is nevertheless difficult to shake the sense that Nick appears fearful. This fear marks a shift

in Nick's character from the one we meet in a story like "The Killers" or in a story like "The Undefeated" where the protagonist distinguishes himself precisely because he confronts danger in a becoming manner.

Indeed, the most significant aspect of the story for the purposes of the themes I trace in the second set of stories is how this unfamiliarity with the landscape is coupled with Nick's uneasiness with Ad Francis and Bugs whose campfire he happens upon. In these two characters, Nick faces a white man and his black companion who are outside the bounds of class society, and who occupy a terrain wholly unfamiliar to Nick.

Ad and Bugs's social position is a point discussed by William Bache in his essay, "Hemingway's 'The Battler.'" Here Bache argues that "Bugs and Ad are outcasts who, by sloughing off the falsity and inhibitions of society, have become 'crazy.' Thus, according to Bache, "it is useless to say that they are good or bad; they are motivated in terms of their figurative selves (Explicator 13). By "figurative" here, Bache seems to imply, but does not fully articulate, the roles the characters play in developing the main narrative, which is specifically focused on Nick and his response to the unfamiliar environment he finds himself in and the unfamiliar characters, Ad and Bugs, he encounters.

Nick's uncertainty about Ad and Bugs is reinforced by his uncertainty about the terrain. His encounter with both men—and Hemingway's narration of it—is marked by skepticism and fear, and decided unsteadiness rather than grace under pressure. Nick is not controlled or in the process of developing a steady masculinity as we observe in the Nick from "The Killers," for instance, who coolly takes up the challenge of finding Ole Anderson to warn him that gunmen are after him. Nor is the Nick we see here able to

take positive lessons from his experience with Ad and Bugs as he did with the brakeman. Instead, we find a confused and cautious Nick unable to deal with the masculinity these two characters together present.

Both Ad Francis and Bugs add to Nick's sense of confusion and disorientation. Bugs is black, and our narrator has considerable trouble describing him using words like, "long nigger legs" (100) and "smooth polite nigger voice" (103). These descriptions create a distancing and amorphous effect such that both the reader and Nick are never close enough to—or comfortable with—Bugs to see him as a three dimensional character. Indeed, Bugs is barely presented as a human being.

Bugs would fall neatly into Toni Morrison's notion of a "disturbing nurse." These characters, Morrison argues, have enabling properties, which take the place of female nurses in the masculine world Hemingway usually prefers to occupy (Morrison 82). These characters, Morrison further suggests, "...are Tontos all, whose role is to do everything possible to serve the Lone Ranger without disturbing his indulgent delusion that he is indeed alone" (82). She goes on to note with specific reference to "The Battler," that the nurse men often have disabling qualities, too, pointing out that when Ad gets unmanageable, Bugs has leave to smash him over the head with his blackjack⁷. She also reminds us of the similarity between this scene and the slave Juniper in Poe's "Gold Bug" who has similar leave to whip his master (83). George Monteiro, in his essay, "This is My Pal Bugs': Ernest Hemingway's 'The Battler,'" suggests another interpretation—not altogether inconsistent with Morrison's—of Bugs's character drawing

⁷ Morrison's use of the word "smash" here is perhaps a little misleading as the text actually says "taps". The detail is small, but important since the care and attention Bugs shows Ad Francis is better conveyed with Hemingway's word, and indeed "taps" does seem to illustrate Morrison's point all the more convincingly.

on the fact that he was in prison, where he met Ad Francis, for “cutting a man,” and comparing Bugs with Herman Melville’s Babo where he shaves his master, Benito Cereno, who lends his name to the title of the short story. In this interpretation, Nick would be roughly equivalent to the naïve Captain Delano and Ad would, of course, be Cereno. This reading also lends itself to my reading of “The Battler” as one of my aims is to show that Nick and Ad belong to a white community, and occupy a space that Bugs can be no part of. I also wish to suggest the potential danger Bugs represents that Nick has so much trouble confronting and which our narrator can only point to, invoking our reading of Ellison, with descriptions, as illustrated above like, “long nigger legs” (100) and smooth polite nigger voice (103). These descriptions are signs of potential danger not only because of the anomalous humanity Bugs represents in the story, but also because of his relationship and similarity to Babo in Benito Cereno.

Following Monteiro’s comparisons between the two stories, we recognize that the potential violence we are aware of on Cereno’s ship is rooted in the slaves’ resistance to a system of chattel commerce of which they, the slaves, are the principle object. In “The Battler,” written in 1925, the potential violence was less likely based on chattel slavery than it was on a system of injustice that, as if in slavery like Babo, relegated Bugs to the position of permanent labor. Indeed, Bugs’s function in the text is, as Morrison suggests, to labor taking care of Ad Francis and all of his menial needs.

Ad Francis is an ex-prizefighter who we have a much more lucid view of, and who we are clearly meant to see as physically and psychologically damaged as his physical description suggest:

The man [Ad Francis] looked at Nick and smiled. In the firelight Nick saw that his face was misshapen. His nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, he had queer-shaped lips. Nick did not perceive all this at once, he only saw the man's face was queerly formed and mutilated. It was like putty in color. Dead looking in the firelight. (99)

Ad Francis's physical features clearly evoke Nick's own scars and confrontation with danger. This evocation suggests that Nick and Ad Francis occupy a white space—that of confronting danger—that Bugs does not. This reinforces the notion that this capacity exists in whites but is absent from blacks. Nick's disoriented state of mind, and his finding Ad Francis in a wholly unfamiliar terrain is also significant. Ad Francis represents a whiteness Nick rejects, but it is not a rejection Nick fully understands since Ad does not occupy a readily identifiable social class position in the text. This also accounts for—and underscores Nick's—bewilderment.

The climax of "The Battler" occurs when the crazed Ad takes offense because Nick listened to the black man, Bugs, and didn't hand Ad his knife. Ad accosts Nick and we see a Nick who is ill-prepared to defend himself. Indeed, as the narrator tells us, Nick "felt nervous" and "stepped back." The danger is alleviated only when Bugs taps Ad across the base of the skull with a blackjack wrapped in a handkerchief (102). It is at this point that Nick engages in a conversation with Bugs, where Bugs relates the story of Ad Francis's life and his ill-fated relationship with his wife who, because of her likeness to Ad, many thought was his sister. While it is made clear in the text that Ad's estranged wife, who also doubled as his manager, still provides him with money, Ad squanders it suggesting neither he, nor his nurseman, Bugs, understands its value, or expresses any

great will to use it to join society. In the conversation with Bugs, Nick says very little and on instruction from Bugs “walked away from the fire across the clearing to the railway tracks” (103). Nick’s disorientation and confusion by his interactions with Ad and Bugs is further illustrated in the last paragraph of the story where the narrator tells us, “He found he had a ham sandwich in his hand and put it in his pocket” (104). He registers no recollection of Bugs putting the sandwich in his hand as the narrator tells us or any desire at all for their company. Nick seems to have learned from his interaction with Ad that confronting danger can make you go crazy. It can leave physical as well as psychological scars. If you do not control pressure gracefully—however it presents itself to you—you become a social outcast similar to the fate of Macomber who loses his whiteness and as illustrated symbolically by Ad’s deformed flesh and misshapen face. Ad Francis, then, is an example of someone who faced danger, but went mad doing it. His is a masculinity and whiteness which Nick rejects.

Hemingway’s inability to draw black characters as fully human as illustrated by his depiction of Bugs appears to be related to his inability to present a landscape reflecting the reality of America’s industrialized working class, and—as we have seen with the character of Ad Francis—America’s migrants in these early short stories. This inability signals a rejection of racialized identities, as well as certain kinds of white identities against which he is unable to posit a meaningful self. The resulting evacuated and diminished landscape, as well as the flattened presentation of black characters signals the production of literary whiteness in these stories.

“Big Two-Hearted River Part I and Part II”

Frederic J. Svoboda, discusses Hemingway's use of landscape to create an imagined reality in his essay, "Landscapes Real and Imagined: 'Big Two-Hearted River'":

In "Big Two-Hearted River" we live with Nick in a world that becomes more real to us as readers as it involves questions of life and death. We live in a Michigan selected by Hemingway to parallel Nick's states of mind as he looks for control. The story stays rooted in the historical and legendary Seney even as Nick hikes from Seney, moving into a timeless Michigan, a Michigan of the writer's and the reader's imaginations in which much more seems implicated than only the lives and deaths of insects—["hoppers"]—and trout. (41)

As suggested earlier in this chapter—and as Svoboda seems to confirm here—the treatment of landscape is crucial to the relationship Hemingway wishes to establish between himself and his audience. Svoboda's essay focuses on the historical Seney and the ways in which Hemingway's story, "Big Two-Hearted River," uses the historical facts of the logging town asynchronously. The essay also demonstrates how these asynchronous deviations from the historical facts of the town and its surrounding flora are not incidental in Hemingway, but actually serve his narrative purposes. For example, Svoboda points out that in part I of the story Nick camps in an area populated by fern and jack pines, two species of plant that thrive upon fire for pollination (40). As I will show, the evidence of fire in "Big Two-Hearted River" is symbolic of the industrial landscape and the plight of the racialized and white worker elided in Hemingway, but crucially important to the historical town of Seney and to the events of the summer of 1919 when Hemingway would have first visited it with his high school friends, Al Walker and Jack

Pentecost (Svoboda 38). Svoboda's essay ends with the passage that I cite above. This passage suggests that the Michigan presented in "Big Two-Hearted River" is a deliberate mis-recreation on the part of Hemingway. That is to say, key elements of the actual Michigan and its landscape are ignored while other elements are inserted—such as the hike north that takes place midway through Part I of the story through a grove of old growth pines which could not have existed since the area would have been barren, made so by logging activity which would have occurred several decades before Hemingway would have had an opportunity to see it (Svoboda 39). Also significant is Svoboda's observation that the Michigan that we see is "parallel [to] Nick's states of mind as he looks for control." We are, then, as readers inside the psyche of both the protagonist and by implication, Hemingway, the author. Certainly, as the excerpt suggests, more seems at stake than only the deaths of insects, hoppers and trout. However, Svoboda never ventures to articulate what that "more" might be. One plausible answer to this question lies in what Hemingway wishes to convey with his use of landscape and subsequently how he wishes to establish the relationship between himself and his audience.

