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The Wages of Whiteness

Race and the Making of the American Working Class

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VERSO
London · New York
On Autobiography and Theory: 
An Introduction

When I was ten, it suddenly became possible to hit Little League pitching and, after my first (and only) five-hit game, the league's best player asked if I'd go to the carnival with him. This was a sign of acceptance, but as we walked to the fairgrounds the stakes increased. My new friend produced a long knife that he was not supposed to have and I was not supposed to know he had. 'This', he told me conspiratorially, 'is a nigger gigger.' Neither of us knew if this meant that the knife was for attacking Blacks or of a sort used by them. Neither of us knew any Blacks. None lived in the small German-American quarrying and farming town in which we were growing up. Local folklore held that laws barred Blacks from being in town after sundown. And yet the value of that knife, in terms of preteen male bonding, attached at least as much to its name as to its fake-pearl handle.

Even in an all-white town, race was never absent. I learned absolutely no lore of my German ancestry and no more than a few meaningless snatches of Irish songs, but missed little of racist folklore. Kids came to know the exigencies of chance by chanting 'Eeny, meeny, miney, mo/Catch a nigger by the toe' to decide teams and first batters in sport. We learned that life – and fights – were not always fair: 'Two against one, nigger's fun.' We learned not to loaf: 'Last one in is a nigger baby.' We learned to save, for to buy ostentatiously or too quickly was to be 'nigger rich'. We learned not to buy clothes that were a bright 'nigger green'. Sexuality and blackness were of course thoroughly confused.

My mother's family came from Cairo, the half-Black city where the Ohio and Mississippi rivers meet, and we spent lots of each summer in a
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changing Cairo neighborhood. In the early sixties, the civil rights movement came to Cairo and so did a furious white backlash. Decisive from my child’s point of view was the decision of the city fathers – one was a distant relative I called ‘uncle’ – to close Cairo’s swimming pool rather than integrate it. Since there were few white kids to play with and it was unthinkable to play with Blacks, this defeat for civil rights seemed very much aimed at me. I also noticed that Black kids my age were challenging authority in a very appealing way: they crossed streets in front of angry white drivers with all deliberate speed, and sometimes rather less.

At the time none of this made me rethink racism. My family, all workers and many of them union supporters and minor officers in quarrying, telephone work, printing, teaching and pipefitting, held no doubts about white supremacy, and I knew no antiracists through junior high school. Racial attitudes did vary somewhat, however. My father’s family held to the reticent racism of the insular German small town. On my mother’s side, my aunts from Cairo were far more open in their somewhat contradictory denunciations of Blacks on welfare and of Blacks taking ‘our’ jobs. But they also had a small paternal streak, expressed especially toward a domestic who came for a half day every two weeks and who pleased everyone (including, I later figured out, herself) by repeatedly referring to one of my cousins as ‘pretty good-looking for a white girl.’ At the first sign of civil rights activity, such paternalism vanished. Nor could German reticence be relied upon. In family arguments, my paternal (all-German) relatives floated the idea that the Irish heritage of my maternal relatives was a Black one, as the ‘Black Irish’ had resulted from intermixing with shipwrecked slaves.

As late as my freshman year in high school I repeated to my classmates the arguments I’d heard from white relatives in Cairo – Blacks paid no taxes and therefore ought not vote. No-one dissented politically, but the mold of racism showed some slight cracks. We all hated Blacks in the abstract, but our greatest heroes were the Black stars of the great St. Louis Cardinals baseball teams of the sixties. The style, as well as the talent, of players like Lou Brock, Bob Gibson and Curt Flood was revered. More grudgingly, we admired Muhammad Ali as our generation’s finest sportsman. We listened to Chuck Berry and Tina Turner, both based in the St. Louis area, though not yet to Miles Davis, born a few miles up the road. A few of us became firm fans of Motown music, especially Smokey Robinson. A small signal of rebellion in high school was to have the car radio blaring music from St. Louis’s soul station – KATZ.

These tastes did not supplant racism. Most of them were decidedly prepolitical. But they did open the possibility of antiracism, and my own experiences pushed me in that direction. The city of Cairo continued to decline, now with my ‘uncle’ as mayor. I had developed the habit of going to church at the small Catholic church for Blacks there, originally because that church’s white priest raced through mass in half the time that it took at the white church. This Black parish gradually became a center of civil rights activity in Cairo, and I increasingly was made to wonder whether whites were ruining the town, as they had the swimming pool, in order to hold on to white supremacy. The common wisdom in my hometown held that it was impossible to take buses, or even to drive, through downtown East St. Louis, a nearby city deindustrializing and becoming almost wholly Black. But three days a week, in order to play public parks tennis in St. Louis, I rode the bus through East St. Louis with no incidents but pleasant ones. My best friends among tennis players were also Black, students of Dick Hudlin, Arthur Ashe’s coach. Racism increasingly just made no sense to me.

In my junior year of high school, 1968–69, George Wallace swept votes in the school’s mock presidential election after a student’s nominating speech, which declared, to a full assembly of students, ‘I have nothing against niggers. Every American should own one.’ My senior year was much spent in counselors’ and principals’ offices because a few of us raised the issue of racism in the school newspaper, before it was censored, and later in an underground paper. When the student government voted to send money to the Black United Front in Cairo, all hell broke loose. As we were threatened with expulsion, some of the rebellious students who had spoken most vociferously for Wallace – oddly or maybe not – became our best supporters.

Until very recently, I would have skipped all this autobiographical material, sure that my ideas on race and the white working class grew out of conscious reflection based on historical research. But much of that reflection led back to what my early years might have taught me: the role of race in defining how white workers look not only at Blacks but at themselves; the pervasiveness of race; the complex mixture of hate, sadness and longing in the racist thought of white workers; the relationship between race and ethnicity. My own youthful experiences – and they were not very different, except in outcome, from those of many white working class kids at the time – could have given me the central themes of this book. But the further tasks – of explaining how, when and why ‘whiteness’ became so important to white workers – do require conscious reflection and historical research.
Marxism and the White Problem

My question at age eighteen was why friends wanted to be white and why I didn't. In the two decades since, the Marxist tradition has furnished most of the intellectual tools I use, but in the main, it has not led me to press for answers to the question of why the white working class settles for being white. In my view, no answer to the 'white problem' can ignore the explanatory power of historical materialism, but neither does Marxism, as presently theorized, consistently help us focus on the central issue of why so many workers define themselves as white.

Writers of color have often raised the issue sharply, perhaps because they have had to. There is a long tradition, dating back at least to Cyril Briggs's writings of sixty years ago, of Blacks pointing out that race in the US was not a 'Negro problem' but a problem among whites. This tradition has explored the cost of whiteness to white workers, with W.E.B. Du Bois writing, 'It was bad enough to have the consequences of [racist] thought fall upon colored people the world over; but in the end it was even worse when one considers what this attitude did to the [white] worker. His aim and ideal was distorted. ... He began to want, not comfort for all men but power over other men. ... He did not love humanity and he hated niggers.' Or as James Baldwin put it, 'As long as you think you're white, there's no hope for you.' Nor does this tradition revolve solely around the political problems whiteness raises. The white problem – the question of why and how whites reach the conclusion that their whiteness is meaningful – is an intellectual and even an artistic problem for Black writers like Ralph Ellison, who observes, 'Southern whites cannot walk, talk, sing, conceive of laws or justice, think of sex, love, the family or freedom without responding to the presence of Negros.' Most recently, empowered by what Toni Morrison calls the 'successful assault that feminist scholarship [made] on traditional literary discourses', novelists and critics like Morrison, Hazel Carby, Bell Hooks and Coco Fusco have tellingly interrogated the concept of whiteness. Fusco reminds her readers that 'racial identities are not only Black, Latino, Asian, Native American and so on; they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it.'

