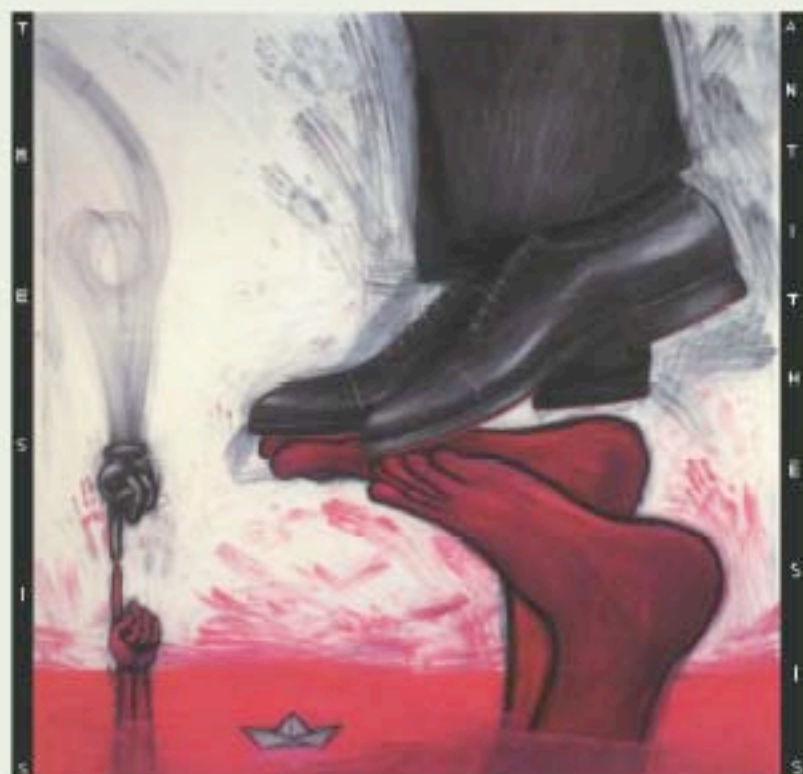


DISPLACING WHITENESS



Edited by Ruth Frankenberg

**ESSAYS
IN
SOCIAL
AND
CULTURAL
CRITICISM**

Displacing Whiteness

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Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism

Edited by Ruth Frankenberg

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Introduction: Local Whitenesses,
Localizing Whiteness
Ruth Frankenberg

THE essays in this volume critically examine contemporary meanings of whiteness and the circumstances of their construction from a range of national, racial, and ethnic locations. The result is whiteness unfrozen, whiteness viewed as ensembles of local phenomena complexly embedded in socioeconomic, sociocultural, and psychic interrelations. Whiteness emerges as a process, not a “thing,” as plural rather than singular in nature.

Why talk about whiteness, given the risk that by undertaking intellectual work on whiteness one might contribute to processes of recentering rather than decentering it, as well as reifying the term and its “inhabitants”? But there are also tremendous risks in *not* critically engaging whiteness. Among these are, first, a continued failure to displace the “unmarked marker” status of whiteness, a continued inability to “color” the seeming transparency of white positionings. Second, to leave whiteness unexamined is to perpetuate a kind of asymmetry that has marred even many critical analyses of racial formation and cultural practice. Here the modes of alterity of everyone-but-white-people are subjected to ever more meticulous scrutiny, celebratory or not, while whiteness remains unexamined—unqualified, essential, homogeneous, seemingly self-fashioned, and apparently unmarked by history or practice (e.g., the notion of “racial-ethnic communities” as synonym for “communities of color”). Third (and Angie Chabram-Dernersesian’s essay in this volume demonstrates this particularly well), critical attention to whiteness offers a ground not only for the examination of white selves (who may indeed be white *others*,

depending on the position of the speaker) but also for the excavation of the foundations of *all* racial and cultural positionings.

For the most part, critical work on whiteness has emerged in the context of, and very frequently in direct response to, critique of racism and the racial order focused on positions of subordination, whether the latter is undertaken by people of color (as has most often been the case) or by white people. Indeed, I would argue that the essays in this collection would lack much of their meaning and efficacy outside the broad context of such work. Conversely, as suggested above, critical analyses of whiteness are vital concomitants of engagements with racial subordination.

Recent work on whiteness has engaged a range of questions. Arguably, the fullest and best developed area of work is in historical studies. This work, in social and economic history, at times building on but also radically revising and extending Marxist and feminist historiography, has begun to map out the salience of whiteness to the formation of nationhood, class, and empire in the United States and in the European colonial enterprise.¹ This scholarship helps make it evident that the formation of specifically white subject positions has in fact been key, at times as cause and at times as effect, to the sociopolitical processes inherent in taking land and making nations. Historical work on whiteness thus builds from and adds to the much larger body of historical work on racism and on other racialized and/or colonized subjects (e.g., African American history, Native American history, Indian colonial history). It is also enabled by, and advances, work arguing for the fundamentally racialized character of U.S. and European histories.

In a second and related area, sociologists and practitioners of cultural studies have begun to examine the place of whiteness in the contemporary body politic in Europe and the United States. Like the historians, such scholars are interested both in the making of subjects and in the formation of structures and institutions. Here again, their substantive work joins with that of theorists of race and critics of racism about and/or from a range of subordinated racial locations. They too assert the central rather than epiphenomenal location of race in social formation.² Naming the temporality of this body of work is challenging. While some historians, sociologists, and feminist or cultural critics (e.g., Baldwin, Smith, Horsman, Wellman, and Rich) have published critical work on white identity over several decades, the bulk of such work is more recent, dating from the second half of the 1980s and 1990s.

A third area of work asks how whiteness is performed by subjects, whether in daily life, in film, in literature, or in the academic corpus.³ At times what is at stake in such research is the “revealing” of the unnamed—the exposure of whiteness masquerading as universal. But at other times the stake is rather in examining how white dominance is rationalized, legitimized, and made ostensibly normal and natural.

A fourth area examines racism in movements for social change. The burden of this work is rather similar to that just named: the critique of whiteness asserted as universal, and the critique of white dominance in social change movements (or a presumptive arrogation, by white subjects, of leadership of social movements). Feminist movements, are, I would suggest, one site of highly developed work in this last area.⁴ And, relatedly, work on the “other side of the coin” monitors and analyzes the making of white supremacist identity and political movement ideology and practice. Here again we see a stream of criticism rather older than the work that has burgeoned from the mid-1980s into the present.⁵

Of course, these four areas cannot be segregated from one another; one cannot adequately examine questions of culture or performance or movement theory and activism outside their social context; nor does one usually undertake historical research in the absence of a set of animating concerns in the present. This collection of essays engages all four areas just named but is centered between the second and third: attention to the contemporary body politic, at the levels of both structure and subject formation, and engagement with cultural practice and performance in a range of genres. However, it must be noted that both history and the implications of authors’ conclusions for activist practice are frequently a part of their discussions.

This collection is interdisciplinary, both in that its authors are institutionally situated across a range of locations—departments of anthropology, literature, sociology, humanities, African American studies, American studies (racially unmarked?!), Chicana/o studies, cultural studies, and women’s studies—and in that each author works syncretically with a repertoire of theoretical apparatuses and methodologies drawn from traditionally “humanities” and “social scientific” sources.

By naming this book *Displacing Whiteness* I indicate the authors’ efforts to resituate whiteness from its unspoken (perhaps unspeakable?) status; to displace and then reemplace it. The authors show how whiteness operates in particular locales and webs of social relations. And with the subtitle *Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* I signal the

methodologies by means of which these authors situate whiteness(es) in time and space, tracing rather than merely asserting its embeddedness in particular histories and class formations, in masculinity and femininity.