As discussed earlier, Srychacz and Ellison argue that the audience for Hemingway fulfills the role of appraiser and judge. What the audience is judging is the state of the protagonists' mind; his will as revealed through his actions. What these actions come to symbolize, as Ellison points out, is a ritual for the absolution of his guilt. This guilt is related to Hemingway's inability to find a suitable identity amongst America's racialized and industrialized others against which to posit a meaningful self. It is recognition, as Ellison says, that the democratic ideals for which he fights during World War I, are incapable of accommodating the humanity of America's blacks or its growing industrial

working class. This incapacity is extended into literary landscapes that only present an evacuated and diminished sense of labor and industry. The following excerpt from “Big Two-Hearted River Part I” is illustrative of Hemingway’s narrative focus which evinces this kind of evacuated and diminished industrial landscape:

The train went up the track out of sight, around one of the hills of burnt timber....There was no town, nothing but the rails and the burned-over country (163).

In “Big Two-Hearted River Part I” Hemingway is most interested in “doing the country like Cezanne.” In terms of the theory of literary whiteness I articulate here, the burned over country we see in this excerpt—and at various places later in the text—functions almost precisely the same way that the racialized characters Sam, Molo and others function in the texts discussed above. They create a dramatic contrast to what Hemingway—and Nick—want to show the reader, a pristine idyllic Michigan landscape only fully realized in part II of the story; the country as Cezanne would have painted it, even if it is more than half-created from his imagination. Indeed, the most dramatic difference between part I and part II of the “Big Two-Hearted River” is the absence of the burned over country and any evidence of the civilization or industry that pervade part I of the story.

The parallel between Nick’s states of mind and the landscape that Svoboda sees is created, in part, by the rhetorical positioning and treatment of the audience. The role of the audience and the creation of familiarity with it in Hemingway is a point raised by Walter Ong in his essay, “The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction.” He, like Svoboda

and Strychacz, highlights several important features of Hemingway's writing in relation to his audience. Ong says:

The writer [Hemingway] needs only to point, for what he wants to tell you about is not the scene at all but his feelings. These, too, he treats as something you really had somehow shared, though you might not have been quite aware of it at the time. He can tell you what was going on inside him and count on your sympathy, for you were there. You *know*.

The reader here has a well-marked role assigned him. He is a companion-in-arms, somewhat later become confidant. It is a flattering role.

Hemingway readers are encouraged to cultivate high self-esteem. (13)

Here Ong has identified several important features of Hemingway's rhetorical style, including the intimacy with which he treats his audience, the implicit familiarity and trust conveyed. An example of this can be illustrated in the passage I cite above from *Big Two-Hearted River Part I*. As we read the opening line, "The train went up the track out of sight..." we are tempted to ask, what train? Indeed, what tracks? As we read on, we find even more information, but no explanation, "There was no town, nothing but the rails and the burned-over country." While we may understand that the rails must be "the tracks" there is no indication of what these tracks signify, and how they are related to the town, which we similarly have little information about. The audience is brought in as a familiar companion who would know these details. This is a rhetorical strategy Ong associates with Hemingway and that he finds pervasive in *A Farewell to Arms*. As my example illustrates, no explanation is given concerning the significance of the burned-over country, the tracks or why the town—that we later learn is Seney—should be

deserted. All we learn is that as Nick moves away from Seney and the evacuated industrialized civilization it represents he becomes more contented and progressively happier. As the text explicitly says, "...Nick felt happy. He felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs. It was all back of him" (164).

When Nick sees the burned over country, he is restless—only stopping to observe the trout fish in the stream near the town, but not long enough to fish for them. This is significant as he is ostensibly in the country to fish for trout. His implicit rejection of the trout fish near the burned-over country suggests his need not only to fish for trout, but to do so within a particular context. That is, away from any semblance of industry. Here, then, Hemingway's rhetoric suggests an evacuated industrial landscape to be disregarded. Indeed, Nick does not stop moving toward the pristine idyllic country presented most fully in "Big Two-Hearted River Part II," and away from the burned over landscape pervasive in part I.

As he moves toward this idyllic open country, Nick encounters grasshoppers blackened by the fire that evidently destroyed the town. These blackened grasshoppers appear to be symbolic of a rejected identity. The text reads:

Nick had wondered about them [the blackened grass hoppers] as he walked, without really thinking about them. Now, as he watched the black hopper that was nibbling at the wool of his sock with his fourway lip, he realized that they had all turned black from living in the burned-over land. He realized that the fire must have come the year before, but the

grasshoppers were all black now. He wondered how long they would stay that way.

“Carefully he reached his hand down and took hold of the hopper by the wings. He turned him up, all his legs walking in the air, and looked at his jointed belly. Yes, it was black too, iridescent where the back and head were dusty.

“‘Go on, hopper,’ Nick said, speaking out loud for the first time. ‘fly away somewhere.’”

The blackened grasshoppers that we come to see through Nick’s eyes because of the familiarity established by Hemingway’s rhetorical style are at first seen by Nick, but not really considered by him. They are blackened because of the place they occupy, the blackened landscape of the Seney region. As noted earlier, Hemingway’s first trip to Seney was in the summer of 1919 with his two high school friends, Al Walker and Jack Pentecost. That summer was a critical juncture in the history of labor and capital relations in the United States. It was marked by pervasive riots and civil unrest that affected the rapidly industrializing urban centers of the country including Chicago, the Oak Park suburb of which was where Hemingway grew up. While there is almost no mention of political activity or discussion of the social politics of the United States in the biographies of Baker, Meyers, Reynolds or Griffin (Cooper 1), it is unlikely that such social unrest would have escaped Hemingway’s notice. Like the blackened hopper that nibbles at Nick’s sock, the plight of blacks and the working class generally would have been noticed, but not given much thought or space in Hemingway’s literary or creative imagination. This is consistent with our protagonist noticing that the hopper is blackened

all over and disregarding it, though he needs grasshoppers for bait. He proceeds to collect a bottle full of hoppers that are not blackened shortly after this scene. It is in reference to the disregarded and blackened hopper that Nick speaks the first words in the short story saying, “Go on hopper...fly away somewhere.” Nick “tossed the grasshopper into the air and watched him sail away to a charcoal stump across the road” (165). The grasshopper, then, by crossing the road and landing on a charred stump which itself is still blackened is symbolically placed outside of the world which Nick is moving toward; the unspoiled, idyllic natural world. Indeed, Nick’s objective is to leave the burned town behind him, to leave everything behind him, “. . . the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs. It was all back of him” (164).

“The End of Something”

Our reading of the first set of stories, particularly “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” and “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” and our brief reading of The Sun Also Rises teaches us that the ideal audience for Hemingway is not female or black, but is instead rather like himself, white, male and middleclass; someone for whom these images of “the country” would not have been alien or threatening, but would have been familiar and welcoming.

In the short story, “The End of Something,” we are most interested in the opening paragraph, which, like “Big Two-Hearted River Part I,” presents an evacuated industrial landscape that is crafted by Hemingway to parallel the internal conditions of the protagonist’s, Nick’s, mind:

In the old days Hortons Bay was a lumbering town. No one who lived in it was out of sound of the big saws in the mill by the lake. Then

one year there was no more logs to make lumber. The lumber schooners came into the bay and were loaded with the cut of the mill that stood stacked in the yard. All the piles of lumber were carried away. The big mill building had all its machinery that was removable taken out and hoisted on board one of the schooners by the men who had worked in the mill...it moved out into the open lake, carrying with it everything that had made the mill a mill and Horton's bay a town. (79)

While critics agree that the landscape mirrors Nick's feelings about his deteriorating relationship with Marjorie, his soon to be ex-girlfriend—whose comment on the ruins, “it look like a castle,” (79) suggests she has no idea how Nick feels about the state of their relationship—it is important to understand that he does so through appropriating the symbols and images of labor that enter the landscape, obliterating the evidence of class and turning them into only instrumental elements of the narrative.

This view of the landscape is continued in the third paragraph of the opening:

Ten years later there was nothing of the mill left except the broken white limestone of its foundations showing through the swampy second growth as Nick and Marjorie rowed along the shore. (79)

As well as reiterating the theme of an evacuated landscape, this paragraph introduces the reader to Nick and Marjorie. They row out to Hortons Bay and it is here that Nick ends their relationship. However, “the end of something”—their relationship—is also the end of Hortons Bay, the industrial town. This is so because the reader is encouraged to see their romantic relationship in terms of the ruins of the town. In the description above, we are left to imagine what the excitement of industry, the making and production of

lumber, and the energy of humanity hustling and bustling about must have been like. We do not *see* the production so much as we hear and imagine it as Hemingway says “no one lived in [Hortons Bay] was outside of the sounds of the big saws in the mill by the lake”. Through this suggestion, we are left to imagine and align the fate of Hortons Bay with the fate of their relationship and this is confirmed for the reader when Nick ends their relationship by saying:

“It isn’t fun anymore. Not any of it.”

She didn’t say anything. He went on. “I feel as though everything was gone to hell inside of me. I don’t know, Marge. I don’t know what to say.”

He looked on at her back.

“Isn’t love any fun?” Marge said.

“No,” Nick said Marge stood up. Nick sat there his head in his hands.

“I’m going to take the boat,” Marjorie called to him. “You can walk back around the point.” (81)

Like the contents and the machinery of the town, then, Marjorie leaves on the lake further suggestive of the parallel between the fate of the town and that of their romantic relationship. This rhetorical strategy is consistent with “doing the country like Cezanne” in that it is not so much what Hemingway says, as it is what is hinted at, left at the margins of his narrative and left to the reader’s imagination that completes the story. In this construction the hustle and bustle of industry and production are as mysterious and complex as the interpersonal relationship that is at the center of the story.

Significantly, there is no mention whatsoever of the human beings—the workers themselves—that would have operated the machinery and run the production lines. They

are invisible in that their labor is disembodied sound, and absent in that we never actually see them. This throws rhetorical and narrative definition inward onto the subjective relationship between Nick and Marjorie adding definition and meaning to its emptiness. Through these images Hemingway creates a landscape that would be familiar to any laborer seeking work in the Midwest in the mid 1920s and early 1930s when these short stories were published. However, the plight of the laborer is subordinated to Nick's inner-most feelings about Marjorie such that the scene, rather than reflecting an objective social reality reflects instead Nick's personal feelings. This is underscored, as illustrated above, by Marjorie's complete misreading of their relationship indicated by the fact that she sees the ruins as a castle. Nick does not respond to her comment. Literary technique, industry, labor and landscape, then, are united in Nick's subjective consciousness for his subjective feelings. We come to understand that all that remains of the relationship is parallel to what remains of Hortons Bay through our narrator's eyes, the broken white limestone of its foundations showing through the swampy second growth.

