White Liberal Identity, Literary Pedagogy, and Classic Realism

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NOTES

Introduction

1. Burke, Permanence and Change, 90.
2. See, for example, Patell, Negative Liberties; Newfield, Emerson Effect; and Bercovitch, Rites of Assent. Two excellent recent books, however, maintain a tight focus on the relationship between literature and political liberalism during the period of the 1930s: Szalay, New Deal Modernism, and McCann, Gumshoe America. Again, however, both of these studies take as a unifying theme the relationship between individuals and communal or social structures. While absolutely central to liberalism as a political theory, this theme is less immediately and insistently preeminent when considering the contemporary versions of left-liberal identity I concentrate on below. A slightly earlier group of books interested in liberalism and American literature—including new historicist criticism influenced by Foucault's notions of power—focuses on liberalism as a managerial practice that is also immanent in such literary genres as realism and naturalism. See Corkin, Realism and the Birth of the Modern United States; Howard, Form and History in American Literary Naturalism; Kaplan, Social Construction of American Realism; and Seltzer, Henry James and the Art of Power.
3. Turner delivered “the Significance of the Frontier in American History at the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association, held in conjunction with the Chicago World’s Fair. He concluded his speech by asserting, “the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.” The paper appears as chapter 1 of Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History. See Garland, Main-Travelled Roads; Banta, Taylored Lives; and Morrison, Playing in the Dark.
4. On Howells and liberal identity, see Barrish, American Literary Realism, 30–47.
5. “We speak routinely and casually of the need to restore works to the ‘historical situation’ in which they were produced, or of sketching ‘historical situations’ for our own studies. The concept has turned slogan, and the inevitability with which it has accompanied efforts, especially programmatic efforts, to argue against certain kinds of formalism—New Criticism, Deconstruction—and for a certain kind of contextualism would be impossible to document exhaustively here; the practice has simply been too pervasive.” Chandler, England in 1819, 37.
7. James, Art of the Novel, 5.
8. Rowe, Other Henry James, 192.
11. Lipsitz, Possessive Investment in Whiteness, viii.
12. In choosing to take my own university as a focal point in Part One, I have
also been influenced by Henry Giroux’s Gramscian insistence that a critical pedagogy “must always be contextually defined, allowing it to respond specifically to the conditions, formations, and problems that arise in various sites in which education takes place. . . . Progressive educators need to engage their teaching as a theoretical resource that is both shaped by and responds to the very problems that arise in the in-between space/places/contexts that connect classrooms with the experiences of everyday life” (Giroux, “Pedagogy,” 18–19).

16. Williams, Marxism and Literature, 132.
17. Newfield, Emerson Effect, 10, 5.

Part One, Introduction

3. De Man, Blindness and Insight, 187.
5. Stokes, Color of Sex, 13.

Chapter 1

2. “Autre Temps . . .” was first published in two parts as “Other Times, Other Manners” in Century Magazine 82 (July–August 1911). Wharton translated (or retranslated) the title into French, italicized it, and replaced the second half of the well-known French proverb (autre temps, autre moeurs) with ellipses for inclusion in her 1916 collection, Xingu and Other Stories (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons). Future page references to “Autre Temps” will be from Wharton, Roman Fever and Other Stories.
3. The key decision in the Hopwood case was actually issued by a panel of three judges from the Fifth Circuit Court, who were assigned to consider the Hopwood plaintiffs’ appeal of an earlier District Court ruling in the case. The district court judge, Sam Sparks, had found unconstitutional the specific affirmative action mechanisms in place when Karen Hopwood et al. had applied to UT’s Law School, but he had awarded no damages to the plaintiffs. Moreover, following the Supreme Court’s 1978 opinion in Bakke v. University of California, Sparks’s ruling would still have allowed for a system that treated race as one (but never the sole deciding) factor in admissions. The Fifth Circuit’s three-judge panel went much further, declaring in their “Decision Reversing and Remanding” that race could not play any sort of role in admissions decisions by the Law School. (In doing so,
the panel controversially—and some argued illegally—set Bakke aside.) Although there was room for ambiguity about whether the panel’s decree against giving race any consideration whatsoever applied to anything besides UT Law School admissions, Texas’s attorney general at the time, Dan Morales, issued a binding interpretation that read the ruling as broadly as possible. All of Texas’s public universities, Morales said, would have to cease any consideration of race not only in admissions but in financial aid and hiring. Four months after the three-judge panel’s decision, the Supreme Court declined to become involved in the case. The district court ruling in Hopwood, et al. v. State of Texas, et al, 94 Ed 760 (S.D. Texas 1994), is accessible online at http://www.law.utexas.edu/hopwood/hoptxt. The Fifth Circuit panel decision, Hopwood, et al. v. State of Texas, et al., 78 F.3d 932 (5th Cir. 1996), is accessible online at http://www.ca5.uscourts.gov/opinions/pub/94/94–50569-cv0.htm. (The latter decision will be referred to parenthetically in my text as “Hopwood, 5th Cir.”) Texas Attorney General Dan Morales’s Letter Opinion No. 79–001 (Feb. 5, 1997) is accessible online at http://www.law.utexas.edu/hopwood/morales.htm.