The main body of writing by white Marxists in the United States has both 'naturalized' whiteness and oversimplified race. These weaknesses, and the fact that they largely reproduce the weaknesses of both American liberalism and neocentrism where race is concerned, have limited the influence of the very real Marxist contributions to the study of race. The central Marxist contributions are thoroughly presented in Barbara Fields's provocative 'Ideology and Race in American History'. Fields argues that race cannot be seen as a biological or physical fact (a 'thing') but must be seen as a notion that is profoundly and in its very essence ideological. Race, for Fields, is then entirely socially and historically constructed as an ideology in a way that class is not. Because people really do own or not own land and workplaces, class has 'objective' dimensions. Moreover, race is constructed differently across time by people in the same social class and differently at the same time by people whose class positions differ. These latter points, not peculiar to Fields but expressed by her with considerable force and eloquence, underpin this book. They implicitly call for historical studies that focus on the racism of a class as well as of a society.

But with certain exceptions, writers within the Marxist tradition have not often acted on such insights. The point that race is created wholly ideologically and historically, while class is not wholly so created, has often been boiled down to the notion that class (or 'the economic') is more real, more fundamental, more basic or more important than race, both in political terms and in terms of historical analysis. Thus, the pioneering Black sociologist, Oliver Cromwell Cox, writes, 'We shall assume that economic relations form the basis of modern race relations.' This view, which informed and deformed the practice of the socialist movement during its heyday in the US, leads in Cox's case to the political conclusion that Blacks and whites should look to class-based revolution as the solution to racism. Cox observes, 'There will be no more "crackers" or "niggers" after a socialist revolution because the social necessity for those types will have been removed.'

That rosy view of a literal correspondence between racism and 'social necessity' and of the possibility of an unambiguous revolutionary solution to racism is largely gone. But the idea that class should be politically privileged has not, as is witnessed by the outpouring of recent left and left-liberal arguments that the Black freedom movement must now couch its appeals in terms of class rather than race. Nor has the privileging of class over race by any means given way within Marxist and neo-Marxist historical analysis. Even Fields wavers. At times she nicely balances the ideological creation of racial attitudes with their manifest and ongoing importance and their (albeit ideological) reality. She writes, 'It follows that there can be no understanding the problems arising from slavery and its destruction which ignores their racial form; recognizing that race is an ideological notion and that not all white Americans held the same ideology does not mean dismissing racial questions as illusory or unreal.' But shortly thereafter we learn that, during Reconstruction, however much 'the Republicans may have perceived the situation through the veil of ra-
cial ideology, their frustration with the freedmen had nothing to do with color. Instead, their frustrations were those that ‘have ... appeared again and again, in every part of the world, whenever an employer class in process of formation has tried to induce men and women unbroken to market discipline to work ... for a wage.’ Race disappears into the ‘reality’ of class.

These are tricky but important matters. It is certainly true that racism must be set in class and economic contexts. Cox was right to quote delightedly Julius Boeke: ‘Europeans did not sail to the Indies to collect butterflies.’ Clearly, as Edmund Morgan and others have shown, labor control and land ownership provided the context for the emergence of strong white racial consciousness in early Virginia.7 This book will argue that working class formation and the systematic development of a sense of whiteness went hand in hand for the US white working class. Nonetheless, the privileging of class over race is not always productive or meaningful. To set race within social formations is absolutely necessary, but to reduce race to class is damaging. If, to use tempting older Marxist images, racism is a large, low-hanging branch of a tree that is rooted in class relations, we must constantly remind ourselves that the branch is not the same as the roots, that people may more often bump into the branch than the roots, and that the best way to shake the roots may at times be by grabbing the branch.

Less botanical explanations of why the traditional Marxist habit of emphasizing class over race is not useful are in order before taking up consideration of better strategies. One major problem with the traditional Marxist approach is that what it takes as its central task – pointing out the economic dimension of racism – is already done by those in the political mainstream. In a quite meaningless way, the ‘race problem’ is consistently reduced to one of class. For example, when the outspoken racist and former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke won a seat in the Louisiana legislature in early 1989, one expert commentator after another came on the morning news shows to announce that unemployment was high in Duke’s nearly all-white district and therefore the election turned on economic grievances rather than race. Viewers were thus treated to the exotic notion that, when white workers react to unemployment by electing a prominent white supremacist who promises to gut welfare programs, they are acting on class terms, rather than as working class racists. Such an argument is to be expected from the ‘Today’ show, but a viable left must find a way to differentiate itself strongly from such analysis. Similarly, it is worth noting that both neoliberalism and neoconservatism argue that race is not (or ought not to be) ‘the issue’ but that economic growth – neatly separable from race – will solve conflicts that only seem to revolve round race.8

A second problem with traditional Marxist analyses of race is that, while trying to show the class dimension of racism, they have tended to concentrate on the ruling class’s role in perpetuating racial oppression, and to cast white workers as dupes, even if virtuous ones. Communist party leader Earl Browder’s account of Jack Johnstone’s experiences in the packinghouse union struggles of 1919 – struggles in which the working class was deeply split by race – provides one revealing, if extreme, example:

... all obstacles to unity and solidarity came not from either group of workers themselves, but from the enemies of the working class – from the capitalist press, from the bosses, from the bourgeois politicians ... and from the reactionary A.F. of L. officialdom.9

Cox echoes this view in theoretical language. Racism, he argues, is ‘the socio-attitudinal concomitant of the racial exploitative practice of a ruling class in a capitalistic society.’ Or again, in writing of the Jim Crow system in the South, he explains that ‘every segregation barrier is a barrier put up between white and black people by their exploiters.’ Cox later adds that it was the exploiters who maintained those barriers.10 The workers, in this view, largely receive and occasionally resist racist ideas and practices but have no role in creating those practices.

The neo-Marxist perspectives that have in the past twenty years come to dominate the study of the working class, personified in the US by Herbert Gutman and in Britain by E.P. Thompson, should help us call into question any theory that holds that racism simply trickles down the class structure from the commanding heights at which it is created. The ‘new labor history’, whatever its weaknesses, has made the tremendous political and analytical contribution of showing that workers, even during periods of firm ruling class hegemony, are historical actors who make (constrained) choices and create their own cultural forms.

However, for reasons I have tried to explore elsewhere,11 the new labor history has hesitated to explore working class ‘whiteness’ and white supremacy as creations, in part, of the white working class itself. Few historians would adopt an outlook that simply characterizes racism, as Communist party chair Gus Hall does, as monopoly capital’s ‘deliberate strategy for superprofits’.12 Some have, wrongly I think, even suggested that capital and the state do not foster racism, or that capital does not profit from racism and acts to see racism ended.13 But movements away from conspiratorial views of racism and toward a consideration of the
agencies of the working class in the social construction of race have not resulted in many class-specific studies of racism. The valuable general histories of racism, especially those by George Fredrickson and Thomas Gossett, rely mainly on evidence from political leaders, intellectuals and scientists. Equally useful studies of race and popular culture generally do not explore the difficult question of the specific role of the working class in creating popular cultural treatments of race nor the specific meanings of racism in popular culture for workers. Studies bringing race and labor together, including the pioneering work of Herbert Hill and Philip Foner, mainly stay on the terrain of trade union practices regarding race. When the motivations of the white working class in accepting racism are considered, overly simple economic explanations hinge on advantages of ‘white skin privilege’ within the labor market too easily prevail.

Nor are the efforts of historically minded economists and sociologists wholly satisfying in providing alternative interpretations. The ‘segmentation’ theories of Michael Reich, David Gordon, Richard Edwards and others make the useful point that racism benefits the capitalist class, but at times in language so careful to avoid any notion of conspiracy that it is clear they are not offering a theory of racism but an empirical observation about racism. Reich, for example, writes, ‘Capitalists benefit from racial divisions whether or not they have individually or collectively practiced racial discrimination.’ The other major socioeconomic model for discussing racism emphasizes split labor markets, which are seen as vexing to capital and as benefiting ‘dominant workers’ against ‘cheap labor’. But this theory at best explains the results, not the origins, of white working class privilege. Edna Bonacich, the most prominent theorist of split labor markets, holds that the ‘dominant workers’ did not originally gain their position by racially exclusionary movements but rather ‘historical accident’. Typically, neither segmentation theory nor split labor market theories offer the possibility that racism comes from both above and below. Neither entertains the possibility that racism is not a matter of bread alone, but is in addition a way in which white workers have come to look at the world.