In many ways it is appropriate that we should end our discussion of Hemingway's short stories with "The End of Something." Not only is the title somewhat appropriate, but the text itself illustrates a fitting story to juxtapose with "The Battler" with which we began this set of stories. "The Battler" is both similar to "The End of Something" and markedly different to it. With respect to landscape, both are used by Hemingway to mirror the inner workings of the protagonist's mind. In both, Nick is alone with a person who is either racialized differently to him as in "The Battler," or gendered differently to him as in "The End of Something". As such, they each are used to circumscribe and

adorn the white masculine identity of the protagonist, Nick Adams. Their characters, then, help to provide the boundaries of whiteness upon Hemingway's canvas.

"The Battler" and "The End of Something" are also very different. Whereas fear and disorientation seem to govern Nick's actions in "The Battler," when he confronts the image of misshapen whiteness in Ad Francis and the racialized Other in Bugs, precisely the opposite is true when he is confronted with white femininity in the form of Marjorie. His diametrically opposed response to Bugs and Marjorie gives us insight into other aspects of American culture during early Modernism with respect to race, gender and sexuality and also raises questions about other aspects of Hemingway's fiction along these specific lines. However, that discussion—if only marginally so—falls outside the bounds of this study.

Chapter Five

Rhetorics of Resistance: Race, Class and the Negation of Literary Whiteness

In this study, literary texts from the early Modernist period of North America—in particular, Ernest Hemingway’s collection of short stories—have been examined to illustrate tropes and rhetorics of literary whiteness. I have argued that Hemingway sought to populate his literary canvas with specifically white heroes and protagonists. He sought self-definition for these protagonists in natural arenas of open landscapes such as those of the American Midwest far removed from the racially mixed factories and industrial centers of the North. Hemingway’s rustic settings subsequently contribute to a class-based interpretation of American Modernist literature. This interpretation situates whiteness in Hemingway as a middle-class construct of identity; a product of a social class not unlike that of turn-of-the-century Oak Park, Illinois, the suburb of Chicago where he was born. This identity is very often circumscribed by servicing images and depictions of blacks or racialized Others who enable the white protagonist to exercise human will, demonstrate the capacity for choice, grace under pressure and not infrequently, to confront danger.

The presence of danger in these texts exposes the racialized coding employed by the author who invests the always white, always male protagonists with a force of human will that dominates the text. This domination defines the protagonists’ character and, indeed, American masculine identity. Hemingway’s literary craft underscores the idea that the racialized Other is preemptively assigned social and rhetorical roles that fall outside the universe of whiteness (and subsequently the community of humanity) that Hemingway and many of his contemporaries embrace and, to some extent, help to define

through fiction.

Many of Hemingway's short stories also focus the attention of the audience toward the internal workings of the protagonists' mind. Indeed, I demonstrate the ways in which even the landscape in such texts is used in the service of this endeavor and thus the texts I discuss tend to illustrate a highly technical craft and rhetoric dedicated to an individualism focused almost exclusively on the development of the reader's understanding of the protagonists' character at the expense of more social, communal, or humanistic pursuits.

I have also argued that there is a form of literary whiteness used by writers primarily concerned with working-class life. In texts such as Clifford Odets's Waiting for Lefty or John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, black characters or racialized Others are marginal or completely invisible. They are used as metonyms to highlight the moral, social and political injustice leveled at a specifically white working class by the elite. As I have argued, this use of the literature limited the boundaries of freedom imaginable for the white working class to the boundaries of whiteness itself, both occluding working-class unity and, crucially, encouraging white workers to act in ways inconsistent with their own best interests. Literary whiteness emerges out of these key ideas and tropes in early American Modernism.

Argument and Method

This chapter discusses two plays, Clifford Odets's Waiting for Lefty and Michael Gold's Hoboken Blues and one novel, William Attaway's Blood on the Forge. In the first text I show how Odets resists literary whiteness by ascribing its codes to white working-class characters. In Hoboken Blues and Blood on the Forge, I show how some

of these characteristics are extended to African Americans.

I begin, then, by tracing the codes of literary whiteness through Waiting for Lefty. I show that Odets fought for, and sought equality for, a specifically white working class. He did so, however, by using many of the literary tropes used by Hemingway to marginalize both blacks and working-class whites. We can reasonably argue, because of his use of exclusionary tropes while privileging white workers, that Odets sought to bring only white workers, rather than *all* workers, into the community of humanity, and subsequently into mainstream American life and politics. As in many of Hemingway's texts, Odets's protagonists demonstrate the capacity for choice, human will, and confrontation with danger. However, his characters are always working-class as opposed to Hemingway's who are always middle-class. The danger confronted by Odets's characters is often articulated in the form of the ruling class or those acting in the interests of the ruling class. Odets, then, constructs white working-class identity against a constructed and servicing ruling-class identity.

Another mechanism used by Odets that is similar to that used by Hemingway is to present stereotypically black characters. Odets simply draws the readers' attention to the idea of blackness, in order to distinguish them from white working-class protagonists whom he constructs as ideal heroic figures. Racial positioning, then, is important in my reading of Waiting for Lefty, just as it is important in my reading Hemingway's short stories.

While these practices of literary whiteness are employed by Odets, I also show that he explored innovative, experimental theater of the time as well as other new strategies and theories of theater that challenged the artistic individualism Hemingway's

work exemplifies. Waiting for Lefty, then, rejects both individualism inherent in the new industrial capitalism of the early twentieth century, and the idea of black workers as equals with white workers as Odets's marginalization of black characters in the experimental and innovative theatre he explored exemplifies.

I then discuss Michael Gold's play, Hoboken Blues: Or the Black Rip Van Winkle, A Modern Negro Fantasia on an Old American Theme, which, while a text in the tradition of Waiting for Lefty in that it, too, may be considered experimental theater, was nevertheless committed to presenting black characters in ways that challenged prevailing myths and stereotypes about blacks and proletarian black life. I speculate that this fact, along with the text's insistence upon confronting racial division in the American proletariat, contributed to it being seen as an artistic failure. I further argue that this text resists literary whiteness to such a degree that it may be said to be completely absent; reversing, in many ways, the imbalance that Newman cautions us against in chapter two of this study and thereby preserving a distorted sense of reality.

I end this chapter with a discussion of William Attaway's novel, Blood on the Forge. This text shows how many of the characteristics of literary whiteness might be demonstrated by a multi-ethnic group of newly industrialized workers. This text also allows us to examine how racial division is created and fomented by a ruling elite where none previously existed. I also argue that this text—also non-canonical for reasons not dissimilar to those relating to Hoboken Blues—points the way to resisting the tropes of literary whiteness central to much of early American Modernism.

Waiting for Lefty and White Working-Class Identity

When Waiting for Lefty opened for the first time at a benefit for the New Theatre

League on January 6, 1935 at the Civic Repertory Theatre on 14th Street in New York City, it was not only a theatrical success, but also a theatrical phenomenon. The play had innovated theatrical art in ways previously unimaginable.

The play is set during a taxi driver strike loosely based on the New York City taxi drivers' strike of 1934. We meet the characters in a hall where they are deciding whether or not to strike. Part of the text's innovative style is derived from the fact that the audience itself constitutes the masses of taxi drivers ostensibly listening to the debate. Indeed, members of the cast are dispersed throughout the audience in order to underscore the feeling and immediacy of the choice the workers have to make in deciding whether or not to strike. The audience, then, is brought into the action of the play as if they themselves were one with the taxi drivers and fellow strikers.

Human Will and the Capacity for Choice

Interspersed between the action of the play centering on the meeting hall debate are six vignettes, each of which constitutes a "flashback" illustrating the personal motivations driving the principal characters in each section to strike. The flashbacks are significant because they highlight characteristics of literary whiteness such as the capacity for choice, and human will. However they do so only in white working-class identity.

A good example of how this is articulated throughout the six vignettes is illustrated by the first flashback, "Joe and Edna." In this episode, Edna, a stay-at-home mother, incites her husband to strike by complaining that they cannot live on the wages he brings home. Indeed, the scene opens with Joe asking where all their furniture has gone. Edna replies insipidly, "They took it away. No installments paid" (190). A

vigorous exchange between the two ensues where Edna threatens to leave Joe if he cannot provide for them (193). In essence, Edna challenges Joe's masculinity and his will to go out and fight for his wife, children and their livelihoods and she argues that he has a choice to make concerning their oppressive condition. The following exchange is illustrative:

JOE: ...One man can't make a strike.
 EDNA: Who says one? You got hundreds in your rotten union!
 JOE: The union ain't rotten.
 EDNA: No? Then what are they doing? Collecting your dues and patting your back?
 JOE: They're making plans.
 EDNA: What kind?
 JOE: They don't tell us.
 EDNA: It's too damn bad about you. They don't tell little Joey what's happening in his bitsie witsie union. What do you think it is—a ping pong game?
 JOE: You know they're racketeers. The guys at the top would shoot you for a nickel.
 EDNA: Why do you stand for that stuff?
 JOE: Don't you want to see me alive?
 EDNA *after a deep pause*: No...I don't think I do, Joe. Not if you can lift a finger to do something about it, and don't. No, I don't care.
 (192-93)

Here Edna not only challenges Joe to assert his masculinity and demonstrate his human will, but she also instructs him that he is not alone, and is part of a community of workers who, together, can change and affect the world they live in. She shows him that the fate of their family is embodied in his capacity to choose to side with the union bosses, or act in a way more consistent with his own best interests since she is able to discern the distinction between the union bosses on the one hand, and the common

worker on the other. Also noteworthy is the fact that the position Edna encourages Joe to take requires the community of union workers to act as one as suggested by her statement “Who says one? You got hundreds in your rotten union!” The idea of a single community in action as opposed to individually taking on the union bosses is further exemplified by her statement later in the argument with Joe when she says:

...your boss is making suckers outa you boys every minute. Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and poor innocent kids who’ll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones. Sure, I see it in the papers how good orange juice is for kids. But dammit our kids get colds one on top of the other” (192).

While the reference to kids getting colds one on top of the other may refer to her kids specifically, it is clear by the construction of the passage that the reference to crooked spines and sick bones is intended to refer to all the children whose fathers are being suckered by the boss.

Edna’s statement suggesting that she does not care if Joe loses his life fighting the union bosses is also significant because she implies that it is through facing danger that Joe becomes a man in her eyes. This is underscored by her pause, and then her remarkable statement that she would rather see him dead—that is, without the capacity for human will and the willingness to confront danger—than alive and unable to change their material status in life. Joe, and she, would be better off if he were dead. In fact, he is for all intents and purposes, dead without that capacity.