4. Catherine Gallagher uses a reading of Steven Spielberg’s 1985 film Back to the Future to develop rich insights about the temporality of affirmative action and of proposals for racial reparation. Gallagher’s argument about temporality and affirmative action is oblique to the ideas that I am developing here, but not incompatible with them. Gallagher, “Undoing.”

5. Chandler, England in 1819, xiii
10. See Brodkin, How Jews Became White Folks; Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color; Roediger, Wages of Whiteness; and Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White.
11. Miller, Afterlife of Plays, 27.
12. Glavin, After Dickens, 1–4. Mary Poovey’s review essay, “Creative Criticism and the Problem of Objectivity,” contains a useful discussion of After Dickens as well as some other recent examples of what she calls “creative criticism.”

15. Ibid.
17. “Hopwood, 5th Cir.” “Present effects of past discrimination” is a phrase cited not only in this but in prior and subsequent affirmative action cases as well.
19. Wharton, Roman Fever and Other Stories, 246; further page references will appear in the text.
20. Wharton, Mother’s Recompense, 74.
21. For an analysis of the blush and its function in nineteenth-century fiction, see O’Farrell, Telling Complexions.
22. Morales, Letter Opinion No. 79–001 (see n. 3).

24. As the Thurgood Marshall Society and the Black Pre-Law Association summarized in a later brief, "The state declined to introduce the evidence or the testimony of the expert witness, presented no evidence concerning the validity of the Texas Index and raised no argument that race-conscious measures were required to mitigate the discriminatory effect of its use." Renewed Motion for the Limited Purpose of Allowing Evidence on the Predictive Validity of the Texas Index, July 1, 1994, Binder V. Hopwood v. State of Texas Reserve Collection, Tarlton Law Library, Austin, Texas.

25. Ibid.


28. Interveners representing minority students were allowed to present evidence about standardized tests and their racially disparate impact at early stages of the two Michigan cases. Their evidence was quickly dismissed by the presiding judges, however, and dismissed with a tone that at least one of the interveners' attorneys found "insulting," *Barbara Grutter v. Lee Bollinger, et al.* Civil Action No. 97–75928 (E.D. Mich), Rep. Joan L. Morgan, February 6, 2001: 127. http://www.umich.edu/~urel/admissions/legal/grutter/gru.trans/gru2.06.01b.html.

29. Matthew Cook, "Minority Applicants Less Likely to Be Accepted into Law School," *Daily Texan*, June 28, 2000, 1A.

30. Regarding individual "merit," Christopher Newfield contrasts ideas that were indeed floated in late-nineteenth-century discourse for more pluralistic modes of evaluation with the more rigid supposedly "meritocratic" systems of measurement that actually came to hold sway in research universities: "It is a bitter fact that the research university's great leap forward came in the decades, 1890–1910, during which Jim Crow segregation was being systematically installed in American life. Having cloaked stratification in the languages of nature and science, meritocracy insured that future attempts to value individual difference and diversify higher education would appear not to expand merit, but to compromise it" (Newfield, *Ivy and Industry*, 103).