This collection breaks new ground in both theoretical and substantive terms. The overall effect, both of these essays and of whiteness as it is reconceived here, is well illustrated by the image of fractals that John Hartigan Jr. deploys in his essay. Hartigan draws on the work of Marilyn Strathern, who has said that thinking of fractals when modeling social processes calls attention to the partial connections that link such processes, generating patterns that are replicated at levels of increasing specificity.

Whiteness emerges in this book as historically constructed and internally differentiated. Whiteness as process is seen to be contested and contestable; yet these essays are also animated by their authors' cognizance of the fundamental coconstitution of whiteness and racial domination—a reality that is, if not intractable, clearly not amenable to elimination or evasion by textual fiat. This collection is thus both an effort to deconstruct and fragment the notion of whiteness and a contribution to ongoing critique of racism and (neo/post)colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century. And as will be manifest in the pages that follow, this volume does not conceive racial formation—whether in the United States or elsewhere—as biracial but rather as multiracial. By the same token, the volume as an ensemble clarifies that whiteness must be viewed both as emergent from multivalent historical processes and through multiple dynamics of alterity.

Haole, pakeha, ghost, gringo, wasiku, and honky—some names for white people given to them by people who are not white.⁶ American, English, British, man, woman, white woman, white United Statesian—some names for white people given to them by people who are white.⁷ When has whiteness been visible and when has it been “unmarked”? When has whiteness “disappeared” into national, ethnic, or cultural namings? First, it is crucial to take into account the position in the racial order of the person viewing whiteness. For as bell hooks points out in this volume, communities of color frequently see and name whiteness clearly and critically, in periods when white folks have asserted their own “color blindness” as well as in times of self-conscious white claims of superiority. And in examining white self-namings, one must further distinguish—although the separation is not always hard and fast—between assertions of white supremacism or superi-

ority and critical self-examinations of whiteness (Rebecca Aanerud, this volume).

The more one scrutinizes it, the more the notion of whiteness as unmarked norm is revealed to be a mirage, or at least a phenomenon delimited in time and space. For I suggest that it is only in those times and places where white supremacy has achieved hegemony that whiteness attains (usually unstable) unmarkedness. In this volume, David Wellman and Phil Cohen analyze, from opposite sides of the Atlantic, the crisis in white masculinity that has resulted from the fall of that subject position from its prior state of unmarkedness (unmarked at least from its own purview). In times and places when whiteness and white dominance are being built or reconfigured, they are highly visible, named, and asserted, rather than invisible or simply “normative.”

The notion of whiteness as unmarked in particular times and spaces should not be taken to invoke sequential or fully separable locales, for hegemony is never complete, never uniform. To take the United States as an example, white dominance, white normativity, or the presumption that “white” and “American” mean the same may be taken for granted in a small town but contested in a large city, presumed in a suburb but challenged downtown. Americanness as whiteness may be hotly defended at the United States–Mexico border, as when Californians challenge the efforts of border crossers by parking their vehicles with headlights blazing in the direction of potential incomers.

Less dramatic perceptions of the racial order vary by neighborhood, in part because not only racial identities but also income and class status vary by neighborhood. The vast majority of white, California-raised students whom I teach make it clear that they grew up with few or no peers of color. For them, whiteness is indeed unmarked, and race an apparently distant and abstract concept. For them, marking of whiteness frequently begins as an awakening—rude or otherwise—in women’s studies, ethnic studies, or American studies classrooms. Elsewhere, whiteness may seem to be performed invisibly in one household while it is named and contested in the one next door. Meanings of whiteness can also be contested within households. For example, within the multiracial families France Winddance Twine studied, whiteness was often ostensibly invisible to a “genetically white” mother but visible to her young adult biracial daughter. Finally, as my own research with white U.S. women shows, “color

blindness" is in fact difficult to maintain as a fiction, even for those most securely raised within it and those who try hardest to hold fast to it.⁸ However, white people's conscious racialization of others does not necessarily lead to a conscious racialization of the white self. Indeed, here we return to the proposition with which we began: that whiteness makes itself invisible precisely by asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contrast with the marking of others on which its transparency depends. And we return also to the necessity for this text, which is committed to marking whiteness. For it must be noted that the variability in how whiteness is seen is anything but random: rather, it can be accounted for, analyzed, and challenged.

In examining whiteness, in seeking to account for its variable visibility, one must recognize how continual processes of slippage, condensation, and displacement among the constructs "race," "nation," and "culture" continue to "unmark" white people while consistently marking and racializing others. We may take an example of this slippage from the current widespread efforts to increase immigration control in the United States. Popular sentiment in favor of immigration controls draws sometimes on explicit racism and sometimes on racism recoded in national and cultural terms. Thus there is expression of anxiety about the supposed "color" of the United States and the "darkening effect" immigrants will have on it; there is tension about the national origin of potential immigrants, with attention focused more on some nations of origin than on others; and finally, there is at times expression of whites' fears of being culturally and linguistically overwhelmed—and again, some cultures and languages are perceived to be more threatening than others.

Further, notions of race are closely linked to ideas about legitimate "ownership" of the nation, with "whiteness" and "Americanness" linked tightly together. Meanwhile, the repressed memory of the brownness of the original residents of this land ("owners" of the land was not a term many of them would have thought to use) and of the immigrant origins of white United Statesians forms another crucial dimension of the story. This dance of assertion and repression has been present throughout the history of the United States. It continues in the context of debates over whether immigrants, especially those who are not white, have the right to work, to own property, and to utilize resources ranging from water and fire departments to schools and social security. There are, indeed, perpetual question marks hanging over the heads of some categories of legitimate U.S. residents, especially Asian, Latino,

and Chicano citizens and residents. By contrast, I, a British-accented resident of the United States, have rarely been questioned as to the legitimacy of my status as a teacher of American studies.

Formal politics are, of course, also racialized. Campaigns for the 1996 U.S. elections were unfolding at the time this manuscript was being completed. In those contests, support for immigration controls and for limiting immigrants' access to education and health and welfare services increasingly appeared as litmus tests of "electability." The other decisive issues were candidates' positions on abortion; on "crime," policing, and punishment; and on universal access to a health and welfare safety net. All of these domains are racialized in the popular imagination—crime is "black," with the need for protection against crime coded "white"; immigrants are "brown" and "yellow"; "black" and "brown" people are draining the welfare system; and "white" women want abortions. And finally, "Americans," but not foreigners, deserve jobs. As usual, "red" people—Native Americans of the mainland and Hawaii—were entirely absent from the campaign discourse.

It should perhaps be noted that popular imagination is not coterminous with objective fact—thus, for example, the majority of welfare recipients are white. Be that as it may, the political "middle ground" increasingly sees candidates taking up positions *against* immigrants but *for* reproductive rights, *against* socially guaranteed access to health services and welfare but *for* increasingly forceful policing, punishment, and incarceration. We see class and gender being forcefully racialized, and we also see polarizations of insiderness and outsiderness, organized at times around the axis of race, at other times around national status, and yet elsewhere around a race-national combination. I think it is also safe to assert that some women more than others—of the right class, the right "race"—are being seduced into a new kind of insiderness along with their male counterparts.

As the foregoing suggests, class interweaves with race in a complex way. In this volume, Twine points out how middle-class status helped to secure the whiteness of brown-skinned suburban children, at least prior to puberty. Elsewhere, Karen Brodtkin Sacks's essay "How Did Jews Become White Folks?" examines the post-World War II transformation in the status of Jews and other Euroamericans of southern and eastern, rather than northern and western, origin within Europe, whereby, for the first time, the former were able to join with the latter in an expanded sense of white American identity.⁹ Large numbers of European Americans achieved middle-class status, signaled by

college education, homeownership, and suburban residence. In what amounted to a massive movement of upward mobility, differences between city dwellers and suburbanites were sharpened; simultaneously, racial segregation and inequality were further enforced. Sacks notes that “like most chicken and egg problems, it’s hard to know which came first. Did Jews and other Euroethnics become white because they became middle class? That is, did money whiten? Or did being incorporated into an expanded version of whiteness open up the economic doors to a middle class status? Clearly, both tendencies were at work” (86).