Confronting Danger

Both the title of the play, and the title's name-sake, Lefty, illustrate the confrontation with danger inherent in the decision the taxi drivers ultimately make to strike against the wishes of the union bosses. Lefty is never seen as a character in the play and it is upon the knowledge that he has been found dead, apparently the victim of foul play, that the striking taxi drivers speak with one unanimous voice and strike.

Throughout the play there is the constant threat of violence and presence of danger as the henchmen for Fatt, the union boss, display guns and create an atmosphere of intimidation. Odets's use of the audience as fellow striking taxi drivers puts them in a position, rhetorically and physically, which is diametrically opposed to Fatt and his henchmen. The announcement of Lefty's death seals Fatt's fate and the workers vote to strike in spite of the intimidation leveled at them by Fatt's henchmen because they act unanimously. The production history of the play is also significant since during its first performance the audience itself was so moved by the action on the stage and by cast members dispersed around them that they, too, shouted applause and called for a strike (Seward and Barbour 40). Indeed, it has been called the most widely suppressed play in the history of the American theatre because of its appeal to the audience to act on behalf of the striking taxi drivers. (Seward and Barbour 41)

The Absence of Blackness, the Presence of Whiteness

The characters in the play, as indicated above, are different from the characters we meet in more canonical texts such as Hemingway's short stories. Here, the characters are informed by a particular connection to a reality not centered upon the individual's personal consciousness, but rather one centered on the individual's material connection to

the world in which they live. In Odets's play, however, the limits of freedom and equality are nevertheless set by the social and political boundaries of whiteness.

References to black characters are made only twice in the play. The first time is in episode II, "The Lab Assistant Episode". This episode features Fayette, an "industrialist" who says "I like sobriety in my workers...the trained ones, I mean. The pollacks and the niggers, they're better drunk—keeps them out of mischief" (196). While Fayette represents industrial capitalism in this section—and in the play itself—he and Odets appear to share a common view of blacks. While it is interesting to note that Fayette racializes ethnicity as indicated by his reference to "pollacks," it is equally interesting to note that he seems to do so unironically suggesting Odets's tacit agreement with Fayette's comments about Poles as well as blacks. We know this to be so not only because no blacks or Poles appear in the text as venerable characters, but also because no attempt is made by Odets, through the characters he constructs, to correct or comment critically on Fayette's statement. It is, in fact, the reference to blacks that is of most concern to us here because of the inability of blacks to escape the fate of permanent labor and exclusion from the community of humanity. The same fate does not hold true for the Polish since they have the capacity to use whiteness to veil their ethnicity. Had this not been the case, Odets would not only have presented white working-class life in juxtaposition with the character of the industrialist, but he would have also taken the opportunity he created by introducing blacks in the episode to present black life in a way that unified working-class American life.

The other section where a black character is mentioned is significant not only because of its metonymic use of blackness, but also because, as Gerald Weales points out

in his analysis of Waiting for Lefty, called “Waiting for Lefty,” when Odets published the play in his collection called Six Plays in 1939, the episode, “The Young Actor,” was dropped (Weales 151).

In this episode a producer, while rationalizing all of the reasons why he cannot hire Phillips, the young actor, and feeling something akin to indigestion because of a hangover, instructs his stenographer, a female, to “tell the nigger boy to send up a bromo seltzer” (211). This is significant because it suggests a distance not only between the relatively wealthy producer and blacks, but also between Phillips, the young actor in search of work, and blacks. The black character referred to does not have a speaking role and never appears on stage. The absent presence of the black character in the context of the dialogue between the Producer and Phillips about work and labor suggests a triangulation between the Producer, Phillips, and the absent black character that marks who has access to upward mobility and who does not. In this construction, the black character’s absence suggests permanent labor—that which Phillips does not represent *if* he goes on strike with the taxi drivers. This is so not only because the black character is absent, but also because of the way he is absent. His function in the text is labor; he need not be present in the flesh because it is his labor rather than his personhood or humanity that is primary.

The relationship established between Phillips and the black character is similar to the relationship established between the Joad family and the absent present blacks presented near the end of Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath as discussed in chapter four of this study. We will recall that just as the Joad family is almost at the point of being completely destroyed by their circumstances they are told a story by a fellow field worker

of a woman who “had a nigger kid all of a sudden.... [And] Couldn’t never hold up her head no more” (Steinbeck 407). This story seems to serve the purpose of pointing out that the Joad’s social position is even below that of blacks. In Waiting for Lefty, too, the presence of the black character seems to suggest that while Phillips is unable to find work as an actor he does at least have the capacity to exercise his will to find work as a taxi driver and be in a position to strike. Apparently blacks, as suggested by their absent presence as (permanent) labor, are not subject to that assumption. In this way the textual record of Waiting for Lefty exhibits literary whiteness.

This section is also significant because the reason Odets gives for dropping the scene from his 1939 collection of plays was that it was “too untypical”. Weales says, “I can think of at least one other reason why it might have been pulled. It is the most unequivocal statement of the play’s Communist position” (151). Here, Weales points not only to Odets’s desire to distance himself from the Communist party to which he belonged for eight months during which time he wrote Waiting for Lefty, but also to the play’s overt pro-communist stance suggested by the scene where the stenographer offers Phillips a dollar as she goes to the door to get the bromo and he leaves as he is turned down for a job by the producer:

PHIL.: You treat me like a human being. Thanks....
 STEN.: You’re human!
 PHIL.: I used to think so.
 STEN.: He wants a bromo for his hangover. [*Goes to door.*]
 Want that dollar?
 PHIL.: It won’t help much.
 STEN.: One dollar buys ten loaves of bread, Mister. Or one dollar buys nine loaves of bread and one copy of The Communist Manifesto. Learn while you eat, read while you run....” (212).

This episode may be seen as ironic since it is the most radical element of white working-class identity that is dropped coincidentally with one of only two places that blacks are referenced. The episode, then, that holds the most potential for working-class unity across racial lines is pulled ostensibly because of its un-typicality and inadvertently removes one of two places blacks appear, even if in a dubious light.

A Negation of Whiteness: Hoboken Blues

In the previous section, we saw how Odets's play seems to inadvertently represent the exclusion of blacks from working-class attempts to achieve equality and equal status as citizens. In this section, I will discuss how Michael Gold's play, Hoboken Blues, provides a vision of the process through which a status of equality and citizenship might be achieved for blacks.

Hoboken Blues is, on the surface, a comedy about a black Harlemite, Sam Pickens, who is unemployed and goes to Hoboken, New Jersey upon the recommendation of his friends, Achilles McGregor and Barney the bartender, who tell him he can find a good job as a musician there. As one critic has noted, Sam's name is also significant as it could mean the derogative "Sambo" just as easily as it could refer to "Uncle Sam" (Maxwell 116). The double entendre is significant because, as we shall see, Gold sees African Americans as central to the meaning of American identity and citizenship. The fact that they are not treated as such in American culture and society provides much of the irony the play intends to dramatize.

Achilles McGregor's name is also a double entendre with an obvious allusion to the legendary Greek hero, Achilles, from Homer's Iliad. He is only the first of several historic figures we meet in the play who has an allegorical role. For example, in the first

scene of the play Chill (Achilles) enters on “an old burlesque horsecar, pulled by a clown horse.” He is the first of several colorful characters, changed as a result of the industrialization of Harlem, we meet in the play. He is “a short, fat, jolly Negro in a big blue coat and driver’s cap and badge. It is a gaudy, queer, outrageous and sensational outfit that he wears” (549). Chill is presented to us as a beer-drinking philosopher. Gold seems to present Chill in this way to highlight turn-of-the-century black life and to suggest that had it not been for their oppression black Americans, too, would have been philosophers and great warriors. Indeed, Richard Tuerk suggests that “...Chill McGregor could show what tends to happen to black intellectuals in modern America” (4). In this respect, then, Gold seems to be suggesting that the mightiest of Greek warriors when confronted with the destructive effects of racism in early twentieth-century America would be reduced to the figure of Chill McGregor. The historic Achilles simply would not be in a position to exercise his courage in confronting danger; he could not exercise his will or his capacity for choice, and his poverty would make him ill-equipped to demonstrate grace under any circumstances. The comic veneer of the play, then, hides a stinging critique of the industrialization of urban black life and suggests that there is an unacknowledged role blacks play as workers in that process of industrialization.

Gold’s Working-Class Roots

Gold seems to arrive at this view of blacks through a class-based analysis of his own childhood and lived-experiences, as well as through his commitment to the political party to which he belonged, the Communist Party, USA, which saw racism—and especially differential treatment between black and white workers in the American working class—as a crippling hindrance to social equality. According to William J.

Maxwell, Gold also drew on the historical and modern histories of enslavement and persecution of Jews and blacks and became convinced that their two fates were linked (Maxwell 105). Indeed, born Itzok Isaac Granich, he changed his name to Michael Gold, adopting the name of an anti-slavery Union army veteran. (Maxwell 105)

Perhaps Gold's most well-known work is his largely autobiographical novel, Jews Without Money. This text may be seen as a bold attempt to show in fiction the fate of Jews and African Americans as intimately linked since the name of a Jewish hero in that text is "Nigger" clearly suggesting both common cause, and direct identification with the African-American masses and their oppressed state as use of the word "Nigger" suggests.

Maxwell argues convincingly that Gold's conviction concerning the shared fate of Jews and Blacks, as well as his extraordinary commitment to the life and spirit of John Brown, allowed him to see blacks as both American and also quintessentially human.

Maxwell maintains that:

Insofar as John Brown was a national martyr, a precursor of the socialist militant, and a scourge of the slavery to which Jews and blacks had been subjected, he invited Gold to Americanize both his Jewishness and his Communism[;] traits joined and made grounds for denaturalization during the Palmer Raids. (106)

This is significant since this position, as Maxwell goes on to note, allowed Gold to resist Americanization via hating the African-American (106). This, then, is a marked shift both from the analysis of how Jews became Americanized as detailed in Karen Brodtkin's How Jews became White Folks discussed in chapter two of this study, and from Clifford Odets's Waiting for Lefty where white working-class identity confronts ruling-class

identities, but does so to the exclusion of African Americans. Indeed, Gold seems to advocate an Americanism not circumscribed by the notion of a permanent laboring class comprised of African Americans, but rather by making common cause with those susceptible to such a class position. In so doing, Gold is able to imagine African Americans as both full citizens, and within the circle of humanity. However, this citizenship and humanity is not forged out of an industrialized capitalist America dependent upon exploitation, but is rather committed to the notion of one social class to end all social classes. It is out of this personal and political commitment that Michael Gold writes Hoboken Blues in the hope of contributing to what he saw as the desperate need for “a cultural movement organized around the creative arts” (New Masses 13).