There are signs, in the ongoing work of such scholars as Gwendolyn Mink, Robin D.G. Kelley, Eric Arnesen, Dan Letwin, Joseph Trotter, Dolores Janiewski, Roger Horowitz, Michael Honey, Daniel Rosenberg and, above all, Alexander Saxton, that a flowering of a new social and cultural history of race and labor may be beginning. Certainly the new areas opened by scholars in social history – the study of gender, of popular republicanism and of the roles of labor control and industrial discipline in class formation, for example – make possible far more sophisticated studies of working class racism. Indeed, this study begins with the insights of the new labor history and is within that broad tradition. In many ways it represents an attempt to apply to the question of race relations scholarship that takes the agency of working class people seriously. It sees working class whiteness as a gendered phenomenon, particularly expressing and repressing male longings and the perils and pride of republican citizenship among men. To the extent that it can range widely over space, time and subject matter – frankly depending on secondary accounts supplemented by primary research – it rests on the rich, if too often separated, bodies of historical writing on class and on race in the United States.

But some of the old problems found in the work of Oliver Cox still recur in recent labor historiography. Perhaps most serious is the continuing tendency to romanticize members of the white working class by not posing the problem of why they came to consider themselves white and with what results. As the Black historian Nell Irvin Painter has recently remarked:

They [US labor historians] often prefer to wrap themselves in fashionable Europeanisms and to write as though their favorite, northern, European-American workers lived out their destinies divorced from slavery and racism, as though, say, Chartistism meant more in the history of the American working class than slavery.

Painter’s observations bring us nicely back to the suppressed question of whiteness and the need for Marxists to fully reconceptualize the study of race and class. There can be no assumption that the whiteness of the white working class deserves exploration only when we begin to discuss the history of race relations in labor organizations. Rather, race has at all times been a critical factor in the history of US class formation.

The Essential Du Bois

The analysis offered in the preceding section suggests that, at least in the US, the most pressing task for historians of race and class is not to draw precise lines separating race and class but to draw lines connecting race and class. We can get this attention to how race and class interpenetrate from several sources – for example, in the best of Stuart Hall’s and Alexander Saxton’s works, and to an extent in recent studies of ‘racial formation’ but no body of thought rivals that of W.E.B. Du Bois for an understanding of the dynamics, indeed dialectics, of race and class in
the US. Du Bois wrote as a Marxist but also brought additional perspectives to the study of race and class. He was within the broad Black nationalist tradition that Sterling Stuckey has so well portrayed, and from that tradition gained a perspective intelligently critical of oversimplified class analysis. He, like Toni Morrison, C.L.R. James, James Baldwin and other acute African-American students of the 'white problem', clearly saw whiteness not as natural but nevertheless as real and as problematic in intellectual, moral and political terms. Finally, Du Bois enjoyed the advantage of a critical appreciation of Max Weber's thought on race and status and an ability to borrow critically from Weber as well as from the Marxist tradition.

Thus, Du Bois's Black Reconstruction continually creates jarring, provocative theoretical images, mixing race and class by design. Black reconstruction is, for Du Bois, the key to the story of 'our [the US] labor movement'. The book is organized around the activities of workers, but those workers function, for Du Bois tragically, within racial categories: the first chapter is entitled 'The Black Worker' and the second 'The White Worker'. White labor does not just receive and resist racist ideas but embraces, adopts and, at times, mercilessly acts upon those ideas. The problem is not just that the white working class is at critical junctures manipulated into racism, but that it comes to think of itself and its interests as white.

Du Bois regards the decision of workers to define themselves by their whiteness as understandable in terms of short-term advantages. In some times and places, he argues, such advantages showed up in pay packets, where the wages of white, native-born skilled workers were high, both compared with those of Blacks and by world standards. But vital for the white workers Du Bois studied most closely was, as he puts it in a brilliant, indispensable formulation, that even when they 'received a low wage [they were] compensated in part by a ... public and psychological wage.' Here Du Bois not only emphasizes status but the extent to which status was bound up with real social gains. He continues:

They were given public deference ... because they were white. They were admitted freely, with all classes of white people, to public functions [and] public parks. ... The police were drawn from their ranks and the courts, dependent on their votes, treated them with leniency. ... Their votes selected public officials and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment. ... White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and cost anywhere from twice to ten times colored schools.
of ‘free labor’ understandably proved more durable and popular for ante-bellum white workers, especially in the North. At the same time, the white working class, disciplined and made anxious by fear of dependency, began during its formation to construct an image of the Black population as ‘other’ — as embodying the preindustrial, erotic, careless style of life the white worker hated and longed for. This logic had particular attractions for Irish-American immigrant workers, even as the ‘whiteness’ of these very workers was under dispute.

In terms of periodization, this suggests that the first sixty-five years of the nineteenth century were the formative period of working class ‘whiteness’, at least in the North, though obviously earlier habits of mind and patterns of settler colonialist oppression of Native Americans form an important part of the prehistory of working class whiteness. The Civil War, and particularly the blows struck by Blacks on behalf of their own freedom during the war, called pride in whiteness into question. However, whiteness was by that time firmly established and well poised to remain a central value, founded, in Du Bois’s phrase, not just on ‘economic exploitation’ but on ‘racial folklore’.  

In terms of method and evidence, this study is, after its debts to Du Bois and to the labor historians, most influenced by recent work in the historiography of slavery. It particularly seeks to use the sources that have enriched the study of slavery — folklore, humor, song and language — with the same subtlety as have Lawrence Levine and Sterling Stuckey. The analysis of whiteness as the product of specific classes’ attempts to come to terms with their class — never simply economic — problems by projecting their longings onto a despised race grows directly out of George Rawick’s closing chapters in From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community, in which Rawick probes the racism of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglo-European bourgeoisie. Rawick’s largely unacknowledged debt is to the Freudian tradition. I owe a similar debt, especially to the work of Frantz Fanon and Joel Kovel, who forcefully insist on the need for dialectical and materialist approaches within the psychoanalytic framework. ‘Just as the creation of white wealth pushed Blacks down’, Kovel writes, ‘so must the presence of degraded black bodies have exerted a continual stimulation to the continued pursuit of abstracted money.’ In the work of both Rawick and Kovel, projection of desires onto others is very far from being an idealist enterprise.

Because I have emphasized construction of identity through otherness and have often used changes in language as complex evidence of race and class perceptions, this study might appear to bear heavy influences from poststructuralist literary theories. In fact, it does not do so except in mak-

ing use of the older ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, ideas rediscovered by poststructuralism. With certain important exceptions, attempts to apply poststructuralism to history have founndered not only because they agonize so painfully about whether documents and language can reveal anything about the past, but also because they are prone to examining the interaction between ‘the individual’ and the text or setting for the idea that each generation finds different meanings in texts. Bakhtin, on the other hand, holds that ‘at any given moment ... language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects ... but also — and for us this is the essential point — into languages which are socio-ideological.’ Meaning is thus always multifaceted and socially contested, but it is neither absent nor unconnected with social relations. Indeed, for Bakhtin and for such brilliant modern, but not poststructuralist, students of language as Raymond Williams and Archie Green, the ambiguity of language affords it meaning.

The point that language is fluid and yet meaningful will have to be carried at this early point by a brief example. The socialist writer and maritime worker Stan Weir recalls that in the 1930s and 1940s at the port of San Francisco, the drums on the hoisting winches on the decks of ships were called niggerbeads by deck seamen. Within two years of the outbreak of the Second World War, the longshore workforce in San Francisco went from having only a tiny African-American minority to a Black majority. Though the union representing the deck seamen continued to exclude Black American members, the seamen acknowledged the presence of Black longshoremen by changing their language. The drums became gypsybeads. The change in signifiers itself signalled a new set of social realities and racial meanings. These meanings were different for the white seamen in a Jim Crow union, the white longshoremen in an integrated union, and the Black longshoremen. Gypsies might well have had still another view. If such a simple local example yields such complexity, we can approach discussion of a diverse working population defining and redefining terms such as hireling, master, boss, white slave, coon, servant and free white labor with considerable trepidation but also with excitement.