Sacks’s examination of economic mobility in post–World War II United States shows clearly the crucial roles played by the GI Bill, the Federal Housing Authority, and the Veterans Administration, both in underwriting the upward mobility of Euroamerican men and in systematically excluding African American men, and women of all ethnicities, from the benefits offered by these institutions. The middle class expanded by means of a process Sacks describes as “affirmative action” for Euroamerican men (79ff.), simultaneously building a more inclusive Euroamerican whiteness and reentrenching preexisting categories of racial alterity.

One may trace, in the United States, Canada, western Europe, Australia, New Zealand—in short, in all those places one might name as either colonizing nations or settler colonies—a history of the self-naming of white people as white that is linked to imperial and colonial expansion, simultaneous with the making of (white dominant) nation states. One powerful scholarly telling of this story, Reginald Horsman’s *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Making of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, painstakingly maps the origin story of early white Americans.¹⁰ (Here I use “origin story” in the anthropological sense, gesturing to how a community understands itself rather than to the “truth” or “objectivity” of its version of events.) Horsman documents the self-naming of early settler colonialists as the self-perceived true inheritors of an Anglo-Saxon lineage, purportedly traceable to a glorious golden age of rural collectivity that was tragically destroyed by the coming of feudal hierarchy to English soil.

It was in part on the basis of this self-description that white settlers justified to themselves their westward colonial expansion; their destruction of indigenous community, land, and life; the annexation of Mexican land “won” in the Spanish-American War; and their hopes of a domain that would one day span the globe. But the second part of

self-justification called for the naming of a range of others as inferior, including indigenous Americans, Africans, and the “mongrel races” of Spanish and indigenous Americans further south. While beginning with a terminology of “peoples” and nations, a transatlantic literature on “race,” purportedly systematic and scientific, supplanted nationalist and culturalist forms of supremacism through the nineteenth century.

Examining this history makes clear, indeed, why it is that race, culture, and nation slide so smoothly one into another in the present, providing alibis for each other in contemporary social, cultural, and political discourses about race, nation, identity, ownership, and belonging. “Race” is, in fact, a rather recent phenomenon; the hierarchical ranking of “peoples” is a much older measuring instrument in the Western lexicon of supremacism. And I should note, in case it is necessary to underscore this point, that the concept of race was born out of “racism *avant la lettre*,” that is to say, out of earlier namings of supremacy. In other words, it is not the case that an innocent racialness was corrupted by a later ranking of races, but rather that race and racism are fundamentally interwoven.

From this recognition it follows that whiteness is a construct or identity almost impossible to separate from racial dominance. For the term *whiteness*, expressing the idea that there is a category of people identified and self-identifying as “white,” is situated within this simultaneous operation of race and racism. White, then, corresponds to one place in racism as a system of categorization and subject formation, just as the terms *race privileged* and *race dominant* name particular places within racism as a system of domination.

In the historical moment with which Horsman is concerned, whiteness was *not* normative and thus unseen and unmarked, but rather named, marked, and still in the making. At the time of the founding of the first colonies in North America, to be white (and “white” is indeed the wrong word for that historical moment) was to be Anglo-Saxon (Germanic or English), self-identified as the best of the best, as the true inheritors of a long, Aryan legacy. Further, naming the dominant identity meant substantively naming a self (fictitiously or not) as well as naming in order to exclude a range of others. To be Anglo-Saxon was also to be culturally and intellectually superior, arguments developed in relation to the construction of Native American and African others.

Similar processes (although of course with substantive variation) are apparent everywhere in the making and marking of whiteness: the

cycling of race, culture, and nation as naming systems for difference read hierarchically. Also visible is the marking of putative others—constituted by means, again, of race, culture, or nation—as sites for the resolution of contradictions faced by white selves, sites onto which that which is feared or desired may be displaced.

David R. Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness* broke new ground in analyzing the making of a U.S. white working class through the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Then, as in other times, whiteness meant something specifiable: foremost, to be white was to be “not-black.” But one would not fully tell this story without noting that to be “not-black” meant, crucially, to be nonenslaved. And in turn, to be nonenslaved meant *both* not being a plantation slave *and* not living in a monarchic society, but rather in a republic. One must also emphasize the ways difference was dramatized by being racialized. Roediger notes how all points of connection or similarity between the conditions of chattel slaves and wage slaves were vigorously suppressed, linguistically as well as through antiblack racism. Thus, for example, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, white American workers, both male and female, rejected the term *servant*, substituting *help*, *hired hand*, or later simply *hand* to describe their status as persons who worked for wages. In those decades this transformation was widely noted by Americans and overseas visitors alike; and whites' insistence on these terms as markers of their distinction from “negurs” and slaves was also common knowledge, remarked on both in the press and in visitors' and immigrants' letters home.¹² In a similar way, use of the terms *wage slave* and *white slavery* to describe the condition of white waged workers, common in proworker literature of the 1830s and 1840s, fell out of favor in later decades, for a number of reasons, but in part because “to ask workers to *sustain* comparisons of themselves and Black slaves violated at once their republican pride and their sense of whiteness.”¹³ Moreover, as Roediger notes, “for all but a handful of committed abolitionists/labor reformers, use of a term like white slavery was not an act of solidarity with the slave but rather a call to arms to end the inappropriate oppression of whites.”¹⁴

Roediger also shows how, on the minstrel stage, as whites put on blackface makeup and performed (mis)representations of black culture, blackness became a site for the exploration of white male workers' own anxieties, both as new immigrants from Europe and as new urbanites fresh from the countryside.¹⁵ Finally, Roediger documents Irish immigrants' struggle to become white.¹⁶ Onto the site of “race,”

then, were condensed a range of contradictions. In this process potential cross-racial solidarities were skirted as difference was emphasized. Again, we see whiteness as being made rather than as self-evident. We see, too, its instability, its insufficiency as an autonomous location of identity. For these workers, whiteness meant a particular relationship to nationhood and the labor process. Simultaneously, particular forms of masculinity were being marked out, classed, and racialized. *Wages of Whiteness* shows, then, how in the process of nineteenth-century, northern U.S. class formation, constructions of whiteness were densely interwoven with constructions of femininity and masculinity as well as with class and nationhood.

One may trace, beginning within early colonial and racist discourses within and beyond the United States, and unfolding into the present, a repertoire of "images" or tropes that construct versions of femaleness and maleness divided by race, nationality, or peoplehood, depending on which mode of naming difference predominates in a given moment or place. The repertoire is small. Its themes are repetitive to a degree that would be banal were these tropes not so devastating in their effects. In them, both maleness/femaleness and whiteness/nonwhiteness are articulated, at times in simple pairings, at other times in more dizzying, more complex formations. These are at times complementary, and at other times more immediately contrastive; but in all cases these tropes are coconstructed, and always hierarchically so.