31. Consider an exchange twice repeated, almost verbatim, in the Supreme Court on successive days during the oral arguments phase for each of the University of Michigan's two cases. Justice Antonin Scalia, one of the court's most conservative members, advanced to the university's lawyers that, if the State of Michigan chose and still chooses to develop an "elite" "super-duper law school," "one of the best law schools in the country"—which, he emphasized, is not a choice that the state or its university were ever compelled to make—then naturally it achieves this goal by "taking only the best students with the best grades and the best SATs or LSATs, knowing that the result of this will be to exclude to a large degree minorities" (my italics). Scalia then demands why, "considering [that the University of Michigan] created this situation by making that decision, it then turns around and says, oh, we have a compelling State interest in eliminating this racial imbalance that [we] ourselves have created." Scalia's racism is obvious: he assumes that the University of Michigan could no longer be a "super-duper law school" if it were to admit significant numbers of minority students. The univer-
sity's lawyers disagreed with him on this specific point by reminding him that minority students admitted under affirmative action are highly “qualified,” just as are many other students whom the school is unable to admit. But what is most telling about the liberal university here is that Michigan’s lawyers join Scalia in accepting “best,” “elite,” and “super-duper” (as well as “academic excellence”) as neutral and transparent terms when applied to a law school, terms whose meanings they do not think of questioning. *Barbara Grutter v. Lee Bollinger, et al.*, U.S. Supreme Court, no. 02–241, Oral Arguments, April 1, 2003, p. 31, http://www.supremecourtus.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts.html.


Chapter 2

1. If one were to make a point of always substituting “the n-word,” as Burron suggests and as one of my white colleagues does even when he reads direct quotations to a class, the sudden break into artificially formal or “stilted” (Burron’s term) speech would, as sudden emphasis on verbal form always tends to do, itself call attention to the word as material object. The pointed elision would “conjure up” the technically unspoken term as listeners were forced to pause, if just for an instant, to speak the translation of “n-word” in their heads.


6. Ibid., 123, my italics.


10. Hortense Spillers makes a powerful argument that regarding race “as an aspect of the Real brings to light its most persistent perversity.” “‘All the Things You Could Be by Now,’” 150. See also Lane, “Introduction,” to *Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Lane.


17. “The Last Word,” Unsigned Editorial, Boston Globe, January 30, 1999. The colonialist fantasy at work in this particular Boston Globe editorial is made still clearer when the author insists the mayor should have “stood up for . . . the English language, which is the envy of the world for its richness and nuance.”
19. Savran, Taking It like a Man, 5. Curiously, Savran’s history jumps from the English Renaissance and Restoration to post–World War II America, ignoring trajectories of male masochism in seventeenth-, eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early-twentieth-century America. Yet the historical relationship between masochism and white American masculinity has been receiving significant critical attention over the past decade. For example, see Burgett, “Masochism and Male Sentimentalism”; Leverenz, Manhood and the American Renaissance; Newfield, Emerson Effect; Person, Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity; and Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins. For a comparative perspective that focuses on the German-speaking world at roughly the period of American literary realism, see Stewart, Sublime Surrender. Like Savran, Stewart argues that masochism “became the site by and through which masculinity was not only redefined but again made hegemonic” (9).
20. Savran, Taking It like a Man, 5, 37.
21. Sally Robinson develops an argument closely related to Savran’s but, among other differences, she emphasizes “a pleasure in explorations of pain” on the part of “white men displaying their wounds as evidence of disempowerment.” Such pleasure constitutes a facet of what she calls white masculinity’s “identity politics of the dominant.” Robinson, Marked Men, 11, 3.
22. Foster, Sublime Enjoyment, 161.
23. Leonard, Making Mark Twain Work in the Classroom. For teaching Twain’s novel, in addition to Leonard’s book I have found particularly helpful Richard C. Moreland’s suggestions for juxtaposing Twain’s novel with Toni Morrison’s Beloved (Moreland, Learning from Difference), as well as the essays collected in Leonard, Tenney, and Davis, eds., Satire or Evasion?
24. See Smiley, “Say It Ain’t So, Huck,” and Wallace, “The Case against Huck Finn.” But Julius Lester, who has also written strongly against the book, is an academic. See his “Morality and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.”
25. Kaplan, “Born to Trouble”; Smith, “Huck, Jim, and American Racial Discourse”; and Fishkin, Was Huck Black?
26. Arac, Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target, 33.
27. Ibid., 16, 28, 24–28.
30. For a small collection of descriptions by African Americans of what it felt like for them (or for their children) to study and/or teach *Huck Finn* in primarily white classrooms, see Mensh and Mensh, *Black, White, and Huckleberry Finn*, 107–13.