Notes

THE WAGES OF WHITENESS


Irish-American Workers and White Racial Formation in the Antebellum United States

Low-browed and savage, grovelling and bestial, lazy and wild, simian and sensual – such were the adjectives used by many native-born Americans to describe the Catholic Irish ‘race’ in the years before the Civil War.¹ The striking similarity of this litany of insults to the list of traits ascribed to antebellum Blacks hardly requires comment. Sometimes Black/Irish connections were made explicitly. In antebellum Philadelphia, according to one account, ‘to be called an “Irishman” had come to be nearly as great an insult as to be called a “nigger.”’ George Templeton Strong, a Whig patrician diarist living in New York City, considered Irish workmen at his home to have had ‘prehensile paws’ rather than hands. He denounced the ‘Celtic beast’, while maintaining that ‘Southern Cuffee seems of a higher social grade than Northern Paddy.’² Nativist folk wisdom held that an Irishman was a ‘nigger’, inside out. But by no means did nativists, who more typically developed a ‘moral’ rather than a ‘racial’ critique of the Irish, corner the market on calling the whiteness of the Irish into question. A variety of writers, particularly ethnologists, praised Anglo-Saxon virtues as the bedrock of liberty and derided the ‘Celtic race’.³ Some suggested that the Irish were part of a separate caste or a ‘dark’ race, possibly originally African. Racial comparisons of Irish and Blacks were not infrequently flattering to the latter group.⁴ The Census Bureau regularly collected statistics on the nation’s ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ populations, but kept the Irish distinct from even the latter group. Political cartoonists played on the racial ambiguity of the Irish by making their stock ‘Paddy’ charac-
ter resemble nothing so much as an ape. In short, it was by no means clear that the Irish were white.

There were good reasons – environmental and historical, not biological – for comparing African-Americans and the Irish. The two groups often lived side by side in the teeming slums of American cities of the 1830s. They both did America’s hard work, especially in domestic service and the transportation industry. Both groups were poor and often vilified. Both had experienced oppression and been wrenched from a homeland. Many Northern free Blacks who lived alongside Irish-Americans not only knew that their families had been torn from Africa by the slave trade but had also themselves experienced the profound loneliness, mixed with joy, that Frederick Douglass described as the result of escaping North from slavery, leaving loved ones behind. Lingering thus characterized both the Northern Black and Irish-American populations, and members of neither group were likely to return home again. When Douglass toured Ireland during the famine of 1845-46 he heard in the ‘wailing notes’ of Irish songs echoes of the ‘wild notes’ of the sorrowful songs he had heard in slavery and was ‘much affected.’ In 1829, Blacks and Irish were the co-victims of a Boston ‘race’ riot.

Shared oppression need not generate solidarity but neither must it necessarily breed contempt of one oppressed group for the other. For some time there were strong signs that the Irish might not fully embrace white supremacy. In cities like Worcester and Philadelphia, Blacks and Irish lived near each other without significant friction into the early 1830s. They often celebrated and socialized together, swapping musical traditions and dance steps. Even as late as the immediate post–Civil War years Lafcadio Hearn described Black and Irish levee workers in Cincinnati as sharing a storehouse of jokes and tales, of jigs and reels and even of dialect words and phrases. Love and sex between Black men and Irish women were not uncommon. In the 1834 anti-Black, antibalitionist New York City riots, Irish militiamen helped to restore order. Indeed, the antiabolition riots of the 1830s generally drew little Irish participation.

Most promisingly, abolitionists noted little popular racism, and much sympathy for the plight of the slave, in Ireland. In 1842, 70,000 Irish in Ireland signed an antislavery address and petition, which called on Irish-Americans to ‘cling by the abolitionists’ in seeking not just the end of slavery but of racial discrimination as well. The address advised: ‘Irishmen and Irishwomen! treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren’. Though much abolition agitation in Ireland was initiated by the Dublin Quakers, the most celebrated Irish abolitionist was Daniel O’Connell, who also led the massive Repeal campaign for Irish freedom through an end to union with Britain. Called ‘The Liberator’, O’Connell sponsored the 1842 petition knowing that his words would alienate some Irish-Americans and cut financial contributions to the Repeal struggle. Nonetheless, the very firmness of the politically sophisticated O’Connell’s stance on Irish America and abolition suggests that he was optimistic that many in the US would ultimately stand with him. Another of Ireland’s greatest mass leaders, the temperance organizer Father Theobald Mathew, joined O’Connell in sponsoring the petition drive. Men who knew a great deal about how to move large numbers of Irish people believed it quite possible that Irish-Americans, whom O’Connell saw as having much in common with all colonized people, might become critics of white supremacy.

The radical abolitionist followers of William Lloyd Garrison – including two of the Garrisonians most concerned with the white working class, Wendell Phillips and John A. Collins – busily organized for unity between the supporters of the ‘repeal’ of British colonialism and the ‘repeal’ of American slavery. The Garrisonians could claim a strong record of supporting Irish nationalism and rebuking American nativism, and their campaign began auspiciously when an overflow crowd of more than five thousand packed Boston’s Faneuil Hall to receive the petition and to pass resolutions for Black and Irish freedom.

But it quickly became apparent that the Irish ‘peasants’ who heartily applauded at Faneuil Hall were atypical of Irish-American opinion on slavery and race. The meeting had hardly occurred when a mob of Philadelphia Irish attacked Blacks gathering to celebrate West Indian emancipation – a cause dear to O’Connell – near the hall from which Blacks promoted temperance, Father Mathew’s passion. By 1843, the British Oweneite traveller John Finch would report to London readers the ‘curious fact’ that ‘the democratic party and particularly the poorer class of Irish emigrants, are greater enemies to the negro population ... than any portion of the population in the free states.’

O’Connell’s pleas and threats achieved nothing. Irish-American and Catholic newspapers, some of which had originally argued that the petition and address were fakes, soon began to attack O’Connell. They portrayed him as at best misinformed and at worst a meddler who associated with religious skeptics who threatened the unity of the United States. Irish-American contributions to the Repeal campaign were jeopardized, but O’Connell refused to move from his outspoken abolitionism, though he did distance himself somewhat from the religious unorthodoxy of some of the Garrisonians. Even O’Connell’s pointed threat to read proslavery Irish-Americans out of the nationalist struggle failed to rally his erstwhile
followers to the banner of abolition. 'Dare countenance the system of slavery', he warned, and 'we will recognize you as Irishmen no more.'

But Irish-Americans had already made their reply: they had refused to recognize O'Connell. An important and typical Irish-American answer to O'Connell, written by miners in New York, answered his call with a sharp denial that Blacks were 'brethren' of Americans and an unequivocal statement of their loyalty as Americans who were full 'citizens of this great and glorious republic'. The statement condemned O'Connell's address as the interference of an outsider, and declared that no cooperation with abolitionists would be forthcoming. From 1843 until 1854, Garrisonians and O'Connell's followers separately pushed unsuccessfully against the 'proslavery' position of Irish-Americans. They failed, succeeding only in weakening Repulse forces in both Ireland and the United States. When Father Mathew toured America in 1849, he rejected any cooperation with abolitionists, contending himself with fighting 'slavery' to alcohol.

Nor did the tremendous influx of desperate Irish emigrants fleeing the results of famine after 1845 produce significant amelioration in Irish-American attitudes toward Blacks. If the emigrants had antislavery and antiracist convictions in Ireland - and even there abolition fell on hard times after O'Connell's death in 1847 - they did not express those convictions in the New World. Irish-Americans instead treasured their whiteness, as entitling them to both political rights and to jobs. They solidly voted for proslavery Democrats and opposed abolition as 'niggerology'.

Astonishingly, for a group that easily furnished more immigrants to the United States than any other between 1828 and 1854, the Irish in New York City reportedly went to the polls in 1850 shouting not only 'Down with the Nagurs!' but also 'Let them go back to Africa, where they belong.' Similarly, Irish immigrants became leaders of anti-Chinese forces in California. Even before taking a leading role in the unprecedentedly murderous attacks on Blacks during the 1863 Draft Riot in New York City, Irishmen had developed a terrible record of mobbing free Blacks on and off the job - so much so that Blacks called the brakemen often hurled at them 'Irish confetti'. In 1865 the British worker James D. Burn observed, 'As a general rule, the people in the North have a lively feeling of dislike to men of colour, but it is in the Irish residents that they have, and will continue to have, their most formidable enemies: between these two races there can exist no bond of union except such as exists between the hind [deer] and the panther.'