I shall demonstrate this interplay of complement and contrast by means of an unholy and unorthodox extended, or even distended, "family," a cast of characters to whom I give capitalized, and thus "proper," names for the purpose of underscoring their status as tropes rather than people. Let us begin with a simple quartet: White Woman, White Man, Man of Color, and Woman of Color. They have reappeared so frequently across time and space as to justify describing their primary characteristics, if only to complicate these immediately afterward. My namings here focus in particular on the North American and especially United Statesian versions of this cast of characters, although they share much with versions found elsewhere. White Woman is frail, vulnerable, delicate, sexually pure but at times easily led "astray." White Man is strong, dominant, arbiter of truth, and self-designated protector of white womankind, defender of the nation/territory (and here defense of the nation and its honor often also entails defending White Woman's racial chastity). Man of Color (most frequently

this has meant African/Black Man, but it has also, through the course of U.S. history, meant indigenous American, Mexican American, Filipino, Chinese, or Japanese Man)¹⁷ is sexually rapacious, sometimes seductive, usually predatory, especially toward White Woman; it is he, in fact, from whom White Woman must be protected by White Man. And, finally, Woman of Color (and again this might mean African/Black Woman, Asian Woman, Indigenous North or South American Woman, Latina) is also sexually eager, seductress, willing and able consort, especially for the White Man of this tropological family, personally unhygienic, overly fertile, but also usable for breeding, when this is beneficial for White Man, and for tending white children *and* adults, again when beneficial for White Man or White Woman. Woman of Color as trope is construed ambivalently, always on a slippery slope from exotic beauty to unfemininity and ugliness.

We may note, to begin with, the complementarities required for this trope-ical family to thrive: White Man as savior would founder without White-Woman-who-must-be-saved. Similarly, without Man of Color as predator, White Man loses much of his sense of worth and purpose. Within the terms of the discourse, White Man has most to gain by its perpetuation, and most to lose by its dismantling. By contrast, it should not be hard to recognize that Woman of Color and Man of Color have very little to gain in this setup. White Woman's ambiguous and ambivalent status in this family of tropes is striking: she is, on the one hand, accorded privileges and status by this race/gender positioning, and, on the other hand, confined by it. In any case she is advantaged only conditionally on her acceptance of the terms of the contract. This includes especially her sexual practices, for the trope-ical family is strictly heterosexual and monoracial in its coupling (with the exception that White Man may have unofficial liaisons with Woman of Color, with or without her consent). We may note, too, the binaries in the schema: White Woman's chastity and delicacy, her sexual modesty, contrast sharply with Woman of Color's apparently excessive appetites; the representation of White Man's sexual hungers as appropriate or acceptable contrasts with depictions of the sexual "uncivility" and inappropriateness of Man of Color. A parade of monstrous apparitions indeed.

I have, of course, dramatized the trope-ical family here; but, unfortunately, it seems to me that I have captured it accurately rather than caricaturing it. For elements of this discursive repertoire have been replayed endlessly through British imperial history, through the

history of the United States, and elsewhere. And their potency continues into the present. The temptation to “laundry-list” examples to illustrate my point is strong, but I will avoid it. Suffice it to say, instead, that these tropes have served, first, to explain or justify (to the oppressor if to no one else) myriad forms of disciplining violence—physical, cultural, and psychic—in locations “structured in dominance.”¹⁸ Second, in multiple contexts, *actual* white women, white men, and men and women of color (as opposed to figures in a trope-ical diorama) continue to be enlisted into the service of elements and aspects of these tropic constructs, projecting and performing them with varying degrees of consciousness and unconsciousness, coercion, seriousness, and parody.

One might argue that the white members of the trope-ical family as I have characterized them here are of the elite, and there is some truth to this claim. Poor white women, for example, have at times not been seen as either delicate or deserving protectees of their (and the nation’s) men. Here, the notion of “white trash” comes to mind,¹⁹ as well as the fate of European women immigrants to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁰ For the women of both groups were characterized in terms similar to those I used to describe the trope-ical Woman of Color: excessive fertility and sexual appetite, lack of hygiene. But in fact these counterexamples serve to reinforce my argument, for “white trash” as a concept actually marks the borders of whiteness; and European immigrants, especially those from the south and east, also fought long and hard to be considered “white.” The slipperiness of whiteness as a construct is revealed here: although ostensibly marked by the clearly distinguishable behaviors or characteristics of self-designated selves, and of others named as such by those self-designators just mentioned, whiteness turns out on closer inspection to be more about the power to include and exclude groups and individuals than about the actual practices of those who are to be let in or kept out. (This slipperiness is demonstrated in different ways in the essays by France Winddance Twine, Phil Cohen, David Wellman, and Vron Ware in this volume.)

Like white women, white men are also diversely located in relation to power and privilege. For the most part they are not possessors of territory to defend, and frequently they lack the wherewithal to protect anyone, female or male. Yet often whiteness as a mode of self-naming is precisely the leverage white men have sought to use in their efforts to manufacture a sense of inclusion (to varying degrees

illusory) in the dominant, to claim and seek to enforce ownership of nation or neighborhood, however symbolically. David Roediger's work, for example, powerfully demonstrates the ways whiteness and a particular kind of imagined community of labor enabled the simultaneous manufacture of interwoven versions of whiteness, masculinity, and free labor, quickly displaced and condensed around a sense of national belonging and entitlement as "Americanness." We will see in David Wellman's essay how both nineteenth- and late-twentieth-century minstrel shows project stereotypic images of blackness in order to displace and externalize anxieties about transformations in white masculinity. Phil Cohen and Vron Ware address in different ways the interweaving of masculinity, labor, and the sense of national belonging in the making of British whitenesses.

Additional kinds of instability and place switching are possible within the trope-ical family. To offer only one example in this regard, in the United States, as noted above, Asian men have at times been positioned in the trope-ical family in the classic Man of Color category, as sexual threat to white women. At other times, however, Asian men have been feminized in the racist imagination of the United States. And at still other times, they have been promised partial and conditional access to some of the benefits enjoyed by white men. One can, however, contextualize and thus "explain" these positionings: Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino men were castigated as potential or actual sexual assailants of white women as part of strenuous efforts at anti-Asian immigration control organized by coalitions of white labor unions, media, and elected officials in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth.²¹ In turn, the successful imposition of immigration control, restricting the entry of Asian women, helped bring into being bachelor communities of Asian men who were then derided as effeminate.²² In either case the categorization is premised on the otherness, the alienness, of Asian men and women. This example, albeit described in brief here, demonstrates how racist discourse moves in concert with other political and economic processes, as well as at other times simply rolling along by virtue of its own momentum.

In speaking of place switching, one may also raise the question of agency. Just as white men do not, in fact, consciously control the terms of racial discourse as the discourse itself proposes that they do, white women are in actuality not mere pawns in the mapping and making of racial categories, hapless victims of both Man of Color as predator and White Man as rescuer and stifling protector. Rather, like white men,

white women are frequently agents of racism in their own right; less often, white men and white women are also agents of its subversion. Several essays in this collection examine the nature of white agency in the relations of racism and strategize about shifting the valence of "racial agency" from reproduction to challenge and transformation. Further, the deployment of whiteness as a term of power, as socio-cultural currency, is not solely the prerogative of "biologically white" persons (and I hope that this introduction has, if nothing else, served to render that category an uncertain one). For as Angie Chabram-Dernersesian shows in her discussion of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o constructions of whiteness, whiteness as a system of meanings may be deployed within a range of contexts, by a range of groups of people, and for diverse reasons which are, to paraphrase Hartigan, patterned, irregular, and yet still connected.

Finally, we must pause to note which figures and processes are excluded from this trope-ical nightmare. First, the trope-ical family is relentlessly heterosexual: no image, male or female, however racially marked, is projected as homosexual, for better *or* for worse. A "real" man or woman, white or of color, is presumably heterosexual. There is, for example, no threat of homosexual assault by Man of Color, and likewise no glorification of the homosexual charms of White Woman. Indeed, if the trope-ical family were to exist and confer, their one point of agreement would most likely be that homosexuality is either unnatural, wrong, or both.

Second, there is little place in the trope-ical family to name physical violence, from the standpoint of either the perpetrators or its targets. There is silence rather than praise or blame, for example, in trope-ical articulations of mass killings of Native Americans in the period of colonization and westward expansion, and of African Americans while being transported to the United States as slaves. (White Man is not, for example, glorified as killer; nor is Man or Woman of Color noted as actual or potential target.) In the end, I suggest, we begin to see the trope-ical family deliquesce into a morass of erasures, inversions, distortions, and partial namings of actual historical and sociocultural processes.