34. For a discussion of seemingly “dated” monuments in locales ranging from Austin to Moscow, see Levinson, *Written in Stone*.


38. On the relationship between American Jews’ sometimes not-quite-white status vis-à-vis white Protestants, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their reliable “experience of whiteness and belonging vis-à-vis blackness,” see Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*, 2 and passim.

39. “All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, *How does it feel to be a problem?* they say, *I know an excellent coloured man in my town;* or, *I fought at Mechanicsville;* or, *Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil?*” Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 9.

Part Two, Introduction


6. Whiteness critics who focus on the American West and/or on seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and even early-nineteenth-century American literature and culture do often pay careful attention to the role that constructions of “Indianness” play in literary whiteness. Some of these critics, moreover, also consider how Indianness and Africanism might work differently, yet complementarily, in shaping the meaning of whiteness. See, for instance, Nelson, *National Manhood*, and Brooks, *American Lazarus*, as well as Richard Slotkin’s trilogy: *Regeneration through Violence, Fatal Environment*, and *Gunfighter Nation*. For an unusual example of nonbinary racial analysis focused on late-nineteenth-century American literature, see Coulombe, “Mark Twain’s Native Americans.”

Chapter 3

2. Limón, American Encounters, 3.
3. Morrison, Playing in the Dark, 6, 52. The phrase “Mexicanist presence” was suggested to me by Joseph Rodríguez. Some examples of U.S. works from the same period as The Awakening that contain a seemingly minor, incidental, or even negligible Mexicanist presence—but where that presence in fact plays an important role in helping to construct “whiteness”—include Jack London, Martin Eden; Frank Norris, The Octopus; William Dean Howells, Rise of Silas Lapham; and several short stories by Stephen Crane. José Limón’s American Encounters is a superb exploration not only of Mexican–U.S. “border culture” but also of the often surprisingly subtle roles that Mexico and the United States have played in one another’s literary and cultural imaginations, sometimes in locations that seem remote from the geographical border. Scholarship on Anglo-American literature that focuses on the relationship between literary whiteness and literary Mexicanism remains in short supply, however, especially when one thinks of the large body of recent critical work that seeks to answer Morrison’s question about whiteness and Africanism in such literature. Two important manuscripts in progress make significant contributions. Both are currently available as unpublished dissertations. See Juan Alonzo, “Derision and Desire: The Ambivalence of Mexican Identity in American Literature and Film” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2003), and John-Michael Rivera, “The Rise of Mexican America in U.S. Literary and Legal Culture” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2000).

6. Birnbaum does devote a few sentences to Mariequita, but she essentially takes her as just one more example of the way in which “women of color” “become representative of alternative sexual experience” (Birnbaum, “Alien Hands,” 333). Rebecca Aanerud gives somewhat more attention both to Mariequita as a “Spanish girl” and to the role of Mexico in Edna’s development. She never notes, however, that Mariequita and Mexico play roles in Edna’s “awakening” different from those played by the novel’s Africanist elements, and hence Aanerud never attempts to explore the significance of such differences (Aanerud, “Fictions of Whiteness,” 41–42). It is quite possible that in Chopin’s mind Mariequita was not of Mexican descent. Another “Spanish” girl in Chopin’s fiction, Calixta of “At the ‘Cadian Ball,” is explicitly identified as of Cuban descent. Longtime Spanish-speaking communities existed relatively close to Grand Isle, in and around St. Bernard and Iberville parishes, but the Hispanic settlers of these communities came either from the Canary Islands or straight from Spain. Louisiana’s only long-standing communities of Mexican descent are located in the state’s northwestern area, closer to the border with Texas. Chopin did live from 1879–1884 in this area, in fact in Natchitoches Parish, whose Hispanic Adaesinos community is mestizo and originated in Mexico. For an overview of Louisiana’s Hispanic communities, see Armistead and Katz, The Spanish Tradition in Louisiana, 2–7. I am nonetheless considering Mariequita as part of the novel’s shaping “Mexicanist” presence, how-
ever, for two reasons. First, we are explicitly told that she has “brown” skin. Second, during the section of Chopin’s novel set in Grand Isle, which is where Mariequita appears, the many allusions to Mexico and Mexicans establish a textual context in which a brown-skinned, subaltern “Spanish girl” will function textually, at least for many readers, as “Mexicanist.” In a broader cultural context, Mariequita clearly alludes to the stereotype so prevalent in nineteenth-century dime novels and in early American film of the Mexican “harlot, with her low-cut blouse, rose behind her ear, her hot temper, and her sexual promiscuity” (Kanellos, _Thirty Million Strong_). See also Pettit and Showalter, _Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film._