Having refused to take the path that O'Connell had charted, Irish-Americans went far in the other direction. Instead of seeing their strug-
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speak as much of the attitudes of later generations of Irish-Americans as of arriving Irish emigrants. The evil 'race' that plagued the Irish Catholic imagination was white and British, not Black and African.31

Some accounts have suggested that Ireland nonetheless set the stage for Irish-American racism in more indirect ways. Abolitionists complained, with good reason, that the Catholic Church hierarchy offered at best highly muted criticisms, and at worst racist defenses, of slavery. They charged that the Irish were particularly loyal to priests. Modern scholarship has even suggested that religious obedience left the Irish in a state of 'moral childhood'.32 Aside from reminding us of the proximity of anti-Black and anti-Irish stereotypes, such a view fits poorly with the historical facts. The 'devotional revolution' in Ireland took hold rather late, after the onset of the potato famine, and after much emigration had occurred. Between 1815 and 1844, Catholic identity in Ireland had at least as much political as devotional content, and the mass nationalist politics in which Catholics participated had strong secular elements. Many Irish Catholics in the United States, even as late as 1855, were of the 'anonymous' (or nonpracticing) kind traditionally typical of south and west Ireland. They were little exposed to priestly influence on race relations or other matters, though their hatred of Protestant revivalists may have predisposed them to oppose abolitionism.33

More cogent, but still problematic, is the argument that the Irish Catholic past imparted so fierce a hatred of things British that it was natural, and even nationalist, for Irish-Americans to oppose abolitionism for its British connections. The ease with which Irish-Americans denounced 'Benedict Arnold' Garrison as a co-conspirator of the British supports this view, as does their readiness to accept the argument that blame for American slavery lay with the British, who had forced the institution onto the American colonies.34 However, at least during the period of O'Connell's abolitionist influence, there were alternative nationalist positions that as strongly indicted Britain for creating slavery through its colonialism, but also claimed that much of the credit for British emancipation went to Irish legislators in Britain's Parliament and connected the plight of the Irish with that of other victims of colonialism, including slaves. In denouncing O'Connell, his Irish-American critics somewhat distanced themselves from the nationalist movement, standing as Americans who resented the influence of 'foreigners' on their affairs. The emphasis of Irish-Americans on the common whiteness they wished to be recognized as sharing with other Americans may, as Frank Murray argues, have sped their assimilation.35

What the Irish background surely did impart was a sad and particular context, enshrined in both gloom and mist, in which Irish-American whiteness took shape. By the early 1830s, when the annual immigration of Irish Catholics passed that of early Protestants, agricultural misery, landlordism and dislocation in the handicrafts in Ireland had combined to produce an increasingly poverty-stricken stream of Catholic migrants. Migrants in the decade and a half before the Great Famine began in 1845 tended to have enough resources to exercise a limited but real choice about where to settle and what kind of work to take. Some achieved 'independence' from laboring for others, the goal that had animated their migration. Evidence suggests, according to Kerby Miller, that a substantial minority of those migrating managed to set up as farmers. Local studies show substantially greater opportunities to become skilled workers for those arriving in prefamine years than for migrants coming after the famine. But hard and usually unskilled wage work was nonetheless the typical experience of the prefamine Irish Catholic immigrant, with the group being far poorer, less skilled and more urban compared with native-born Americans or with other European immigrants.36

The Great Famine turned these tendencies almost into iron rules. Between 1845 and 1855, Ireland lost over two million emigrants - a quarter of her population - with famine-associated deaths taking over a million more. The evictions of 1849, 1850 and 1851 alone forced a million Irish from their homes. Roughly three in four Catholic Irish famine-era migrants came to the United States, now seeking only survival. Without savings, they had small choice in where to settle. Without marketable skills, they served, carried and hauled when they could get work and sometimes held 'skilled' but low-paying jobs as outworkers or apprentices. The most decidedly preindustrial and little Anglicized parts of Ireland - the South and the isolated West - came to furnish many migrants. These were often Gaelic speakers who had previously resisted emigration as a kind of deorai, or 'banishment', but now left Ireland dolefully, if perhaps also with an air of release. Although the poorest famine and eviction victims went to Britain, or died, the Irish emigrants to the US were nonetheless destitute and often nearly despairing. Recently peasants, now overwhelmingly laborers and servants, they settled in slums and shantytowns in cities in the United States, where large nativist political movements resented their religion, their poverty and their presence.37 They often came with only their weakened bodies and their memories, the latter horribly bitter but capable of being kindled into a deeply nostalgic glow. Their numbers afforded them the political possibility to become white. The desperate nature of their labor and their longings ensured that they would embrace that possibility to the fullest.
Irish Votes, Democratic Votes and White Votes

Coming into American society at or near the bottom, the Catholic Irish sorely needed allies, even protectors. They quickly found them in two institutions that did not question their whiteness: the Catholic Church and the Democratic party. Although the former proved more open to promoting Irishmen to positions of power – most bishops in the United States were Irish by the 1850s – the Democratic party was far more powerful as a national institution and more consistently proslavery and white supremacist in its outlook. The church did reflect the racial attitudes of its members, with Kentucky Catholic newspapers carrying advertisements for the return of runaway slaves. New York church publications hinted at, and then spelled out, the view that the 'negro is what the creator made him – not a rudimentary Caucasian, not a human in the process of development but a negro.' The official Catholic paper in New York City meanwhile advised that emancipated slaves moving North be 'driven out, imprisoned or exterminated'. However, these strong and unpleasantly Catholic stances, which existed alongside softer calls for amelioration of the slave's plight, at most reproduced existing white supremacist attitudes without challenging them. The Democratic party did more.

Jean Baker, a leading historian of the Democrats between the Age of Jackson and the Civil War, has acutely observed that the Democratic party reinvented whiteness in a manner that 'refurbished their party's traditional links to the People and offered political democracy and an inclusive patriotism to white male Americans.' This sense of white unity and white entitlement – of white 'blood' – served to bind together the Democratic slaveholders and the masses of nonslaveholding whites in the South. It further connected the Southern and Northern wings of the Democracy. But less noticed by scholars has been the way in which an emphasis on a common whiteness smoothed over divisions in the Democratic ranks within mainly Northern cities by emphasizing that immigrants from Europe, and particularly from Ireland, were white and thus unequivocally entitled to equal rights. In areas with virtually no Black voters, the Democrats created a 'white vote'.

From the earliest days of the American republic, Irish immigration to the United States had caused political division. The 'wild Irish', a term that invoked images of both 'semi-savage' Catholics and political rebels who were sometimes Protestants, excited particular concern among conservative Federalist politicians. Defense of immigration by the Jeffersonian Democrats helped to create a lasting preference for the
'races'. Caleb Cushing aroused the Massachusetts legislature by announcing late in the 1850s that he admitted 'to an equality with me, sir, the white man, — my blood and race, whether he be a Saxon of England or a Celt of Ireland.' He added, 'but I do not admit as my equals either the red man of America, or the yellow man of Asia, or the black man of Africa.\textsuperscript{425}

The most celebrated racial exchanges of the nineteenth century remain Democratic leader Stephen A. Douglas's stalkings of Abraham Lincoln as a race-baiter during the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates. The debates came hard on the heels of the 1856 elections — the first in which the great mass of foreign immigrants were voters — when national candidates had vied to best articulate the interests of the 'white man' by preventing 'white slavery'. In those elections Know-Nothings threatened the Democracy by running, in Millard Fillmore, a trained artisan commanding substantial loyalty from native-born workingmen who feared immigrant culture and immigrant debasement of the crafts.\textsuperscript{426} Douglas sought to make points among Illinois voters but also to speak to the needs of the Democracy as a national and particularly northern party. He decided, in the words of a recent biographer, that 'Negro inequality made up the platform on which he would stand in the ensuing years.'\textsuperscript{427} Mixing sex and politics, Douglas spoke for 'preserving not only the purity of [white] blood but the purity of the government from any ... amalgamation with inferior races.' He added, drawing lessons from the Mexican conflict, that the results of 'this amalgamation of white men, and Indians and negroes, we have seen in Mexico, in Central America, in South America and in all the Spanish-American states.' Douglas promised that Mexican War veterans could back his claims regarding the effects of racial 'impurity'. He further protested that Lincoln's belief that the Declaration of Independence applied to 'people of color would make the debate's listeners, who sometimes chanted 'White men, White men' during his speeches, the equals of Fiji Islanders.\textsuperscript{428} Significantly, he meanwhile also argued that Americans' ancestors were 'not all of English origin' but were also of Scotch, Irish, German, French, and Norman descent, indeed 'from every branch of the Caucasian race.'\textsuperscript{429}