I began this discussion by proposing that to view whiteness as "unmarked marker," as empty signifier, is to universalize a particular, and rather recent, historical moment. I have sought to argue that a range of processes of inclusion and exclusion have gone into the making of the version of whiteness that has been handed down to

many of us—whiteness as norm, as transparency, as national/natural state of being. It is only when the processes of constructing dominance are complete that whiteness enters the realm of the apparently natural, of doxa. Moreover, as the essays in this volume point out, the status of whiteness in doxa is unstable, to say the least. Rather, I would argue that whiteness is always constructed, always in the process of being made and unmade. Indeed, its characterization as unmarked marker is itself an “ideological” effect that seeks to cover the tracks of its constructedness, specificity, and localness, even as they appear.

In a process that has been gradually gathering force over the last several years in the United States and elsewhere, whiteness is once again leaving its location in doxa, becoming a focus of discussion and critique for some, and a treasured yet endangered object for others. In this latter regard, we may note that in the United States white supremacist, white patriot, and white militia terrorism is on the rise, with black churches, Southeast Asian schoolchildren, *and* government buildings among the targets. As analysts of white patriot and militia movements explain, in assaults on government buildings and agents we see white activists self-styled as an endangered race, ostensibly fighting back or striking preemptively against a government—probably run by Jews, possibly with multinational influences, and aided by African American “underlings”—whose intention is to withdraw all basic rights from white people (the self-described true and just inheritors of the land).²³ As extreme as this sounds, it is also important to recognize its eery resonance with more “mainstream” white fears and fantasies: of curricula overrun by African Americans and other people of color (perhaps aided or encouraged by Jews, homosexuals, and other liberals), of jobs withheld from white men and given to others, of the nation bankrupted by welfare and medical bills, and of NAFTA and illegal immigration ruining the economy. Electoral and legislative assaults are another mode of response to fears of this kind—“mainstream,” perhaps, but arguably equally if not more violent in their long-term effects.

Meanwhile, other whites are also asking the question with which David Wellman ends his essay: What, or who, do white people want to be? Are there alternatives available to whitenesses coded as national and racial dominance? The answer remains unclear. In the efforts to form European American social clubs in junior high and high schools that parallel the African American and Filipino clubs (for example) that already exist, we see attempts to recode whiteness as ethnicity or culture rather than race. However, this shift is not one that comes

easily. First, the founding of a European American club inevitably brings with it the image of white supremacism, however unintended. And given the recruiting work of white supremacists in junior high and high schools, cases of mistaken identity are perhaps understandable. Indeed, it is sometimes hard to tell whether such efforts are undertaken in the spirit of parallelism or as backlash. Next, it is unclear whether there is, truly, a culture group namable as "European American" in terms of language, practice, and activity. And this returns us to the question, can whiteness be deracialized any more than any other ethnicity in a racially hierarchical social order?

In the world of social life and activism beyond the far right, white adults as well as children are seeking to pose the question of whiteness in new terms. White participation in politics of solidarity, in civil rights and national(ist) liberation movements, is, of course, longstanding and ongoing. But until recently such activities had not for the most part interrogated whiteness close up. Certainly its effects—the reproduction of dominance and privilege—were critically examined and named in racial and class terms, and certainly whites were enjoined to eschew race privilege. But there was not much in the way of examination of what whiteness is, as daily practice, as cultural assemblage, as site of identity or identification.

More recently (that is to say, beginning in the first half of the 1980s), left-of-center activist engagement with whiteness has approached the terrains of subjecthood and culture. The earliest work dovetailed intentionally with (and actually often sprang from) solidarity-based activism and multiracial coalition efforts. It sought primarily to comprehend how white people learn their places in the racial order and what keeps them invested in those locations.²⁴ As noted above, significant studies in this area have been undertaken by feminists and other community activists, and their work is consciously antiracist in its intent. However, as I have argued elsewhere, if focusing on white identity and culture displaces attention to whiteness as a site of racialized privilege, its effectiveness as antiracism becomes limited.²⁵

In an even newer twist, versions of these ideas have been "corporatized," widely taken into the worlds of business, education, and the nonprofit sector. "Sensitivity" and "diversity awareness" programs bring new difficulties along with them, since they ask trainers to, in effect, guide people, willing or not, toward greater racial and cultural awareness of themselves and others. Here, the intent is to act in increasingly diverse classrooms, workplaces, health maintenance organi-

zations, and so on, to train whites (and others too, but mainly whites) in “cultural competence,” the capacity to work effectively with cultural others. Such training sometimes, but by no means always, also seeks to help create racial and ethnic equity in the workplace. Depending on the trainers and their approaches, this activity may focus attention more on racial “others” than on dominant selves. This means that, in these processes, once again whiteness may reemerge as the generic place marker, with whites asked to become “competent” in relating to members of “marked” cultural groups, or with nonwhite and/or non-male and/or non-U.S. persons taught to communicate in apparently generic corporate languages.

Other issues are being worked through under the surface of this new discourse. One is whether white people and white culture are “good” or “bad” (a question that, according to some interpretations, is begged by critique of white privilege and complicity with advantaged locations in the racial order). Here, we see a displacement of practical and material questions about white people’s location in racial hierarchy onto very static notions of essence and original sin. It follows naturally from this displacement that whites would embark urgently on the quest either to be proven innocent or to find redemption. From here, the effort to find reasons to be “proud” of white culture, or ways to nuance whiteness by reference to class or ethnic subordination, becomes comprehensible within the terms of the discourse. A second problem in these approaches is the reification of cultures and the erasure of the processes through which cultures as practices come into being. Rather than conceptualizing cultures as fluid, intersecting realms, one gleans the image of a toy merry-go-round, with each bobbing figure representative of a group hermetically sealed from all the others.

An example taken from a training handout designed for work with white employees in corporate and nonprofit institutions illustrates these efforts. I draw on it not because it is better or worse than others, but because in its clarity it expresses well the difficulties inherent in these approaches. The handout says: “Some of our issues [as white Americans] are unique. While minority cultures have struggled to obtain power, white Americans must struggle to share the power we have. While minority cultures have struggled to retain their autonomy, white Americans must struggle to make our culture exist without dominating other cultures. We need to develop a public discussion of issues that apply uniquely to us as white Americans in a multicultural

America.”²⁶ Here, the goal is manifestly to generate an antiracist practice of whiteness and to name whiteness as simultaneously racial and cultural. But we also see the enactment of a complex linguistic dance, one painfully familiar to many antiracist educators in the United States and probably elsewhere, too. Its burden, in my view, is to speak to white people about race privilege and white dominance in ways that mimic the discourses of activists of color (although discordantly here using the term “minority”), while at the same time naming the oppositeness, the differentness, of the positioning of whites in the racial order. There is, I’d suggest, an effort to sneak in the critique of racism and white privilege or dominance rather than, as older organizations might have done, to express it more directly. The intent here is perhaps to speak to and reorient, without naming them, the white backlash, resentment, and “me-too-ism” that have manifested as all too common responses to civil rights discourse. Thus, the implications in this quote are that whites, too, are unique; whites, too, must struggle to name their culture and retain their autonomy; whites, too, have a place in a multicultural United States.

What becomes of whiteness in this process? Or, to put it a different way, what kinds of whitenesses are being constructed in the turn to identity and culture? Two things are evident, I suggest. First, there is a drift away from viewing whiteness as racial category to viewing it as cultural category. This simultaneously evades and mystifies the positioning of whiteness in the racial hierarchy. Second, such constructions frequently reify and homogenize whiteness. I suggest that the effort to name an entity called “white culture” mirrors the reification of “nonwhite” cultures that has been in place for much longer. For there is, of course, no singular delimitable space called “black culture,” “Chicana/o culture,” or “Indian culture,” any more than there is one called “white culture.”