7. Culley, ed., _The Awakening_, 33 and 107; subsequent page references appear parenthetically within the text.


10. Larry McMurtry’s _The Last Picture Show_ takes an at least partly parodic view of this idea of the Mexican sojourn as a passage into manhood for U.S. boys (two Texas high school boys cross the border, watch some grainy pornography and get drugged and robbed, then stagger back home), and Cormac McCarthy’s _All the Pretty Horses_ develops a richly layered, complexly ambivalent version of it.


Chapter 4

1. Lakoff, _Moral Politics_, 108. Other than the one casual sentence quoted above, Lakoff says nothing about the asymmetrical gendering and non-gendering of the two models that he invokes: the strict _father_ vs. the nurturant _parent_. The putative androgyny of the latter figure, however, belies the fact that the nurturant parent can only become available for Lakoff’s argument—indeed the figure can only politically _matter_ in the terms that Lakoff sets up—once it is construable as male. It is fair to say that Lakoff’s argument already presumes the trajectory depicted by _Traffic_, in which a male adopts the role of nurturing parent and thereby moves to the center of a new national vision for a more liberal polity.

2. Lakoff, _Moral Politics_, 153, 12.

3. For the one location where he does not appear, the San Diego–La Jolla area inhabited by the Ayalas, Wakefield is represented by his handpicked surrogate, prosecutor Ben Williams.

8. Williams traces this scene from Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its ubiquitous late-nineteenth-century theatrical performances, through televised scenes of non-violent black protesters being attacked by white police in the 1950s and 60s, up to and beyond the nation-riveting videotape of Rodney King’s beating by white LAPD officers in 1992.
12. I owe this connection with *The Searchers* to Sabrina Barton.
13. Seth is an interesting character. Reviewers almost uniformly dislike him, but despite (or maybe in conjunction with) his portrayal as a selfish shallow smart-ass, he articulates the only critique of Robert Wakefield’s and the movie’s own “othering” of the black ghetto. “What do you mean ‘this place?’” he demands of Wakefield in the car as Wakefield looks out with disgust at ghetto street corners clustered with young men offering drugs. In a speech peppered with transgressive but also show-offy “fucks” and “shits,” Seth urges Wakefield to “Think about the effect that [whites’ offering easy drug money] has on the psyche of a black person, on their possibilities.” As Seth becomes more and more animated and ready to argue the topic, however, Wakefield fixes him with an expressionless stare. Seth slowly stops talking and his own face loses its excited debate-team look. Nervously, he hastens to resume an expression of seriousness and concern. Staring Seth down, Wakefield’s look says something like, “you are mouthing progressive pieties while my daughter, goddammit my daughter, is lost in this place.” *Traffic* thus renders Seth’s desire to discuss the socioeconomics of racial geography beside the point, irrelevant, a sophomoric luxury. Writing in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Roger Ebert tellingly misremembers Seth’s words as spoken by “a black man” in “one of the most heartfelt” speeches in the film. Roger Ebert, “Heavy Dose of Reality. *Traffic* Wages Screen War on Flawed, Futile Drug Laws,” *Chicago Sun-Tribune*, January 5, 2001, 25.
14. Fregoso, “Recycling Colonialist Fantasy,” 83. José Limón cogently critiques several aspects of Fregoso’s indictment of *Lone Star* (*American Encounters*, 156–59, 236 n. 43). While Limón may be correct that, in *Lone Star*, a subtle portrayal of Sheriff Sam Deeds (Chris Cooper) as “less white than ‘off-white’” works against Fregoso’s presumption of a unitary and still hegemonic whiteness in that film, my reading of *Traffic* suggests that, in the context of representing a multicultural social order, “off-white” can also serve as a means for realigning whiteness with universality. Among the crucial differences between Sayles’ and Soderbergh’s films, however, is that *Lone Star* culminates in a historically aware, self-consciously chosen relationship between an Anglo man, Deeds, and a Mexican-American woman, Pilar Cruz (Elizabeth Peña), who also discover that they are related by blood. Moreover, *Lone Star* depicts a context in which Mexican Americans are about to take real political power.
15. In their study of the rhetorical structures popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous, Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol suggest that reiterated “recovery nar-
narratives”—narratives that portray recovery from addiction as an unending process dependent on regular attendance at twelve-step meetings—are designed to give the impression of “cutting across lines of gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, race, social class, religion, and nationality.” The repetition of similar recovery narratives provides group members with an “autobiography-in-common.” The recovery group assumes a “collective identity.” (Michie and Warhol, “Twelve-Step Teleology,” 328). In Traffic, that autobiography-in-common and collective identity are both implicitly white.