Douglas spoke in the highly racialized political language increasingly common among Democrats, and to some extent among their opponents. Since Blacks wielded virtually no political power, to mobilize the white vote it was useful to declare white opponents and their ideas to be Black. Discussing Republican support in Illinois, Douglas found that 'the creed is pretty black in the north end of the State; about the center it is pretty good mulatto and it is almost white when you get down to Egypt [Southern Illinois].\textsuperscript{430} The Republicans became, in Democratic propagan-
da and especially in appeals from or directed at Catholic Irish Democrats, the 'Black Republicans'. Irish Democrats often scored the perfidy of the German 'Black Dutch' or of 'red' Germans in league with 'Black Republicans.\textsuperscript{431}

Lincoln's studied replies to Douglas's race-baiting stressed that a belief in natural rights applied to Blacks did not imply a desire to intermarry, that Republicans better protected the 'white man's' interests than Democrats did, and that slaveholders, not Republicans, practiced racial amalgamation. Other Republican propaganda was much uglier, branding the Democracy a 'nigger party' by virtue of its association with slavery and connecting its proslavery and pro-Irish policies. German opponents of Irish Democrats similarly cast doubts on the race of their adversaries.\textsuperscript{432}

Reginald Horsman's careful study of American 'racial Anglo-Saxonism' shows that 'politicians of Irish or Scotch-Irish ancestry' were especially prominent in challenging ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority and in arguing for the existence of a new and improved 'American' race of white men.\textsuperscript{433} Catholic Irish immigrants were also the best consumers of Democratic appeals that equated 'white men' and 'workingmen'. As Dale T. Knobel observes in Paddy and the Republic, 'Irish-Americans were sure to be enthusiastic about any treatment of American nationality that stressed the relevance of race while putting the Irish safely within the Anglo-Celtic racial majority.' The aptly named Democratic New York City Caucasian particularly won Irish-born readers to its view that defense of the 'white working class' during the Civil War was best carried forward by attacking abolition.\textsuperscript{434}

Democratic paeans to whiteness must have seemed a godsend to Irish Catholics, especially amid hardening anti-Irish attitudes after 1845. By the time of the famine, it could be argued — and was argued by Irish-Americans themselves — that longstanding British oppression had kept the Irish in political slavery and brought utter economic dependency. Irish-Americans were deeply offended in the 1856 campaign when a remark by Buchanan implied that England had not made 'slaves' of the Irish. But to make this argument, and to compare Irish and African oppression, forfeited any claim of Irish-Americans to be qualified for freedom by republican criteria. Past and present, their history seemed to be one of degradation. As John Ashworth has perceptively put it, since Irish-Americans were in many cases as economically dependent as free Blacks, no 'empirical' case could be made that the immigrants had shown themselves fit for freedom, and Blacks by comparison had proven themselves unfit to be 'true Americans'.\textsuperscript{435}

Nativists were somewhat constrained by the historic American accep-
tance of Irish immigrants, by the cultural proximity of Irish Catholics with clearly assimilable Celtic Protestants from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and by the ease with which Irish Catholics could pass as mainstream ‘white’ Americans. Anti-immigrant politicians therefore generally did not dwell on the popular ethnological theories that identified the Celts as genetically inferior. They instead concentrated on Irish subservience to religious authority and Irish degradation, loosely arguing at times that the famine itself had helped produce an Irish ‘race’ incapable of freedom. Some unfavorably compared the Irish with free Blacks, not so much as racial types as in terms of their alleged records of fitness to function as republican citizens. Black leaders like Frederick Douglass generally avoided anti-Catholicism but charged that the ignorance and intemperance of the Irish and their roles as ‘flunkeys to our gentry’ made it certain that Irish Catholics were not more desirable than Blacks as citizens of a republic.\(^8\)

The Democratic emphasis on natural rights within a government ‘made by the white men, for the benefit of the white man’ appealed to Irish Catholics in large part because it cut off questions about their qualifications for citizenship.\(^9\) Under other circumstances, Irish-American Catholics might not have accepted so keenly the ‘association of nationality with blood – but not with ethnicity’, which racially conflated them with the otherwise hated English. They might not have so readily embraced a view of ‘American nationality that stressed the relevance of “race” while putting the Irish safely within an Anglo-Celtic racial majority.’\(^10\) But within the constrained choices and high risks of antebellum American politics such a choice was quite logical. The ways in which the Irish competed for work and adjusted to industrial morality in America made it all but certain that they would adopt and extend the politics of white unity offered by the Democratic party.

‘Slaving like a Nigger’: Irish Jobs and Irish Whiteness

In 1856, Henry C. Brokmeyer, then a wage-earning immigrant German molder in St. Louis, wrote in his diary a question posed about one of his German-American friends: ‘Why doesn't he learn ... a trade; and he wouldn't have to slave like a nigger?’ Brokmeyer, who was to become not only independent of wage work but eventually lieutenant governor of Missouri, had picked up a pattern of usage common in American English since the 1830s.\(^11\) Not only was nigger work synonymous with hard, drudging labor but to nigger it meant ‘to do hard work’, or ‘to slave.\(^12\)

‘White niggers’ were white workers in arduous unskilled jobs or in servient positions.\(^13\)

But not all European immigrants had the same prospects to ‘learn a trade’, let alone to acquire independence from ‘slaving like a nigger’, by owning a workshop or a farm. English and Scandinavian immigrants were especially likely to achieve such mobility, while the Irish and Germans faced most directly the question of how and whether their labor was different from ‘slaving like a nigger’. But the Irish confronted the question much more starkly. Both before and after the famine, they were far more likely than the Germans to be without skills. The famine Irish infrequently achieved rural land ownership. Within large cities Irish-American males were skilled workers perhaps half as often as German-Americans, and were unskilled at least twice as often. Although frontier cities, perhaps attracting Irish migrants with more resources and choices, showed less difference between Irish and German occupational patterns, the Irish stayed at the bottom of white society.\(^14\)

In larger Eastern cities the divergence was great. In Boston in 1850, according to Oscar Handlin, 22 percent of the German-born and 6 percent of the Catholic Irish-born worked in nonmanual jobs. 57 percent of the Germans were in skilled trades, as against 23 percent of the Irish. 47 percent of the Irish and only 12 percent of the Germans were unskilled. Handlin in fact argued that free Blacks were for a time both economically and socially more secure in late antebellum Boston than were the Irish. In New York City in 1855, Germans were about twice as likely to do nonmanual labor as the Irish, and the Irish were nearly five times as likely to be without skills. In Jersey City in 1860, over half of Catholic Irish-American workers, and only one German-American in eight, did unskilled labor.\(^15\) In addition, many skilled and ‘independent’ Irish-Americans were only nominally or precariously so. Concentrated in declining artisanal crafts, often as outworkers or as highly exploited apprentices, Irish artisans and petty employers in some areas experienced significant downward mobility as they aged. Irish stevedores frequently descended into the ranks of employed longshoremen, and small Irish building trades contractors into the ranks of laborers, from year to year.\(^16\)

The prominence of Irish workers, especially women, in jobs involving service in households became especially pronounced. Christine Stansell’s work shows a dramatic ‘Irishization’ of such jobs, so that in New York City by 1850 three serving women in four were Irish-Americans. Faye Dudden’s Serving Women details the same trends in a broader study. Travellers took note of the change as one that placed Irish Catholics in servile positions. Thomas Hamilton, writing in 1834, found that ‘Domes-
tic service ... is considered degrading by all [Americans] untainted with the curse of African descent.' He bet that Andrew Jackson could 'not find one of his constituents, who, for any amount of emolument, would consent to brush his coat.' The Scottish and British migrants quickly came to share this republican view, according to Hamilton. The Irish, he added, took servile jobs.66

