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:
4. The King of Tars. ~1330.
5. Pearl & Sir Orfeo. Translated by J.R.R Tolkien. 14th C and 1944.
8. Lewis, Matthew Henry. The Monk. 1796.

Prologue: Theoretical Foundations

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

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.


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).


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.


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.


• These both could be interesting read alongside Anderson’s White Rage in particular