Chapter 5

1. Within Americanist literary and cultural studies it is difficult to cite sources pertinent to American exceptionalism because it has been such a ubiquitous framework. In a sense, American Studies as a discipline is founded on exceptionalist thinking, which is only most obviously evident in scholarship from the 1950s and 1960s. Perry Miller is probably most responsible for elucidating the Puritans’ sense of their exceptional mission and status. See Miller, Errand into the Wilderness and Nature’s Nation. See also Bercovitch, Puritan Origins of the American Self and American Jeremiad. For treatment focused on the feelings surrounding (and constituting) the Puritans’ exceptionalist beliefs, see Leverenz, Language of Puritan Feeling; and Delbanco, Puritan Ordeal, 81–117. For differing overviews on American exceptionalism, see Madsen, American Exceptionalism; and Kammen, “Problem of American Exceptionalism.”

2. Catherine Beecher, A Plea for the West (Cincinnati, 1835), 10. Quoted in Bercovitch, Rites of Assent, 189.

3. To sample recent treatments of American exceptionalism from outside the field of literary history, see Schafer, ed., Is America Different?; Adams and Van Minnen, eds., Reflections on American Exceptionalism; and Lipset, American Exceptionalism.


5. James, The American, 281. Subsequent page references appear within the text.

6. On Newman’s masculinity, homophobia, and homoeroticism, see Derrick, Monumental Anxieties, 83–155.

7. Compare the anxiety that is inseparable from John Winthrop’s classic image of the “city upon a hill,” with “the eyes of all people” focused on it: “If we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.” Winthrop, “A Model Christian Charity,” in Nina Baym, ed., Norton Anthology of American Literature, 105.


9. Henry James to William Dean Howells, October 24, 1876, in James, The American, 343.
10. See, for example, Delbanco, *Puritan Ordeal*, 59–80, 97–118.

11. John Carlos Rowe makes the intriguingly converse argument that Newman's intense desire to differentiate himself from Europe derives from the ways in which his "Europe" is constituted through an unconscious projection of his own characteristics and history onto it, so that "Europe" becomes an uncanny double of "America." Rowe, "Politics of the Uncanny," 79–90. See also Rowe, "Politics of Innocence in Henry James's *The American.*"

12. See Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*.

13. See, for example, Prince Hall, "Petition to the Honorable Counsel & House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts Bay," presented January 13, 1777. This document is accessible online at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h32t.html

14. I owe the connection with Scorsese's film to the insight of my colleague Brian Bremen.


16. For a rich exploration of this notion of romance in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature, see Bell, *Development of American Romance*.

17. Consider the immense importance of preserving the term "innocence" for the United States and its citizens in relation to the "war on terror." Recognizing the term's powerful resonance in the wake of 9/11, even high-ranking U.S. officials sought discursive control over "innocence." As just one example, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called it "unfortunate" that United States soldiers mistakenly killed sixteen U.S.–friendly Afghans because the soldiers mistook them for Al Qaeda or Taliban fighters. Regarding the dead Afghans, however, Rumsfeld nonetheless insisted to reporters, "Let's not call them 'innocents.' We don't know quite what they were." Thom Shanker, "U.S. Says 16 Killed in Raids Weren't Taliban or Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, February 22, 2002, A1.