At the heart of the problem is the history of the concept of culture itself. Assertions of cultural superiority and inferiority have been among the alibis of racism for at least three hundred years. Equally, the assertion of some white cultural practices as culturally normative has been one of the effects of the achievement of race dominance. And this imposition of white cultural normativity explains precisely why whiteness looks more amorphous than those other cultural assemblages intentionally bounded and delimited in the context of racial oppression. Whites have never been culturally identical, nor have all the cultural practices preferred by whites been culturally dominant. And an effort

to erase these long “culture wars” and manifest a bounded white culture is not only doomed to failure but also irrelevant to an effort to challenge racial hierarchy.

The essays in this text certainly examine whiteness as culture—but as practice rather than object, in relation to racial formation and historical process rather than as isolable or static. The authors ask how whiteness is complexly and differentially deployed in mediating social relations, whether between whites and racial “others,” among whites, or within communities of color. Each essay steps beyond the taken-for-grantedness of whiteness to examine particular aspects of whiteness, or particular whitenesses, through analytic matrices that engage whiteness in terms that are both local and translocal, contemporary and embedded in specifiable histories. The contributors’ foci include the following:

Examination of the “performance” and production of whiteness and white identities in daily, local practices (Cohen, Hartigan, hooks)

Tracking of daily performances of whiteness as they move into formal and institutional political processes (Ware, Wellman)

Deconstruction of the ways whiteness marks literary, cinematic, and scholarly practice (Aanerud, Chabram-Dernersesian, Mura-leadharan, Sandoval)

Excavation of the limit points of whiteness, enabling reflection on the disciplinary practices that reinforce race as a historically constructed system of differentiation, exclusion, and belonging (Aanerud, Hartigan, Twine)

Critique of white complicity with the reproduction of racial domination along a continuum from conscious to unself-conscious enlistment (all authors)

Articulation of strategies for the development of antiracist, activist practice (Chabram-Dernersesian, Cohen, hooks, Ware, Wellman)

These essays are *not* the proceedings of a conference, and there has been no direct contact among contributors except contingently. Nor have the authors read one another’s essays. Yet they share much. Some authors have been directly influenced by the other contributors’ work.

Many share a common pool of textual influences, in the area of whiteness in particular, in the history and theory of race, and in sociocultural and textual theory at large. Moreover, as will be clear, these authors have in common a set of guiding questions and expectations as they enter their discussions of whiteness. First and most obvious is a recognition that whiteness cannot be assumed, but rather must be examined. Second, all undertake social constructionist analyses of race and whiteness. A third common theme, and here I start to name the ways these essays powerfully break new ground, is that these authors emphasize and document how whiteness is always emplaced, temporally and spatially. They trace (rather than simply asserting) the intermeshing of whiteness with other webs of relations, including those of gender and sexuality, class, nation, and region. Fourth, and relatedly, the authors' recognition of whiteness as a site where much power accrues is followed up by their innovative approaches to analyzing the workings of whiteness as a set of relations where power is most usefully viewed as multifaceted rather than monolithic, and as less stable in some locations than in others. Last, and interwoven with all of the above points, is an insistence that analyzing whiteness is inseparable from the critique of racism. This lends a determination, a doggedness, and an urgency to the essays in this volume.

The essays are presented along a continuum, beginning with those primarily focused on written and filmic texts and moving on to those engaging social and/or ethnographic settings. It need hardly be said, though, that a clear separation of the essays into cultural versus social texts, much less into humanistic versus social scientific approaches, is impossible. For of course, none of these authors deals with writing or film outside social context, and conversely, none of those who engage social texts does so without situating them in relation to the cultural practices and performances that help to make them explicable.

Rebecca Aanerud's essay, "Fictions of Whiteness: Speaking the Names of Whiteness in U.S. Literature," examines constructions of whiteness in literature. Aanerud notes the questions framed by Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*: What might be "the nature—even the cause—of literary whiteness? What is it *for*? What parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as 'American'?"²⁷ Aanerud examines two distinct moments in literary whiteness: one is modernist and gender conscious, exemplified in Kate Chopin's 1899 novel, *The Awakening*; the second moment, postmodern

and post-civil rights, is examined with two texts as foci of inquiry: Allan Gurganus's novella "Blessed Assurance" and Joanne Brasil's *Escape from Billy's Bar-B-Q*. Aanerud's intent is to develop a critical reading practice that foregrounds the construction and representation of whiteness in U.S. fiction and allows readers to recognize white authors' complicity with the discourses of white supremacy.

Aanerud argues that reading whiteness into texts that are not overtly about race is essential if we are to disrupt whiteness as the unchallenged racial norm. We also learn about the genderedness of whiteness and the racialness of gender from Aanerud's reading. She points out how in *The Awakening* whiteness signifies particular relationships to maternity and sexual propriety. Analyzing *The Awakening* also reveals how whiteness itself is socially constructed. The white female character works to preserve her whiteness, which, Aanerud argues, "is a highly orchestrated product of culture and nature."

The post-civil rights texts on which Aanerud focuses tell a different story, for in these works the authors self-consciously name and interrogate their own whiteness. These texts pose other questions for the critic, whose goals are now to analyze the meanings assigned to whiteness by examining how it is represented and constructed. Rather than challenging the terms of whiteness, however, these white authors seem most interested in establishing the innocence or distance of their white protagonists in relation to white dominance. Here we learn how, in fact, white solipsism can be reestablished in contemporary performances of literary whiteness.

Aanerud's essay sets the stage for themes that recur throughout this collection. First, her discussion indicates the constructedness of whiteness, which is established as performance rather than essence. Aanerud also indicates the possibility and necessity of situating performances of whiteness, literary or otherwise, in time and space. For we see in her readings of *The Awakening*, "Blessed Assurance," and *Escape from Billy's Bar-B-Q* how location, political moment, and standpoint place limits and priorities on the possible or likely range of enunciations of whiteness by subjects. Moreover, she articulates clearly the embeddedness of whiteness in racial formation and also in other sets of relations (in her essay, class and gender are especially to the fore). And finally, as do all the authors here, Aanerud emphasizes that as a racial category, whiteness cannot be other than embedded in racism.

T. Muraleedharan, like Aanerud, examines a textual enunciation of whiteness, but in film rather than literature. Muraleedharan's essay,

"Rereading *Gandhi*," asks the startling question, Is Gandhi white? Muraleedharan refers here to the Gandhi of Richard Attenborough's 1982 film of the same name. Muraleedharan shares Aanerud's recognition that part of the overall project of antiracism is the analytical emplacement of cultural artifacts—here, visual and literary texts—in their social contexts. In particular, Muraleedharan demonstrates the need to investigate the cultural products that sustain the racist foundations of the dominant order, and sets out to make explicit the "scarcely visible" racism evident in the narrative of *Gandhi*.

The social context is postwar, postempire Britain, and Muraleedharan situates *Gandhi* within a series of films, television shows, and novels offered in the late 1970s and early 1980s in a burst of Raj-nostalgic fascination with "British" India. He demonstrates that reading Gandhi in *Gandhi*, both formally by means of film theory and contextually by means of sociocultural analyses of postwar Britain, elucidates the participation of *Gandhi* and other Raj-nostalgia texts in the Thatcherite policies that dominated Britain in the 1980s.