Producing Hoboken Blues

The play was written in 1927 and first performed by the New Playwrights’ Theater in New York City as part of their 1928 season. Like Waiting for Lefty, it is an example of experimental theater. Unlike Odets’s play, however, Hoboken Blues is informed by the Moscow tradition of Vsevolod Emilyevich Meyerhold who, with his constructivist designs meant not only to “bring the October Revolution in drama” (Maxwell 112), but also to industrialize the theatrical space. Gold says of Meyerhold, “[he] has broken down the silly drawing room walls of the theater, and brought the street onto the stage. Constructivism is his invention; it is a technique for capturing the swift powerful movement of the machine age” (Loud Speaker 6 qtd. in Tuerk 7).

This desire to capture the machine age, and its implicit attention to industrialized America may be seen as a sharp contrast to the natural landscapes of Ernest Hemingway’s America. Here, Gold wishes to put working-class life at the center of his

literary canvas unlike Hemingway who sought to use it to mark the contours of his. Gold's work, then, is in diametric opposition to Hemingway's who presents an evacuated sense of industry and labor. As we shall see, it is out of this desire to present working-class life that Gold is able to present black life and imagine the democratic ideals for blacks Hemingway could only conceive of as the province of middle-class whites.

While the play received almost universally poor criticism in its reviews—not least, according to critics, because of its dialogue, story, (Atkinson, Sec. 8.1), and unrealistic characters (Krutch, 277)—it may nevertheless be seen as a bold attempt on the part of Gold to put blacks on stage in order to illustrate how their lives, like those of white workers, were being shaped and conditioned by a growing—and in Gold's eyes, menacing—industrial capitalism. In so doing Gold not only presents blacks as quintessentially human in contrast to much of canonical literature of the time, but also, by extension, people who confront danger, express the capacity for choice, human will, and who exhibit at least qualified grace under pressure. Put another way, Gold articulates an American masculinity premised upon the lived-experiences of a specifically black working-class life that is absent the circumscription of a constructed or servicing racialized Other as we have seen in Hemingway, Odets and others. Where Gold's black characters do not exhibit these qualities of masculinity, he makes sure to show the effects of industrial capitalism and its attendant system of exploitation as the root cause.

If Hoboken Blues had overly ambitious aims—its rather long and unwieldy title is, perhaps, the first clue toward that suspicion—then it was not helped by those entrusted with its stage production at New Playwrights which, ironically, Gold helped to found. For instance, Gold writes in the stage directions that “No white men appear in this play.

Where white men are indicated, they are played by Negroes in white caricature masks” (549). However, according to Richard Tuerk in his essay, “Hoboken Blues: An Experiment that Failed,” The play’s director, Edward Massey, “...used an entirely white cast who played blacks by wearing blackface. Thus,” continues Tuerk, “...what Gold intended at least in part as an attack on American racism became itself a basically racist production in the tradition of the minstrel show” (4). The fact that Massey apparently knew little of the theory informing constructivist theater, and that the stage of the Cherry Lane theater where the play was performed was not large enough to accommodate an elaborate play like Hoboken Blues (Williams 23), only contributed to the play’s poor production and viewing.

Resisting Codes of Whiteness

While these and other problems virtually assured the play’s failure as good theatre, I am most concerned here with its textual and literary qualities, and what Gold ultimately achieves in terms of the negation of literary whiteness and the presentation of black characters. That is to say, Hoboken Blues, written during the same historical period as virtually all of Hemingway’s short stories, may properly be seen as an example of the negation (consciously or not) of many literary tropes intrinsic to literary whiteness, and subsequently to much of Hemingway’s work and the American literary canon.

In his chapter, “The Proletarian as New Negro; the New Negro as Proletarian: Mike Gold Meets Claude McKay” from his ground-breaking book, New Negro, Old Left: African American Writing and Communism Between the Wars, Maxwell analyzes in considerable detail Hoboken Blues. While Maxwell uses the analysis to demonstrate Gold’s political and ideological relationship and indebtedness to McKay—though they

shared a turbulent six months together when they co-edited The Liberator between 1921 and 1922—it is also a useful text to consider for studying the mechanisms and ideas Gold uses to challenge the rhetoric and literary tropes of whiteness.

“African Americans,” Maxwell argues:

...represent nothing less than the fully human. Beneath the cutting racial ties, Gold’s symbolism...rests on the same unconditional denial of black subhumanity that Ralph Ellison praised in his self-selected nineteenth-century ancestors. From the American renaissance to Mark Twain, claimed Ellison in 1953⁸, the best of Anglo-American writing conceived of the African American as ‘a symbol of Man—the reversal of what he represents in most contemporary thought’...Gold bids to enter Ellison’s antiracist canon by recasting a stereotypic sign of black ‘animal spirits’—enthusiastic dancing—as a sign of [their] vibrant humanity....Through this recasting, he implicitly acknowledges that his own humanity is threatened by racism.... (96)

While Maxwell here points only to one aspect of African-American life subjected to stereotypical treatment with his reference to dancing, his suggestion that Gold attempts “to enter Ellison’s anti-racist canon” on the basis of the humanity of the African American implies Gold wished to address more than this one aesthetic element of black life and culture. Indeed, the title of his play suggests both a connection to, and a re-writing of the old American theme of America’s genesis with African Americans at its

⁸ The Ellison text Maxwell refers to here is “Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity” that I discuss at some length in Chapter Three of this study. Maxwell clearly anticipates aspects of my thesis when he connects Gold’s work to Ellison’s theory of American literary fiction of the Modernist period though his purposes for studying Gold are different.

center. Put another way, as Maxwell says, “Gold’s agitprop subject is the Revolutionary significance of an African-American stance toward labor under industrial capitalism” (113). This position had significant roots in Gold’s political stance and his relationship to the CPUSA⁹, but it further presupposes that blacks are conscious of their position as wage slaves and are also conscious of the relationship between their labor and America’s developing international power, and economic wealth.

Gold tries to capture this awareness early in Hoboken Blues in the character of his protagonist, Sam Pickens, whose social consciousness is increasingly heightened as the play progresses, but he especially tries to capture this awareness for his audience who is shown, in the overt style and dialogue of the play, the connection between the wealth of “the nation” and the poverty of some of its citizens. An example of this is illustrated in Act I Scene II when Sam arrives in Hoboken, New Jersey in search of work and meets a bum “roaring with delight” (585):

BUM: “We’re the richest an’ de most powerful nation in de whole cock-eyed world. De Department of the Treasury reports we own one hundred billion, two hundred million, five hundred thousand dollars and fifteen cents!”

SAM: What, de fifteen cents?

BUM: Say, what’s de matter wid you? Ain’t you an American?
...But your mentioning the fifteen cents reminded my I’m hungry

SAM: Brother, I could have a lot of fun with a piece of apple pie myself. I’m broke, too; lookin for a job.

BUM: (*insolent again*) Oh, yuh are, are yuh? An yuh wanna job, hey?

SAM: yes,; heard of any?

BUM: No, I haven’t. Ain’t heard of one in twelve years. Don’t expect to hear of any, either. (Reads the paper and chuckles.) One

⁹ For a full discussion of the American Left’s position that African Americans represented, to quote Richard Wright, “...the real symbol of the working class in America” (190), or, as Paul Robeson frames it, “I Am America” (190), see Barbara Foley’s Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941 from which these citations are taken. Foley goes on to argue that Robeson’s point was not that blacks were integral to, but rather representative of, “the body politic” (190).

hundred billion—two hundred million—five hundred thousand dollars and fifteen cents—Can you beat us Americans? No, you can't.

SAM: (*humbly*). Ain't any other news in dat paper, is they?

BUM: Ain't dat news enough? What kind do you want?

SAM: News of jobs.

BUM: (*incredulously*) yuh really want a job? Say, you're funny.

Nobody with brains ever works, don't you know dat? Lookit me (585-86).

Though neither Sam nor the bum register the connection between the wealth of the nation and their poverty, the audience does register the irony of the exchange between the two. The conversation between them ends with the bum running away at the first sight of cops.

Sam does not run away, however, since he has no prior experiences to suggest he needs to run. The bum's flight, then, suggests that he has had dealings with them, and so he runs for what turns out to be self-preservation as the next time cops are seen in the play Sam is summarily beaten by them (590).

When he is beaten up he does not retreat into childlikeness, timid, corrigible and obedient like the Sam we meet in Hemingway's "The Killers," though he faces danger. Rather, this confrontation with danger leads him to implicitly question why the cops would beat him up. As we shall see, this questioning ultimately leads Sam to take a hand in the material conditions of the futuristic Hoboken he ultimately leaves in order to get his family and return.

Capacity for Choice and Human Will

In order to continue my discussion, I will give a brief summary of the plot of Hoboken Blues. Act I begins in Harlem where we are introduced to Chill McGregor, Sam Pickens, an unemployed musician and the protagonist of the play, his wife Sally and several other colorful characters including Barney, a respectable and elderly bartender, Reverend Rosewater, and Mr. Butler, an undertaker who has designs on Sally. After

arguing with Sally, Sam decides to leave Harlem in search of work in Hoboken. Act II begins in Hoboken. Once there, Sam takes on several jobs. He meets a bum who he befriends before policemen chase him away, then an angel who recounts her life in Hoboken before her people are destroyed by white people. He is then beaten up by policemen. Both Sam and the angel are tried for vagrancy before they meet the historical figures of Spartacus and Plato who incite a working-class rebellion where there is a three-hour workday, roses on the factory gates, and equality for all. Sam decides to stay in Hoboken and is voted President. However, he must first go back to Harlem to get his wife, Sally, and their daughter Honey Lou. Act III begins with Sam's return to Harlem where he finds that twenty-five years have passed. The Harlem he finds himself in is no longer the closely-knit community he left, but is instead corrupted by the industrial capitalism of white America. Mr. Butler's place is no longer a funeral home, but is now a cabaret, as is Reverend Rosewater's church. Sam comes to the realization that there is no place like the utopian Hoboken he imagines and that he lost twenty-five years of his life because he was beaten up by policemen. The play ends with his plaintively questioning why there can't be such a place as he sings his Hoboken blues.

In the progressively surreal Act II of the play Sam's developing consciousness is underscored as he is refused a job as a musician in a circus because, according to the ring master, he is "[t]oo civilized. We want savages. It pays" (589). Here Gold seems to be pointing to the fact that where blacks are capable of competence, the need to present them as "uncivilized," and "savage," that is, less human, for profit is made primary. Gold also illustrates the intransigence of their position as a permanent laboring class, and also the ironic rationalization for it in his text. Sam also refuses work as a waiter, a bootblack and

a target in a booth where he has balls thrown at his head. These jobs are refused because of the degradation and humiliation he suffers in them, further underscoring Gold's desire to satirize the need for American culture under capitalism to present blacks as objects rather than participants in the nation.

In Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*, Rip is entertained by a host of strangers dressed in antique Dutch attire on a mountainside. He joins their party, drinks with them and ultimately falls asleep for twenty-five years. When he awakens he makes his way home to find himself not in the British colonies of America, but, rather, in the new republic of the United States.

This portion of the original text is mirrored in Hoboken Blues by Sam Pickens's brutal beating by the police. From this point forward in the play, the police become characters to be scorned, a significant shift from Sam's first interaction with them when the bum who knew better ran away. Sam, then, has learned to be fearful which, from outside of his world of white middle-class America Hemingway knew, may easily be mistaken for an inability to confront impending danger, or indeed, a lack of will.

Unlike Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*, when Sam returns to Harlem, he does not find himself in a new republic; rather, he is in the middle of the newly industrialized black life of Harlem. Gold implicitly points to the importance and centrality of blacks to American life, even as he points to their systematic exclusion from it both ironically in the play and maliciously in real life.

When Sam wakes up he does not immediately return to Harlem. Instead, he finds himself in a futuristic Hoboken where he meets an angel. Their initial interchange points

to Gold's attempt to compensate for the racial inequality he sees as so destructive. He seems to do so by pointing to whiteness as the cause:

ANGEL: Did they bust your head open, Sam? Who did it?
And why?
SAM: White men done it, lady—white devils—case I wuz
lookin' foh a job. (594)

Later in this initial conversation, Sam continues:

SAM: You're so happy, lady—Have you ever suffered?
ANGEL: Yes, Sam Pickens. I was happy for a thousands of
years. But then I suffered for a long time, too. I lived in a forest here with
my brothers and sisters. I was happy. The Indians lived here after a time,
and were good to us, Then the white men came, and cut down our homes.
My brothers and sisters died. I wondered off alone. (595)

While we can reasonably argue that Gold, here, points to an essentialist view of whiteness with Sam's suggestion that white men beat him up because they are "white devils," and the angel's story arguing that white men came and destroyed her way of life, it is much more likely that Gold is pointing to the power of whiteness as an organizing principle around which capitalism functions to oppress racialized Others and the otherwise defenseless working class. This is a more likely interpretation of the text because of Gold's personal and political history as a poor white Jew.

In this futuristic Hoboken, Sam and the Angel are first arrested, tried for vagrancy, found innocent and meet the characters of Plato and Spartacus. Plato reasons that they should have a three-hour work day, and Spartacus argues that while he failed to affect a revolution, the workers of the future will not. At this, Plato tells the workers to take the factory, and do away with the bosses.

A three-hour work day is heralded by Sam, and he is elected president of Hoboken. The angel entices him to come away with her to Long Island where "there is

no white or black, only [the] deep green [of the woods] (596). He refuses; remembering that his wife, Sally, and his daughter Honey Lou are back in Harlem. He leaves this apparent paradise of Hoboken to return with his family. When he arrives in Harlem, he realizes that he has been asleep for twenty-five years, and that Harlem is now a bustling industrial metropolis. Sam is startled by the dramatic changes. Reverend Rosewater's church is now "Fountain of Youth, Best Cabaret in town," and Mr. Butler's funeral parlor is now "Butler's Cave of Joy, Best Cabaret in town."

Here Gold implicitly asks the question: how did industrialized American blacks get here, and what does their presence mean to the American republic? He does this by showing the relationship between the futuristic Hoboken with its three-hour work day and leadership by workers, with the corrupting effects of industrial capitalism in the Harlem Sam comes back to find.

Capacity for Choice

Implied in this desire to change the social and economic system in which Sam lives in Hoboken is the capacity for choice. Sam both chooses to change the economic system and when asked, chooses to become president. His desire to bring his family to Hoboken causes him to leave, and he returns to Harlem—yet another choice—some twenty-five years after he left as in Irving's version of the Rip Van Winkle text.

In this new Harlem, Sam's daughter, Honey Lou, has been promised to Mr. Butler, the undertaker turned cabaret owner and businessman, not to the more appropriate Oswald, his son who is Honey Lou's peer. Sally, Sam's wife who the undertaker has stolen, is sickly and has been cast aside for her daughter. This seems to suggest that industrial life, controlled as it is by capitalism, misshapes black life.

In Gold's version of the Rip Van Winkle tale, becoming American is ironic and explicitly connected to becoming industrialized. It is therefore on the basis of their status as American workers that Gold argues for the centrality of black life to American life. Sam, then, returns from a futuristic Hoboken run by workers, to a Harlem run by industrial capitalists. If, as Maxwell suggests, Rip Van Winkle is a story about the origins of America then Gold's reformulation of it puts African Americans at its center.

Hoboken Blues: Failure or Future?

Both Maxwell (113) and Tuerk (94) suggest that while in Harlem Sam prefers to be unemployed than be the subject to wage labor and exploitation. This interpretation of the text puts Paul Robeson's refusal to play Sam Pickens in the theatrical production in a particular context. Apparently, Robeson refused the part because he was not interested in playing blacks who were not positive heroic characters (Folsom 234). This, perhaps, sheds light on the many ways in which the play had been misunderstood, and also on the fact that the play may well have been ahead of its time, particularly as it attempted to conceptualize an America free of social inequality. Also significant, however, is that this interpretation presupposes that Sam has the capacity for choice. Rather than be subject to exploitation, he chooses unemployment, or rather, labor on his terms which are not demeaning.

Another significant element of the play is the way Gold parodies notions of race, particularly through minstrelsy. As noted earlier the set directions required that no white men appear in the play. When white characters appear, blacks play the part with white caricature masks. While a strong argument can be made to suggest that Gold wished to point to the fluidity of whiteness and its weaknesses as an organizing tenet for the control

of working-class people, his axiomatic reversal of this aspect of minstrelsy lends itself to the notion that racial inequality is merely an aspect of class inequality and that if blacks were put in positions of power, inequality would end. This is, perhaps, one reason why Edward Massey's error in casting all the characters as white in black face was an unfortunate twist of irony¹⁰.

Richard Tuerk's essay, "Michael Gold's *Hoboken Blues*: An Experiment that failed" may be an accurate title if by failure he means its stage production. If, however, he refers to Gold's attempt to legitimize blacks as quintessentially American, then the play cannot properly be considered a failure. While the play may be faulted for failing to preserve the balance John Henry Newman argues is essential for being true to the whole, *Hoboken Blues* nevertheless represents a bold move toward equality.

Put another way, *Hoboken Blues* is good literature and was successful if "good" and "successful" are measures of its ability to challenge literary whiteness. That the play is not part of the American canon is a matter of record. Why it is not canonical—its notable flaws in structure and production notwithstanding—raises interesting and important questions about canon formation, and the rhetoric of whiteness in the development of early Modernism.

Resisting Literary Whiteness: Blood on the Forge

In the previous section, I suggested that Michael Gold's *Hoboken Blues* successfully resisted many of the codes of literary whiteness for both blacks and the white working class, even though the play was considered a theatrical failure. William

¹⁰ As Maxwell also notes, it is curious that the play when put on stage was so completely misinterpreted by Massey, the producer, yet not challenged by Gold who, we must assume, knew the details of its production since he was a principle founder and owner of the playhouse. Indeed, he is quoted as saying "When I saw the play I wanted to puke" (Folsom 234-35).

Attaway's novel, Blood on the Forge, like *Hoboken Blues*, also challenges codes of literary whiteness and does so partially through a re-working of a historical period, that of the great African-American migration from the south to the north and specifically, 1919 which is also the year of tremendous racial and labor unrest throughout the nation¹¹.

Though hardly a novelistic failure, Blood on the Forge, as critics have noted, (Foley, 372; Ellison, 90-91; Noon, 434) demonstrates a dark, hopeless, though realistic vision of the process by which African Americans from the rural south become industrialized, and how an invisible white power structure (Klotman 459) manipulates their political naïveté to keep them and their fellow workers—Irish, Italian and Slavic—oppressed and divided along racial lines. Indeed, Klotman notes that “The bosses are never seen; their power is felt mainly through their underlings who set white workers against black, deputize strikebreakers, and generally control through fear or famine” (459). This, in some ways, is a reversal of the invisibility of blacks that we see in more canonical works. Here, it is white power structures that Attaway makes invisible, yet not inconsequential.

The novel nevertheless, as Ellison goes on to note, provides hope (91). He suggests that this hopeful vision is not explored in the novel because of Attaway's inability or unwillingness to show the ways in which black migrants from the rural south meet the challenges of their new industrial life, noting that Big Mat, the eldest of the three Moss brothers we follow through the text, “[has] motivation, the intense desire to live and maintain a sense of dignity, [which] has also produced the most conscious American Negro type, the black trade unionist” (91). While Ellison points to the lack of

¹¹ For a full treatment on the profound effect of this historical moment on American life, particularly as it relates to the history of Communism and the American Left and Modernism, see Barbara Foley's Spectres of 1919: Class & Nation in the Making of the New Negro.

hope inherent in the text, the motivation he finds in Big Mat's character suggests the potential, indeed, the capacity, for many of the characteristics reserved for whites in Hemingway and other canonical writers of the Modernist period. Where these potentialities are not fulfilled, Attaway shows that it is not because of the intrinsic nature of the characters themselves, either because of their race or their class, but rather is directly related to the circumstances in which they live as a result of racial and class oppression.

Blood on the Forge, though written in 1941 is set in 1919 which was not only the year Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" is set, a story loosely based on the author's personal experiences after returning home from the trauma of fighting in World War I, but also the year, as intimated above, of the Red Scare, the Palmer Raids, national race riots, and the steel workers strike of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois. The story is based on the steelworkers strike and follows the fate of the three half-brothers, Melody, Chinatown, and Big Mat Moss who, according to Barbara Foley, constitute a tripartite protagonist which means no single Moss brother is obliged to typify the consciousness of the black industrialized working-class (Radical 395). It is through their eyes that we view the action.