With the coming of the Irish into dominance in household work, much of the serrenolok republican practice of avoiding the term 'servant' for whites fell into disuse. From the Age of Jackson, reformers in New York City set out to reshape the behavior of often Irish 'domestic servants'. Thomas Hamilton's account echoed this usage and, as Dudden observes, even when the term domestic came to be used by itself, servant was implied. An 1849 traveller found that native-born Americans still avoided calling domestic workers of the same background servile names but reasoned, 'Let negroes be servants and, if not negroes, let Irishmen....' 'Help', Dudden comments, 'were likely to deny the name of servant, while domestics usually had to accept that title.'67

Irish-American workers also suffered an association with servile labor by virtue of their heralded, and at least sometimes practiced, use as substitutes for slaves within the South. Gangs of Irish immigrants worked ditching and draining plantations, building levees and sometimes clearing land because of the danger of death to valuable slave property (and, as one account put it, to mules) in such pursuits. Frederick Law Olmsted's widely circulated accounts of the South quoted more than one Southerner who explained the use of Irish labor on the ground that 'niggers are worth too much to be risked here, if the Paddies are knocked overboard ... nobody loses anything.'68

Irish youths were also likely to be found in the depleted ranks of indentured servants from the early national period through the Civil War. In that position they were sometimes called 'Irish slaves' and more frequently 'bound boys'. The degraded status of apprentices was sometimes little distinguishable from indenture by the 1840s and was likewise increasingly an Irish preserve.69 In New York City, Irish women comprised the largest group of prostitutes, or, as they were sometimes called in the 1850s, 'white slaves'.70 Given all this, the tendency to call Irish workers 'Irish niggers' is hardly surprising.

Irish-Americans needed 'nigger work'. As the Southern historian U.B. Phillips put it, the dangerous jobs in which Irishmen substituted for slaves 'attracted those whose labor was their life; the risk repelled those whose labor was their capital.' The same might be said about indentured servitude, domestic service by married women, prostitution and other hard jobs for which Irish-Americans desperately competed. Irish-Americans could not simply say, as many other white Americans could, that Blacks were suited to menial or subservient jobs. They bitterly resented comments by some of the elite that Blacks made better servants. As Hasia Diner has remarked, even after the Civil War Irish anti-Chinese agitation was predicated in large part on the need to defend Irish domestic servant women from competition from Chinese males.71

Job competition has often been considered the key to Irish-American racism. From Albon Man to Bruce Laurie, historians have emphasized that Irish workers, especially on the docks and shipyards in cities like Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and above all New York City, fought to keep away Blacks as job competitors and as strikebreakers. Many such direct incidents of Irish violence to intimidate Black workers did occur, especially during the Civil War, and there is some justification for Laurie's view that in Philadelphia Irish gangs undertaking racist violence were exercising job control.72 But to go from the fact that Irish workers really fought with Blacks over jobs on occasion to the proposition that Irish racism was really a cover for job competition is an economic determinist misstep that cuts off important parts of the past. Why, for example, when Irish Catholic immigrants said that they feared the 'amalgamation of labor' should historians hearken to their emphasis on labor and not to their emphasis on amalgamation?73

Moreover, to say that Irish-Americans acted as militant white supremacists because of job competition only invites the further question: why did they choose to stress competition with Black workers instead of with other whites? In 1844, Philadelphia Irish Catholics who mobbed Blacks to clear them from dockworking jobs had themselves recently been removed from handloom weaving jobs via concerted actions by Protestant weavers.74 Why did they not mob the Protestants? In most cities, even when we consider only unskilled work, the Irish had far more German-American competitors than Black ones. Why was the animus against working with Blacks so much more intense than that of against working with Germans? Indeed, as Harold Brackman has argued, the main competitors of the Irish for unskilled work were other arriving Irish.75 Why, given the strength of 'countyism' in Ireland and the patterns of intra-Irish factional fighting for canal-building jobs in the 1830s, did race and not time of emigration or county or even kin network become the identity around which Irish dockworkers in New York City could mobilize most effectively in the 1850s and during the Civil War?76

By and large, free Blacks were not effective competitors for jobs with the Irish. A small part of the urban labor force, negligible in most Mid-
western cities, they at best held on to small niches in the economy and small shares of the population, while the immigrant population skyrocketed in the 1840s and 1850s. Discrimination of the 'No Irish Need Apply' sort hurt Irish opportunities. Sometimes, as in an 1853 New York Herald ad reading 'WOMAN WANTED – To do general housework ... any country or color will answer except Irish. ...', such job prejudice was scarcely distinguishable from racial discrimination. But what was most noteworthy to free Blacks at the time, and probably should be most noteworthy to historians, was the relative ease with which Irish-Americans 'elbowed out' African-Americans from unskilled jobs. By 1850, for example, there were about twenty-five times as many Irish-American serving women in New York City as Black serving women.

One obvious reason that the Irish focused so much more forcefully on their sporadic labor competition with Blacks than on their protracted competition with other whites was that Blacks were so much less able to strike back, through either direct action or political action. As Kerby Miller has argued, Irish Catholic immigrants quickly learned that Blacks in America could be 'despised with impunity'. They also learned that free Blacks could be victimized with efficacy. Even the wholesale wartime atrocities against Blacks in the 1863 draft riots did not draw any opposition for assembled crowds nor vigorous prosecutions by municipal authorities. The attempt of Irish-American dockworkers in New York to expel German longshoremen from jobs under the banner of campaigning for an 'all-white waterfront' – perhaps the most interesting and vivid antebellum example of the social construction of race – reflects in part ill-fated Irish attempts to classify Germans as of a different color. But it also suggests how much easier it was for the Irish to defend jobs and rights as 'white' entitlements instead of as Irish ones.

Had the Irish tried to assert a right to work because they were Irish, rather than because they were white, they would have provoked a fierce backlash from native-born artisans. As it was, in major cities North and South immigrants comprised a majority or near-majority in artisanal jobs by the 1850s. Despite their concentration in unskilled labor, Irish-Americans were also a large percentage of the artisan population and of the factory-based working class, especially in sweated and declining trades. Native-born artisans often complained that Irish and German immigrants undermined craft traditions and sent wages down by underbidding 'American' workers. Historians as diverse in approach as Robert Fogel and W.J. Rorabaugh have held that the native-born workers were at least partly right in connecting the immigrants with a downward spiral of wages and a loss of control over work. Similar arguments have linked Irish immigration with the lowering of wages and the undermining of a promising labor movement of native-born women textile workers. But no means is the case connecting Irish immigration with the degradation of native-born workers the only one that can be made. Edward Everett Hale observed at the time that with the coming of the Irish, 'Natives [were] simply pushed up into Foremen ..., superintendents, ... machinists' and other skilled occupations. Hale's view has some defenders among modern historians, but the important issue here is that many native-born artisans, rightly or wrongly, paired the arrival of the Irish with unfavorable changes in their crafts and wages and participated in both anti-immigrant riots and anti-immigrant political movements. By casting job competition and neighborhood rivalries as racial, rather than ethnic, the Irish argued against such nativist logic.

Thus, the struggle over jobs best explains Irish-Americans' prizing of whiteness if that struggle is considered broadly, to include not only white-Black competition but white-white competition as well. Similarly, we must widen the focus from a struggle over jobs to include an emphasis on the struggle over how jobs were to be defined to understand more fully why the Irish so embraced whiteness. Specifically, the spectre of 'slaving like a nigger' hung over the Irish. In Ireland, peasants with small holdings had commonly described loss of a parcel as a descent to 'slavery'. Irish-Americans did not mind referring to Britain's 'enslavement' of Ireland. Sometimes, as in the 1856 presidential campaign, they insisted on it. Would-be friends of Irish-Americans as diverse as Edward Everett Hale, Orestes Brownson and the labor reformers of the Voice of Industry all alluded to the British imposition of slavery or worse on Eire. Irish-Americans were also receptive to appeals from Democratic politicians who emphasized the threat of 'white slavery' in the United States and were cool to Republican attempts to portray talk of 'white slavery' as reckless and demeaning to white workers.