And there is more, much more, at stake than the simple whitening of Gandhi (itself an extraordinary accomplishment on the part of the filmmaker!). For one thing, whiteness in this context stands for universality and civility. And we may also link Muraleedharan's reading of this postempire British filmic text with Aanerud's analysis of post-civil rights literary artifacts, for each author makes clear that the white liberal "stake" in the text is to prove the innocence of whiteness and of white people, specifically and in general. Muraleedharan's essay again serves to remind us of the localness of whiteness, of its pluralness. We may note, for example, that the nonwhite Other of Gandhi/*Gandhi* is not black but brown. And this recalls once again the nonbinariness of racial categories: the story of race is not a simple story of black and white, but rather one of more complex, intermeshing dyads crafted through nationally structured processes of history (in this collection instantiated as black-white, brown-white, African-European, Mexican-Chicano, Chicano-Anglo, Indian-British).

The burden of *Gandhi*'s whiteness is a particularly British one, and a particularly postcolonial and Thatcherite one. It is also a class-marked one. This means that even Phil Cohen's and Vron Ware's essays, while engaging whiteness in Britain a mere decade or so after *Gandhi*, by centrally focusing on working-class stakes in whiteness offer versions of whiteness different from the one "ambushed" in Muraleedharan's discussion although thoroughly interwoven with it.

Chéla Sandoval's essay is startling in a different way. She represents Roland Barthes to us not only as master semiotician but also as "one of the first white Western critical theorists to develop an analytical apparatus for theorizing white consciousness in a postempire world." Sandoval's "Critical Theory and White Mythologies: The Rhetoric of Supremacy" reads the works of Roland Barthes and Frantz Fanon with and against one another in a way that, like the essays of Chabram-Dernersesian, hooks, and Muraleedharan, brings our attention to the gaze and its socioracial location.

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1951) recounts the "wounded forms of consciousness" developed by people of color forced to live under white supremacist rule. Barthes, in *Mythologies* and its analytical framing essay, "Myth Today," asks how "innocent" or well-intentioned citizens can enact the forms of being that are tied to racist colonialism. Sandoval argues that both texts engage empire and the making of consciousness. While on the surface one might argue that Fanon's text examines the subject formation of the oppressed, and Barthes's that of the oppressor, the two texts are by no means simple mirrors of one another. For one thing, Fanon's examination of the "masking" of subordinated subjects under colonialism cannot proceed without analysis of the making and the pathways of the dominant's consciousness. But in addition, Sandoval demonstrates how Barthes's analysis of dominant consciousness draws on, and then submerges, all traces of what she calls a "methodology of the oppressed."

Sandoval's exploration resituates Roland Barthes as a powerful critic of whiteness. But at the same time she offers insight into the limits of white self-scrutiny in this instance and the challenges faced by a critic, such as Barthes, seeking to analyze circumstances of his own making. What we have, then, is not only a discussion of two texts—not only a recognition of the ways in which we cannot, in fact, examine the subject position of the oppressed without engaging that of the oppressor, and vice versa—but also a powerful allegory of appropriation, of erasure, and of the loneliness and limitation that Fanon and Barthes engender. Further, Sandoval offers powerful lessons about canon formation and its "discontents."

Angie Chabram-Dernersesian's essay, "On the Social Construction of Whiteness within Selected Chicana/o Cultural Discourses," asks what the stakes are in Chicana/o constructions of whiteness. Just as Aanerud asks what literary whiteness is "for" in white literary contexts, and as Muraleedharan asks to what end Gandhi is whitened for the

English popular imagination, Chabram-Dernersesian asks what whiteness is “for” in Mexicana/o and Chicana/o discourse. She begins by noting that in a period of decreased satisfaction with “the essentialist brand of identity politics,” Chicana/o critics have been active in “negotiating the hyphen between Chicana/o and Latina/o and attending to the gender linkages that are inscribed in this transnational movement through the Americas.” But, she continues, critics have put much less effort into examining how Chicanas/os construct whiteness in order to position alternative and even oppositional identities within a conflicted social arena.

Chabram-Dernersesian goes on to examine Chicana/o and Mexicana/o constructions of whiteness sociohistorically, by means of closely reading performance and folk art— theater, literature, poetry, and music. Readers are taken to a range of discursive sites, including the Chicano movement and the theater and filmic performances that emerged from it; the U.S.-Mexican border and the violent remakings of identity that began with the making of that border in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo; and, finally, feminist rereadings both of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o identities and of their interrelation in the present.

For Chicana/o and Mexicana/o cultural practitioners, to name whiteness has in general meant naming an Other. This characteristic, of course, immediately separates their concept from whites’ own namings of whiteness. Further, Chabram-Dernersesian thinks it crucial to examine how, when, and why whites and Others are articulated as *aca* and *alla*, as “within” and “without” Chicano/Mexicano realms of belonging. Chabram-Dernersesian thus demonstrates how other positionings, other namings, are condensed into whiteness in Chicana/o and Mexicana/o discourses on whiteness. A key focus in this essay is *la Malinche*, the brown woman seen to have sold out her people to Cortés and to continue to sell out to white society. For Chabram-Dernersesian, *la Malinche* condenses with whiteness in a way that empties class and race of gender, wresting Chicanas out of the political imaginary of resistance and contestation. In a related way, the *pocha* or *pocho*, the brown woman or man north of the border, is “whitened” in Mexicano cultural discourse. This again flattens and erases aspects of historical and social process.

This essay translocalizes and pluralizes whiteness, indicating its shifting saliency across national borders, and indeed in the aftermath of the restaking of national borders. Chabram-Dernersesian makes evident the fruitfulness of examining the sociopolitical contexts within

which and in response to which narratives of whiteness emerge. She also alerts us to the range of agendas and contexts within which whiteness has value, is currency—whiteness is not, from this purview, the exclusive “property” of a dominant ethnic group, internally undifferentiated and with no other claims to power than its whiteness. Rather, whiteness as a name may be deployed variously. It also follows that perhaps “power” must have other names besides whiteness in order to be fully effective.

Like Chabram-Dernerseian, bell hooks, in “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” a 1992 essay reprinted here, examines whiteness from a vantage point ostensibly outside whiteness—and in doing so shows that the borders of whiteness are not, in fact, as fixed as they might seem at first glance. Hooks’s essay examines, historicizes, and situates black gazes (not “*the* black gaze,” for these are plural too) on whiteness. Her focus on whiteness as terror reminds us as forcefully as did Chabram-Dernerseian of the violently irreducible connection between whiteness and race dominance.

In a mirroring that is careful and complex, hooks also locates whites gazing at blacks gazing at whites. And she points out that whites’ disbelief that there is a black gaze on whiteness is itself racism, a symptom of the twin presumptions of white invincibility and black inferiority. Hooks’s discussion of whiteness as terror is at times auto-ethnographical in its method: a documentation of journeyings old and new through kinds of “white territory,” including neighborhoods, classrooms, conference halls, and that infamous site of international white terror-induction, the airport arrival or departure gate. And hooks returns us again and again to that figure who is the counterpoint to the white terrorist—the disbelieving white liberal. Ultimately, however, for hooks as for all the authors in this volume, whiteness and blackness are historical, not essential, constructs, plural rather than singular, and potentially alterable by means of careful political practice. So that, like some others in this volume, hooks ends her paper by suggesting how we might begin remaking whiteness, how we might start to resituate whiteness and blackness in relation to each other.

John Hartigan Jr.’s essay, “Locating White Detroit,” is drawn from an ethnographic study conducted in white underclass Detroit, part of a larger study of whites in Detroit whose purposes included determining how whites varied by class background in articulating their whiteness.²⁸ Like the other contributors, Hartigan proposes that the analysis of whiteness requires specification. Also like the others, Harti-

gan found it necessary to (re)create analytical and theoretical tools in order to accomplish this task. Adapting cultural anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's fractal theory of cross-cultural communication and using it to rework the racial formation theory of sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Hartigan asks, Where does whiteness end? Where do whites begin? The value of fractal theory as an analytic tool is borne out in Hartigan's examination of underclass Detroit, where, as Hartigan notes, whiteness diverges from national assumptions and understandings and is rarely the normative condition. In fact, whiteness is often considered out of place in this "black metropolis."