Attaway seems to be heavily influenced by the straightforward writing style of Hemingway who, reporter-like tells the facts. His simple-appearing presentation of the facts, however, like Hemingway's prose, hides a complex story which culminates in the Moss family being destroyed and their lives being crushed by the steel mill they are brought to the north to work in. When they get to the north they encounter racism which, in one sense, is anticipated by the reader. What is important for us to consider, however,

is how they meet that racism and, in addition, how each of the brothers, to varying degrees, confront the danger represented by the steel mill itself which is situated in what can only be described as an image of hell. It is, then, a migration novel capturing, as few novels did in its time, the great migration of African Americans from the rural south to the industrialized north. An example of this is illustrated by the fact that the brothers are enticed north by a northern jackleg who we come to discover recruits Southern blacks to fill the labor void created by World War I and as strikebreakers because he knows they will earn more in the north and that their color will be useful for dividing the mill workers along racial lines. Indeed, one of the deputies, an underling for the invisible white power structure says, “That’s the thing ’bout nigger deputies—they’re always fightin’ the race war ’stead of a labor strike” (Attaway 233). Here the deputy is referring to Big Mat’s new-found power, bestowed upon him by the deputies to fight the strikers at the end of the novel, but the same could be said about the white workers who throw stones at the Moss brothers as they walk through the mill town for the first time because they know, by the fact that the brothers are black, that they have been brought in to town to break the spine of the strike (Attaway 47).

It is, then, also a text about the transition from north to south, rural to industrial, which more than likely accounts for the title of Ellison’s review of the book called “Transition”. Simultaneously a protest novel and a class-conscious attempt on the part of Attaway to present “reality,” the book illustrates how race functions to help organize class structures in the agrarian south, and how it does exactly the same thing in the industrialized north. In this sense, Attaway provides us with landscapes populated with

workers and infused with working-class life as the following passage describing the industrial northern landscape the Moss brothers find themselves in illustrates:

What's the good in strainin' our eyes out these windows? We can't see where nothin' grows around here but rusty iron towers and brick stacks, walled up like somebody's liable to try and steal them. Where are the trees? They so far away on the tops of the low mountains that they look like fringe on a black wear-me-to-a-wake dress held upside down against the sky. (Italics in original 45)

This is in stark contrast to the landscapes of Hemingway's texts, many of which offer an evacuated industrial landscape. Just as Attaway's treatment of landscapes invert Hemingway's, so too does his treatment of racialized Others invert Hemingway's. In this way, Attaway creates a text in Blood on the Forge whose characters exhibit many of the codes of whiteness—capacity for choice, human will, confrontation with danger and grace under pressure, which are central characteristics of Hemingway's white protagonists.

The novel begins just before the Moss brothers are uprooted from their rural Kentucky lives as sharecroppers where they live a hand-to-mouth existence on Mr. Johnston's land. They migrate north where they are plunged into industrial life in Allegheny County, West Virginia. Part I of the novel introduces the reader to the Moss brothers and Hattie, Big Mat's wife. As discussed in chapter two of this study, Big Mat and his brothers are forced to leave Kentucky to escape the lynch mob that is sure to follow them in retribution for Big Mat's savage beating of the riding boss who had insulted his mother.

Part two of the novel is a migration story that details the brother's journey northward in a railroad boxcar. Images of pitch darkness, sweaty cramped and inhuman conditions haunt this short section of the text, but it is important as it provides a metaphor for the conditions the brothers confront when they arrive in the northern mill town since they are metaphorically blinded by their own political naiveté and their initial inclination to read the workers' strike through the lens of race.

Part three of the novel introduces the Moss brothers to the industrial north and initially shows the extent to which the brothers are displaced in their new industrial surroundings. As newcomers to the mill they are called "green" to reflect their inexperience and innocence of steelwork. The term is also significant because "green" men are uniformly disliked by the white union workers. As discussed above they are brought in by invisible white bosses from the south as strike breakers. As Bo, the only black foreman who has whites under him says, "Well, company bring new niggers in when there's strike talk. Keep the old folks in line" (51). The "green," then, symbolically represents the money the mill owners stand to make as a result of their presence in the mill. Their displacement, and our vision of the mill, is captured by the narrator's following passage:

Their attitudes spoke. Like a refrain:

*We have been tricked away from our poor, good-as-bad-ground-and-bad-white-men-will-let-'em-be hills. What men in their right minds would leave off tending green growing things to tend iron monsters?
...A man don't get to know what the place where he's born looks like until he goes some place else. Then he begins to see with his mind things that*

his eyes had never been able to see. To us niggers who are seeing the red-clay hills with our minds this Allegheny County is an ugly, smoking hell out of a backwoods. (Italics in original 44-45)

This passage takes on significance for our purposes because as we come to find out, the brothers are housed with other steel workers in interracial bunkhouses. While racial tension hovers just below the surface of the narrative, and boils over in the final section of the novel, it is subordinated here to the presence of the “iron monsters” that is causing the “smoking hell out of a backwoods;” the mill itself. The mill’s furnaces, then, are the object of both awe and loathing. They are awesome because they are so powerful. They are loathed because they represent back-breaking work and extreme danger; to confront them is to confront danger.

Another element of the displacement the brothers experience is brought about by the configuration of whiteness and racism in the mill town as opposed to their configuration in Kentucky. For instance, the narrator says that “This place was full of hatreds the brothers did not understand” (49). The hatred is created by the factory owners because of their use of specifically black strike breakers; a strategy that takes advantage of the simmering undercurrent of racism within the ranks of the workers themselves. Blackness, then, and therefore whiteness as its mirror opposite and signal of unity, is used by the workers to identify their allies and their foes. But even this color-coding of allegiances is mediated by other considerations. A black worker must not only be black, but must also be “green”. It is their newness to the mill town that also signals allegiance. The meaning of race, then, is not always an absolute given.

For example, in one instance, an Irishman calls Melody a “Nigger” in the bunkhouse. The word had been used by other black mill workers, but the context was different. Here, the speaker is Irish, not black and he speaks out of anger, not friendship, “The swell of laughter that pervaded the room before he uttered the words subsided and the room was left in complete silence” (65). This moment illustrates the ambivalence of racial meaning in this milieu of ethnicities, but what it also shows is the relative ambivalence of race given their understanding of a shared social class fate and the prospect of danger represented by the furnace at every moment.

Part four of the text deals with an interracial relationship between Big Mat and Anna, a Mexican girl of fifteen after he gives up hope of bringing Hattie northward, the breakup of the Moss brothers as a family, and a big blast in the mill that literally robs Chinatown of his eyesight. Indeed, this section illustrates the ways in which both Big Mat and Chinatown are especially ill-equipped for the new environment offered by the industrialized north. In Big Mat this is evidenced by his desire to recreate the family arrangements he had in Kentucky by leaving the bunkhouse and renting a place with Anna. In Chinatown, we see a character who is both emotionally sensitive and dependant upon symbols such as his gold tooth for a sense of self. Indeed, he was the one brother who “had been a man who lived through outward symbols. Now those symbols were gone and he was lost” (Attaway 161).

Confronting Danger

If, as Foley suggests, the three brothers, Mat, Chinatown and Melody constitute a tripartite protagonist such that they each share elements of black working-class consciousness, then Big Mat represents that element which most fully illustrates a

willingness and the ability to confront danger. This is seen very early in the text when after beating the riding Boss, he betrays an unwillingness to leave his home, preferring to confront the imminent danger presented by the retribution of the riding boss and the mob that would be sure to hunt him:

Never again would the ground be something to work. It was a solemn feeling. He talked it out of himself in what was a prayer. Ain't nothin' make me leave the land if it good land. The hills bigger 'n any white man, I reckon. Take more 'n jest trouble to run me off the hills. I been in trouble. I been born into trouble. Share-worked these hills from the bad land clean to the mines at Madison. The old folks make crop here afore I was born. Now the land done got tired...

Somehow it seem like I know why the land git tired. And it jest seem like it come time to git off. The land has jest give up, and I guess it's good for things to come out like this. (36-37)

In many ways, this represents not only the human will required to confront danger and the capacity to choose his fate on the part of big Matt, but also his understanding that danger is an integral part of his daily existence as a black man in the south as indicated by his comment "I been born into trouble". The sentence also implicates the social order of the society he lives in as a structural hindrance to his life chances imposed from outside. Even as he is born he must confront the dangers inherent in society for him. His reference to the land creates a triangulation between himself, the land and society. Where Hemingway uses the landscape to inform our understanding of the inner workings of his protagonists' consciousnesses, Attaway uses the landscape to illustrate how big Mat and

the land have a reciprocating effect on each other. The land in this case has an identity as evidenced by the sentences “Somehow it seem like I know why the land git tired...The land has jest give up...”, that is shaped and simultaneously shapes Big Mat’s identity. The land, then, is a stabilizing and sustaining force even as its condition comments on Mat’s socioeconomic predicament and the state of the south generally.

When Big Mat arrives in the mill he immediately turns his attention to proving his manhood in the only context available and allowable for him: at the furnace itself. Indeed, as Cynthia Hamilton suggests, “For ... Mat, the mill becomes an adversary, a challenge to overcome, his struggle and size are pitted against steel and it is to prove his manhood that he returns daily” (Hamilton 155). Big Mat works tirelessly and relentlessly in the Mill and earns the respect of the other workers around him. Indeed, so taken are the Irish workers with Big Mat, that they take to calling him Black Irish:

A big Irish man who was boss melter in charge of five furnaces told Melody:

‘Never had a colored helper work better on the hearth. He’s as strong as an ox—do everythin’ the melter tell him to do and take care of the work of a whole crew if he ain’t held back.

He’s got some Irish in him somewhere.’ Another red Irishman grinned. Lots of black fellas have got Irish guts. (91-92)

This is significant as it highlights the slippery terrain of race and masculinity. Big Mat could not be black in the eyes of the Irish workers because of his strength and his ability to willingly confront the danger the mill represents. He must be Irish on the inside even if he is black on the outside as “lots of black fellas have got Irish guts,” a statement which

suggests that the Irish have a certain spirit or essence about them that blacks do not; an obvious allusion to the myth of whiteness that separates them from racialized Others articulated in chapter two of this study.

Chinatown and Melody also confront danger. However, their engagement with it is marked only by physical and psychological scars. Chinatown lives his life through outward appearance and especially a gold tooth he has in place of a good one he pulls to make space for the gold. He is hedonistic; his love of pleasure and his parallel vulnerability to physical loss underscores his external source of self. He is blinded in a big blast that kills fourteen other workers and was never a match for the danger the mill represented. In this sense, Chinatown represents that element of the black proletariat least able to adjust to modern industrial life.

Melody's source of self is both external and internal; art (his music) as felt and as performed. Of the three brothers he alone succeeds in coming to terms with the industrial north, though not unscathed. He, too, faces danger as he works in the mill. Indeed, he damages his guitar plucking hand which ironically prevents him from playing music for a time:

Melody had entered the stove with Bo. In the lamplight he should have been able to keep out of Bo's way, but his mind was on his guitar. He had put his hand in the wrong place. He had seen Bo's rod come down, it was like watching something in slow motion. Then came the shock. There was no pain. (128)

The circumstances surrounding this accident suggest the irony. Melody is overwhelmed and over powered by life in the north making it painful to think about playing his guitar.

