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Transatlantic whiteness: A Reading List in Three Acts

Building upon a foundation of foundational critical race texts, this list traces the production, performance, and maintenance of the racial category or whiteness from the Early Modern period, through to the 19th Century as viewed through its racialized reconstruction of the Early Modern, and ends with modern perspectives on the white 19th century and its concept of the “Renaissance.” The list ends with a group of texts on whiteness by white scholars, a final section which seeks to contextualize and question this list itself within whiteness’s centuries long intellectual history.

Primary Texts:

1. Jonson, Ben. *Masque of Blackness & Masque of Beauty*. 1605, 1608.
2. Middleton, Thomas. *The Triumphs of Truth*. 1613.
3. Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet & Titus Andronicus*
4. *The King of Tars*. ~1330.
5. *Pearl & Sir Orfeo*. Translated by J.R.R Tolkien. 14th C and 1944.
6. Massinger, Philip. *The Renegado*. 1630.
7. Heminges, William. *The Fatal Contract*. 1640.
8. Lewis, Matthew Henry. *The Monk*. 1796.
9. Walpole, Horace. *Castle of Otranto*. 1764.
10. Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. 1851.

Prologue: Theoretical Foundations

fundamentals that I want in my internal archive, ready to reference thoughtfully as I write, read, and educate.

11. Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Duke 2014.
12. Warren, Calvin L. *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation*. Duke 2018.
13. Anderson, Carol (Carol Elaine). *White Rage : the Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016.
14. Mills, Charles. *The Racial Contract*. Cornell 1999.
15. Harris, Cheryl I. “Whiteness as Property.” *Harvard law review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–1791.
16. Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste : the Origins of Our Discontents* / Isabel Wilkerson. First edition. New York, NY: Random House, 2020.
17. Spillers, Hortense J. *Black, White, and in Color : Essays on American Literature and Culture* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
18. hooks, bell. *Black Looks : Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992.

Act 1: Historical Readings of Race in Transatlantic Early Modern Culture

Setting the scene of my larger academic interests and goals: the formulation and performance of whiteness across periods and the Atlantic ocean. Here we begin with perspectives on race as it stood during the actual Early Modern period in England and North America, with a focus on how race was performed and maintained through literary and popular cultural production.

19. Spiller, Elizabeth. *Reading and the History of Race in the Renaissance*. Cambridge, UK :: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
20. Wood, Forrest G. *The Arrogance of Faith : Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Knopf, 1990.
21. Smith, Ian. *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors*. Palgrave 2009.
22. Thompson, Ayanna. *Performing Race and Torture on the Early Modern Stage*. Ayanna Thompson . New York: Routledge, 2008.
23. Floyd-Wilson, Mary. *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge 2003).
24. Britton, Dennis. *Becoming Christian: Race, Reformation, and Early Modern English Romance* (Fordham 2014).

Act 2: The Transatlantic 19th Century (as viewed through its “Renaissance”)

Moving on to the Early Modern period in the 19th century white imagination, this portion features literature contemporary to the 19th century crucial to constructing the Renaissance. This section aids in my overall intellectual project by examining the 19th century moment as it looks back on and imagines the Early Modern period with a view of how it (the century and its’ production of the Renaissance) will function in 20th and 21st whiteness (doctrines of white supremacy).

25. Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance*. Start Publishing, 2013.
26. Michelet, Jules. *On History*. Open Book Publishers, 2013.
27. Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. La Vergne: Neeland Media LLC, 2020.
28. (Burckhardt to be read in conjunction with) Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning : from More to Shakespeare* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Act 3: Readings of the Transatlantic 19th Century (and its “Renaissance”)

Zooming back out to the secondary, this section focuses on modern historical and theoretical writing about the race in 19th century England and America and their modes of historical and racial production.

29. Bullen, J. B. *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
30. Fraser, Hilary. *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* / Hilary Fraser. Oxford, UK ;: Blackwell, 1992.
31. Richard Sugg. *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians*. Taylor and Francis, 2012.
32. Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Harvard University Press, 2009.
33. Weisbard, Eric. *Songbooks : the Literature of American Popular Music* / Eric Weisbard. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
34. Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Epilogue: white people on whiteness

This reading list ends with a kind of mirror image of where it began. This section features critical white studies by white scholars. I am familiar with and admire some of these texts, others I have not yet read at all and anticipate taking some issue with. I have put these all in the same category (though thematically they each correspond with different areas of the list) because I want to learn from the content of these texts, but also use them to consider how I want to function as white scholar of whiteness.

35. Kelly, Casey Ryan. *Apocalypse Man: the Death Drive and the Rhetoric of White Masculine Victimhood*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2020.
36. Metzl, Jonathan. *Dying of Whiteness : How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America’s Heartland*. New York: Basic Books, 2019.
 - These both could be interesting read alongside Anderson’s *White Rage* in particular
37. Painter, Nell Irvin. *The History of White People*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.
38. Ignatiev, Noel. (1995). *How the Irish became White*. Routledge 1995.

39. Roediger, David. *Wages of whiteness & racist symbolic capital* / edited by Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler, David Roediger. LIT 2110.
40. Dyer, Richard. *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (Routledge 1997).