Through interviews, observation, examination of Detroit media, and participation as a resident of a poor, white and black neighborhood close to Tiger Stadium, Hartigan is able to examine whiteness across a range of sites: race and space, who "belongs" where, when, and why; neighborhood, class, and race, white "flight" to the suburbs and the complex relations between white family members who have left and those still in the "hood"; family, nuclear or extended, at times monoracial and at times not; sexual partnership; school; and public events such as the Saint Patrick's Day parade.

The fractal dance of transmission was, one might say, chaotically orderly. It became clear that the white, underclass Detroitans interviewed by Hartigan never "forgot" they were white. Yet their racialness might be passive or active from one site to the next, and from moment to moment. Hartigan's fieldwork convinced him that whiteness is not transmitted unchanged down through increasingly specific levels of society. Further, whites at different economic levels viewed whiteness in different ways.

Perhaps more than any other essay in this collection, France Winddance Twine's "Brown-Skinned White Girls: Class, Culture, and the Construction of White Identity" makes simultaneously visible the unnaturalness of whiteness as a racial category and the pathways of its enforcement. The essay draws on Twine's interviews with young women of known African ancestry raised by at least one parent of known European ancestry in the suburban United States who were first made "white" as children and later unmade, excluded from whiteness.

Twine states at the outset of her essay that feminists who theorize about whiteness have not addressed "white" women who are not exclusively of European ancestry. Further, she says, "cultural anthropologists have assumed that a white identity that does not involve 'passing' is not available to African-descent women who possess bio-

logical markers that place them in a nonwhite category.” Even the challenge of finding accurate language with which to describe her interviewees underscores Twine’s point—that whiteness is above all a *social* construction, but one whose disciplinary practices work forcefully to maintain the fictive biological “alibi” of race.

We learn from Twine’s essay, and from the words of her interviewees, that whiteness is made out of materials that include socioeconomic status, cultural practice, peer group acceptance, parental teaching, and community participation in ideological constructions of what constitutes “racial neutrality.” But before we are tempted to imagine that race is after all subsumable as something else—perhaps class, perhaps culture—we are shown when, how, and why these young women’s whiteness was challenged, made more complex, made less tenable, beginning in puberty and adolescence. Later, in the atmosphere of the university campus, these women made diverse choices between whiteness, blackness, mixed-ness. We see their reflections on past, present, and future. And as well, we see the delicate balancing of choice and constraint within which these women move, naming themselves and being named as racialized persons.

Like the other ethnography-based essays in this collection (Cohen, Hartigan), this one powerfully localizes whiteness, examining it in spaces as small as a college campus or neighborhood, yet explicating also how the small space is linked temporally and territorially to far larger expanses. And, again like other essays, this one takes us beyond a mere “listing” of the systems within which race “lives” and moves, to a careful tracing of how, in a given setting, race makes and is made by relations of sex and sexuality, class, and culture.

Phil Cohen writes histories of the present, excavating and tracking makings and remakings of whiteness. His “Laboring under Whiteness” analyzes one version of working-class whiteness, a British, essentially male one. In his earlier extensive ethnographic studies in the East End of London, especially with working-class white youth at work and play—as secondary school students,²⁹ as soccer supporters—Cohen focused on the young men’s collective sense of self and other, and the explicit hostility to black people of Asian and African descent that is central to its formation. He analyzed this racist whiteness within sociocultural and sociopsychic narratives, explicating the simultaneous class and ethnic restructurings of the last two decades in this part of London and the effects of these on the kinds of mascu-

linity achievable in this context. As one section heading of his essay in this volume has it (playing on a John Lennon cut later recorded by Marianne Faithful), "A working-class racist is something to be."

In "Laboring under Whiteness," Cohen includes excerpts from an interview and discussion of identity and ethnicity with a group of white high school students, analyzing it within a frame of Lacanian and post-Kleinian psychoanalysis, and against the backdrop of British labor history. Cohen's goals, like his analysis, are many stranded. Cohen asks how this young, male, working-class, East End-based whiteness came to be, and what implications the conditions of its making might have for antiracist strategy in Britain. Cohen's concern to localize whiteness stems in part from his sense of the analytic and strategic inadequacies of a "transatlantic wall against racism" that originated, he argues, in the United States in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement and was elaborated on by left and feminist movements on both sides of the Atlantic. In Cohen's view, whether the outcomes of this overall framing entail a biologicistic or a social constructionist naming of whiteness (and for that matter, of blackness and other racial positionings), "neither offers much purchase on the complexities of the encounters that are currently taking place in and across racial and ethnic divides." Cohen's alternative is an insistence on specification, for "the building of a new transatlantic wall against racism will have to wait on a proper recognition of what separates as well as what unites us."

Vron Ware's "Island Racism: Gender, Place, and White Power" also takes us to Britain, seeking to explore in the context of England's "prolonged identity crisis . . . how masculinity and femininity are involved in the representation of Englishness as an exclusively white identity." Ware frames her discussion around two events: the 1993 local election success of British National party member Derek Beackon with a winning slogan of "Rights for Whites" and a campaign focused on allegations of antiwhite and pro-Bengali discrimination by the local housing authority, and a 1995 soccer match between England and Ireland that ended abruptly when English-initiated riots broke out in the crowd.

Ware takes us on a complex analytical journey, engaging the local and national material and discursive histories in which each event is embedded. She is concerned to view each event as object lesson for theorists and activists against racism, asking where, how, and why we seem to lack tools adequate to the task of analyzing, much less challenging, racism in daily life. She is also concerned to link, analytically,

“extremist” and “mainstream” racism, noting the evasive or distancing responses of the British press that tended to mark as extreme and unusual these events and their participants.

As important as her reading of what is said, Ware argues that other crucial questions are evaded in both media and analytical engagement with everyday racism. How are *women* positioned in the racist relations of these two events? What are the political and economic processes covered over and racialized by the electoral strategies of both the British National party *and* other, more mainstream, political parties, and how are these gendered? And, finally, how might gendered analyses of racism contribute to our ability to respond effectively to racist practices both in the daily life of communities and in the arena of formal politics?

David Wellman is also concerned to tell a familiar story in a new way, and thus to intervene in what in the first half of the 1990s most often appeared as a political gridlock: the struggle over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of affirmative action. And indeed, as we go to press the gridlock seems to be rapidly unjamming, with right-of-way ceded to the anti-affirmative action forces. “Minstrel Shows, Affirmative Action Talk, and Angry White Men: Marking Racial Otherness in the 1990s” begins by examining the myths and facts of affirmative action in a way that forcefully reminds us of the simple untruth of many of the anti-affirmative actionists’ claims. But more significantly, Wellman explains what is at stake, on a deeper psychocultural level, in white males’ responses to affirmative action. Drawing a powerful analogy between the 1990s discourse on affirmative action and the minstrel shows that were extraordinarily popular with white working-class men in the mid-nineteenth century United States, Wellman proposes directions our interventions might take if we are to meaningfully challenge the now commonplace images of the quota queen, reverse discrimination, and the unqualified beneficiary of affirmative action.

I will not steal Wellman’s thunder by reiterating his argument here. Suffice it to say that while Wellman recognizes the necessity of attacking affirmative action myths on evidentiary grounds, he also thinks that other, unacknowledged issues are at stake. In seeking out and analyzing these issues, Wellman ends by offering analytic strategies that might both hone antiracist education *and* enhance popular consciousness about some of the key economic, social, and cultural processes currently unfolding in Western societies.