Chapter 6


3. Ibid., 33.

4. Rorty's and Berlant's political visions are, it should be stressed, incompatible in several important respects. In *Achieving Our Country*, Rorty argues that "the Left should get back into the business of piecemeal reform within the framework of a market economy" (105). He has no use for (and misunderstands) "identity politics" as it has developed since the 1960s. Berlant, by contrast, vigorously pursues "the new cultural politics of difference" ("‘68, or Something," 127). Rorty complains that academic leftists today seem uninterested in such political activities as formulating legislative programs and constructing electoral majorities. Berlant believes it is important not to succumb to "pressures to remain intelligible to the norms that designate what a legitimate public interest is" (127). Rorty contends that "we should abandon the leftist-liberal distinction," which he sees as
a residue of discarded Marxism. By contrast, the distinction between liberalism and radicalism is a key underpinning of Berlant’s essay; she worries, for instance, that liberal feminism has lost its access to “horizons of radical possibility” (129).

9. Ibid., 358.
10. The first and last chapters of Ellison’s book-length study, Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion, draw heavily from her earlier article on liberal guilt, cited above. Quotation from Cato’s Tears, 7.
12. By contrast, Daniel Born insists that “persistent interrogation of oneself, often berated by critics on left and right as a sign of bad faith, is in fact the primary trait which makes the liberal sensitivity worth saving” (Birth of Liberal Guilt, 171).
13. Ellison, Cato’s Tears, 173.
16. Born, Birth of Liberal Guilt, 28, 34.
20. Rorty develops his model for private irony and civic faith most systematically in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.
24. See Bentley, Ethnography of Manners; Gibson, “Edith Wharton and the Ethnography of Old New York”; Trumpener and Nyce, “Recovered Fragments.”
25. The artificiality of “innocence” is well illustrated for Newland by his unmarried or “old maid” sister, Janey. She is described as possessing “a kind of drooping distinction like that in certain faded Reynolds portraits” (82). Given that here appears the book’s only mention of Reynolds, painter of the 1788 portrait (“The Age of Innocence”) from which Wharton borrows her novel’s title, one perhaps might take the description of Janey as a signal that she should be seen as the character who most personifies “the age of innocence.” Yet her innocence is an open pretense. Although “Janey knew every fold of the Beaufort mystery,” including the “other establishment” maintained by the corrupt banker for his mistress, “in public Mrs. Archer continued to assume that the subject was not one for the unmarried” (83).
28. The presidential portrait is probably of Ulysses S. Grant, who served as United States president from 1869–1877, the time during which Wharton’s novel is set. His administration is still regarded as among the most corrupt in U.S. history, although apparently Grant himself did not profit from the widespread bribery, fraud, and looting perpetuated under his “rule.” Writing forty-five years
later, Wharton presumes that her readers will recognize the irony in Newland's pointing towards President Grant as a signifier of American innocence. His doing so serves to underline the artificial lacunae of knowledge necessary to maintain the category itself (here, the artificial innocence is both Grant's and Newland's own).

30. Poirier, *A World Elsewhere*. Gerald Graff points out how pervasive the theme of escape from the social has been across a wide range of Americanist literary scholarship: “In one way or another, all these theories tend to see American literature in terms of some form of escape from social categories” (Graff, “American Criticism Left and Right,” 106).
33. James, *Art of the Novel*, 143.
34. Berlant, “’68, or Something,” 127.
36. Salecl, (Per)Versions of Love and Hate, 15.
41. Berlant, “’68, or Something,” 125.
43. De Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 142. The quoted passage continues, “It is not at all certain that literature and modernity are in any way compatible concepts. Yet we all speak readily about modern literature and even use this term as a device for historical periodization, with the same apparent unawareness that history and modernity may well be even more incompatible than literature and modernity.” With Wharton’s novel and the very notion of an “age of innocence” in mind, we can again substitute “innocence” for “modernity”: “It is not at all certain that literature and innocence are in any way compatible concepts. Yet we all speak readily about innocence and even use this term as a device for historical periodization, with the same apparent unawareness that history and innocence may well be even more incompatible than literature and innocence.”
45. In reviewing a book on contemporary utopian thought, Terry Eagleton writes, “It is the hard-nosed pragmatists who behave as though the World Bank and caffe latte will be with us for the next two millennia who are the real dreamers, and those who are open to the as yet unfigurable future who are the true realists.” Eagleton, “Just My Imagination.”

Coda

2. Ibid., 10.
3. This is not to say that conservative political beliefs, and the versions of political subjectivity associated with those beliefs, are not also self-contradictory in numerous respects. They are.