He loses for a time, then, the ability to describe his circumstances through art—music—which he loves.

As Edward E. Waldron says in his essay, “William Attaway’s *Blood on the Forge: Death of the Blues*,” says:

[Chinatown’s] blindness becomes a blinding of the folk ways to match the stilling of the folk music in Melody. They both survive, but they are changed irrevocably by their confrontation with and absorption by the modern monsters of steel and machine” (58).

Their confrontation with “the modern monsters of steel and machine”—that is, with danger—irrevocably scars them. However, they constitute a type of character completely invisible to canonical writers of the early modernist period such as Ernest Hemingway. He is completely blind to the danger they face even as he goes in search of danger on the battlefields of Europe during World War I.

Human Will

Big Mat’s work in the mill is also a demonstration of his will. The mill to Mat represented a “challenge to overcome” and “his struggle and size are pitted against steel and it is to prove his manhood” (Hamilton 155). She further notes:

These men [Big Matt and Xuma, from Peter Abraham’s *Mine Boy*] were driven by forces within: their old standards of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, their unyielding nature in the face of force, and their traditional conceptions of manhood, which centered around [sic] a silent tolerance and endurance of pain and constant desire for respect. Ironically, the combination drove them helplessly in the arms of capital,

which transformed all these motives into profits for the owners and bosses.

(158)

Hamilton's comment that Big Mat was driven by "conceptions of manhood, which centered around a silent tolerance and endurance of pain and constant desire for respect" suggests a certain grace in his labor at the mill, and the pressure associated with it. It also demonstrates Mat's will to withstand pain in order to command respect. As we come to discover, however, and as Hamilton intimates this desire for respect, and his will are used by the owners and the bosses, not only to ensure their profits, but also to divide the workers along racial lines.

Capacity for Choice

Big Mat's meditation on the condition of the land not only shows his willingness to confront danger, but also demonstrates his capacity for choice as it illustrates a rationale for leaving not related to fear or an unwillingness to confront danger. Rather, it is his realization that the soil, that which sustains his existence, has changed. It is in view of this fact that he chooses to leave.

Melody also demonstrates the capacity to choose in two significant places in the text. In the south, "He never had a craving in him that he couldn't slick away on his guitar" (1). In the north, however, Melody cannot find the rhythms on his guitar to slick away the exhaustive backbreaking work of the mill. After four weeks on the job, "Melody lay on his back, guitar across his chest. Every now and then his hands started idly over the strings but they did not find much music. He didn't try any slicking. That was for back home and the distances in the hills" (62). So crushing is the work, and so traumatic the shift from their rural life to the factory, that "picking at his guitar [in the

north] had wearied him. Yet he knew he would never be able to let the music box alone” (128). Melody, it could be reasoned, chooses to allow his right hand to be crushed as the text suggests, “He would always wonder if he had done it purposely” (128).

Melody also demonstrates the capacity for choice when he chooses to side with social class, and not race just before the climax of the novel in part five. In this instance, a strike is imminent. Just as the Moss brothers had been brought in by boxcar train, so too, do they witness a new batch of men arriving, “They knew all of those men herded in the black cars. For a minute they were those men—bewildered and afraid in the dark, coming from hate into a new kind of hate” (178). Bo had brought Negro politicians in to speak to the black workers in an effort to convince them not to strike. Many follow Bo’s lead and decide to follow the interests of the bosses. Melody, however, does not. While he does not go on strike, he does not go to work either, instead, he chooses to go home and look after Chinatown reasoning:

‘Bo stoolin’ ...Lots of these hunkies who gittin’ fired is all-right guys. Now them talkers [black politicians] gittin’ paid off’ ...Big Mat and Melody were vastly different men. But both of them approached the world alike. Ideas of union and nonunion could only confuse them until that time when their own personal experiences would give them the feeling necessary for understating. (182)

Melody’s recognition that Bo is “stoolin” and selling out the “hunkies” is significant because it points to the potential of an interracial strike in the text, thereby robbing the owners of their most powerful weapon of control: the division of the workers along racial lines. However, Chinatown’s confrontation with danger and his subsequent blindness

presents a choice for Melody. He can involve himself in union and strike trouble, or he can go home and take care of his brother, Chinatown. He chooses to take care of Chinatown.

These experiences, however, soon give them the feeling necessary for understanding. By part five of the text, Big Mat is recruited by underlings of the mill owners who deputize him. With this new-found power he terrorizes the very workers and their families whose respect he had once earned. Now he was to be feared. Indeed, as Phyllis Klotman tells us, “Earlier his skill and strength earned him the approbation of his fellow workers and the title of ‘Black Irish’” (460). At this point in the text, however, he comes to be:

...hated by his fellow workers. He was a threat over their heads. The women covered their faces at the sight of him, the men spat; the children threw rocks. Always within him was that instinctive knowledge that he was being turned to white men’s uses. So always with him was a basic distrust of a white. But now he was a boss. He was the law. After all, what did right or wrong matter in the case? Those thrilling new words were too much to resist. He was a boss, a boss over whites” (Attaway 197).

Big Mat’s actions here are reminiscent of Chrisfield’s in John Dos Passos’s Three Soldiers. Like Chrisfield, Mat is now savage, unpredictably violent, disloyal and thus incorrigible. Just as Chrisfield embodies the kind of violence the army wants to arouse and channel, so too, does Big Mat embody the kind of violence the power structure of the

steel mill want to harness and channel. Also like Chrisfield, Big Mat's childishness will be harnessed and transformed.

Resisting Literary Whiteness: An Opportunity Through a Unified Working Class

Unlike Chrisfield, however, Big Mat's anger is directed at white people specifically. Also unlike Chrisfield, Big Mat comes to political consciousness as he is struck deathblows with the handle of a pickax by a young Slav after Mat has killed a Slav himself. Just before Mat dies:

His vision faded. He was confused. It seemed to him that he had been through this once before. Only at that far time he had been the arm strong with hate. Yes, once he had beaten down a riding boss. A long time ago in the red hills he had done this thing and run away. Had that riding boss been as he was now? Big Mat went farther away and no longer could distinguish himself from these other figures. They were all one and all the same. In that confusion he sensed something true. Maybe somewhere in the mills a new Mr. Johnston was creating riding bosses, making a difference where none existed. (233)

This awakening, while tragic, dark and seemingly hopeless, raises the promise of interracial class union since Mat comes to a realization that he is fighting on the wrong side.

Big Mat's realization both demonstrates his social and ideological whiteness, and simultaneously the power of whiteness as a code. While he is coded black, the striking whites offer him an opportunity for what he believes is upward mobility, to recode his own identity. In this sense he is not only like the riding boss he beats up at the beginning

of the novel, but also very much like the white immigrants at the turn of the century who W.E.B. Du Bois tells us in our discussion in chapter three, wanted no part of permanent labor. Just as those white immigrants defined their identities by what they were not—black laborers—so too, does Big Mat as deputy define himself by what he is not—a striker. It is Big Mat as both deputy and *not striker* that gives him his sense of power.

The tragic end to Big Mat's life is mirrored by the tragic scene of Chinatown and Melody leavening Allegheny County for Pittsburgh. On their way there, they sit across from a black veteran of World War I who, like Chinatown, is also blind. The image of Chinatown sitting across from the veteran becomes a metaphor that Attaway uses to illustrate the plight and naïveté of the black working class and its inability to see how it is being used and by whom (Radical 372). The scene also concludes the novel which suggests that Attaway sees interracial working-class union as a remote ideal. However, in claiming codes of literary whiteness for white, and particularly black, working-class characters as the novel does through much of its narrative—and as Big Mat's realization illustrates—it simultaneously resists them as the sole province of white middle-class males. It also raises the possibility of removing the spectre of whiteness from our literature and, potentially, from our culture and society.

Conclusion

In this study I have suggested that “whiteness” is a multi-signifying term that is most useful when attached to a careful consideration of social class. Indeed, as I have attempted to illustrate, whiteness is an ideology and aspect of identity that has its roots in social class. It is in this light that I offered a reading of several early Modernist texts, particularly those written by Ernest Hemingway, that suggests a central role for—and belief in—whiteness as an organizing principle both in the construction of the texts themselves, and in society in general. It is out of the cultural connection to whiteness that the myth of upward mobility and the American Dream is born and best understood. These powerful myths in our culture encourage people of all racialized groups and social classes, but crucially, white workers in this country to act in ways that are often inconsistent with their own best interests.

I have also attempted to illustrate how the fiction written by authors such as Ernest Hemingway, who is central to the development of early American Modernism as well as the American literary canon, often exhibited the clearest examples of the codes of literary whiteness in their prose. I speculate that their adherence to these codes constitute at least one of the reasons for their status in the canon as their fiction tended to support an ideology of working-class division and racial tension—ideas particularly useful to a ruling class contending with a changing and increasingly industrializing nation in the early decades of the twentieth century.

There are texts which do resist the codes of literary whiteness, but they are not canonical. Michael Gold’s play, Hoboken Blues, and William Attaway’s Blood on the Forge present black characters and black life in ways traditionally reserved for white

middleclass characters in canonical fiction. Their marginal status with respect to the canon cannot, it seems to me, be separated from this challenge to literary whiteness, nor their proworking-class themes and presentation of working-class life. This, perhaps, speaks volumes about the history and politics of canon formation in the United States.

Indeed, in a recently-aired interview¹², Octavia E. Butler comments:

I sold my first three books without an agent and with no particular connections...so nobody knew who I was...When I wrote Kindred, which is unmistakably of special interest to black people I had a lot of trouble. All of a sudden fifteen publishers couldn't find a place for it. They didn't know how to sell it. I have letters saying we really like it, it's wonderful we just don't know what to do with it...maybe you could make it a romance or a juvenile" (Butler).

I relate this anecdote to illustrate how racialized the American canon still is, and the extent to which it is still influenced by the politics of whiteness. As we know, Kindred was sold as mainstream fiction and is extremely popular in high schools and universities today. Butler's experiences suggests that the racialized construction of characters acceptable for publication and canon formation today tends to re-inscribe whiteness in literature and that its function still shapes, moulds and determines structures of power. How it does so in the present climate of multi-culturalism would be an important complement to this study.

¹²The interview originally aired December 14, 1993. It was Rebroadcast, March 6, 2006 as a tribute to Butler who died February 28, 2006, National Public Radio, Fresh Air with Terri Gross.

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