But there were few specific attempts by the Irish or their friends to talk about a specifically Irish-American 'slavery' – a distended metaphor, as Frederick Douglass pointed out, but considerably less so than the generalized concept of 'white slavery', which was used. Immigrants, so hopeful of escaping slavery in Ireland, were hesitant to acknowledge a specifically ethnic defeat in the Promised Land, and real differences between the suffering in Ireland and that in America discouraged use of 'Irish slavery' to describe both situations. Most important, Irish-American Catholics did not want to reinforce popular connections of the Blacks and the Irish. If they could live with being called 'white slaves', it was harder to abide being called 'Irish
niggers'. When Irishmen repeated jokes about slaves complaining that their masters treated them 'like Irishmen', the laughter had a decidedly tense edge. But it was difficult to get out from under the burden of doing unskilled work in a society that identified such work and (some craft jobs) as 'nigger work'. If they were to sever this connection, the Irish could not just achieve a favorable labor market position vis-à-vis Blacks. They had to drive all Blacks, and if possible their memories, from the places where the Irish labored. Frederick Douglass warned the Irish worker of the possibility that 'in assuming our avocation he also assumed our degradation.' Irish workers responded that they wanted an 'all-white waterfront', rid of Blacks altogether, and not to 'jostle with' African-Americans. They thought that, to ensure their own survival, they needed as much.

Industrial Discipline, Sexuality and Irish Whiteness

An analysis centering on Democratic politics and the struggles to secure and redefine the jobs of Irish-American Catholics provides important explanations for that group's embrace of whiteness. But by itself such an analysis makes the unthinking decision to insist on being white seem altogether too utilitarian. Neither political nor psycho-economic calculations can quite explain why some Irish-American Catholics would, for example, mutilate the corpses of the free Blacks they lynched in the 1863 Draft Riot in New York City. Neither can such factors by themselves explain why many other Irish immigrants looked with fascination at these crimes nor why members of the community on subsequent days fought to keep authorities from retrieving the corpses. The psychological wages of Irish whiteness were sometimes of the sort based on rational, if horribly constrained, choices. But as frequently they were the products of what Frantz Fanon called 'the prelogical thought of the phobic' – the fevered thinking in which the racist nurtures his hatred as he 'project[s] his own desires onto the Negro' and behaves 'as if the Negro really had them.'

But what desires? And why should the projections of Irish-American Catholics onto Blacks have been accompanied by such great ferocity? Fanon's further insights are valuable in considering these questions, in that his work is a model of both a refusal to reduce white racism to its sexual dimensions and of a refusal to shrink from discussion of these sexual dimensions. Fanon argues that racism places Blacks within the category of the 'biological', defining them as sexual but also as without history and as natural, erotic, sensual and animal. Whiteness took shape against the corresponding counter-images, shunting anxieties and desires regarding relationships to nature and to sexuality onto Blacks.

For Irish-American Catholics, the anxieties and the desires resulting from a loss of a relationship with nature were particularly acute. Though gang labor, cottage industry and putting-out systems had some substantial currency in mid-century Ireland, no antebellum European immigrant group experienced the wrenching move from the preindustrial countryside to full confrontation with industrial capitalism in an urban setting with anything like the intensity of Irish Catholics. The German-American population, the most comparable group, was one that did develop significant splits within its ranks regarding slavery and white supremacy. German-Americans often came to the United States after experiences as 'wandering' artisans, encountering urban life and wage labor gradually and while still having ties to the countryside. Within the US, German-Americans were far less urbanized than the Irish and more able to preserve familiar work rhythms and measures of craft control on the job, both because of the presence of German-dominated craft union locals and because of the significant numbers of German-American employers using German labor processes.

Irish Catholics, especially but not only during the Great Famine, tended to emigrate directly from rural areas in which place mattered tremendously, contributing to a relationship with the past, to a sense of kinship and even to religious faith. Torn from their homes, they resettled in places remarkably different from Ireland. Not only relocated in cities, but in the most crowded quarters of them, Irish-Americans maintained only the most tenuous of ties to nature. Their efforts to preserve the right to keep pigs in cities – continuing into the 1850s in New York City – and their success in gaining jobs involving butchering and the care of horses should not obscure the general trajectory of Irish-American Catholics – from the Ould Sod to no sod at all in a very short time. One New England factory worker recalled that factory management turned to Irish-American Catholic labor in part because 'not coming from country homes but living as the Irish do, in the town, they take no vacations, and can be relied on at the mill all year round.' It would have been more exact to say 'coming from country homes but not in this country.'

Of course, the time discipline and routinization of work demanded by industrializing America were not uncontested by Irish immigrants. Direct actions influenced by the Irish background – from banhee yelling to terror – shaped working class protest in the United States, especially after the Civil War. Moreover, many Irish migrants defended preindustrial
styles of life through informal actions, refusing or failing to become sober and disciplined workers. As Bruce Laurie has observed, the arrival of so many Irish Catholics 'changed the ethnic base of traditionalism.' That is, the antebellum Irish were especially noted for drinking, for promiscuity, for brawling and for irregular work habits at a time when employers, educators and reformers actively attacked such vices as both immoral and inefficient.  

But it is vitally important to avoid romanticizing such informal resistance. To work — and the Irish desperately needed work — in an urban capitalist environment required conformity with time discipline and work discipline. If to some extent the Irish immigrants were 'insulated' from being directly bossed by their tendency to labor as outworkers, they also needed to work in settings very much subject to 'hurry and push' styles of management: in construction, in longshoring and carting, in service and in unskilled factory labor. Young Irish indentures, apprentices and child laborers in mills often suffered a psychological battering from Protestant employers bent on reforming the children, sometimes in front of their parents. Contemporary observers stressed not only 'uprroarious' Irish working class behavior of the traditionalist sort but also the subservience, loyalty to employers and even the asceticism of the Irish.

Not only were the opportunities for traditionalist resistance on the job circumscribed, but when Irish-American Catholics flouted Protestant and industrial capitalist standards regarding alcohol consumption and sexuality they often did so guiltily, knowing that their own standards were also being violated. If so the Irish Catholics drank heavily in the United States and organized politically around a hatred of temperance reformers, they did not do so in mere continuation of preimmigration patterns of life. Though drinking was a central part of social life for males in Ireland, per capita alcohol consumption there in the early nineteenth century trailed that of the United States. Moreover, the Irish who came to the United States in such great numbers came from a society with a tremendous mass temperance movement. Led by the legendary Father Mathew, that movement swept whole counties, inducing the poor as well as middle class Irish to take a temperance pledge and succeeding in reducing at least the visibility of alcohol consumption. Father Mathew enjoyed wide popularity among Irish-American Catholics as well. The connections between temperance and Protestantism, nativism and antislavery in the United States made Catholic Irish immigrants opponents (and targets) of the political movements against alcohol consumption. However, drinking was far from being an unproblematic symbol of Irish-American Catholic resistance to Protestantism or to industrial discipline. Those downing the drinks may well have considered themselves backsliders more often than they considered themselves traditionalist opponents of Protestantism and industrial morality.

More tortured still were Irish-American Catholic expressions of sexuality. The reformer Charles Loring Brace worriedly described Irish immigrants in New York City as experimenters with the doctrines of 'Free Love.' But Irish-American sexuality was at least as guilt-ridden as it was adventurous. Gender relations took shape within an immigrant population in which men frequently far outnumbered women. As avoidance of service occupations by single women and of wage work by married women became a badge of American respectability, Irish daughters and wives labored for the family’s survival, often in other people’s homes and — to a degree little noticed by historians — often in the households of native-born skilled workers. Men frequently left their families to look for work and sometimes never came back. Wives and husbands advertised in newspapers for the return of their spouses. Need, not desire, drove immigrant women into prostitution. At the least, sexual experimentation occurred under highly unfavorable conditions.

Moreover, the Irish background hardly nurtured a tradition of sexual freedom. Even before the mid-nineteenth-century Devotional Revolution in Ireland, attitudes toward extramarital sexuality were extremely negative, in part because of the importance of family and inherited land. Cal lithumpian bands in Ireland exposed the impure and ridiculed them with 'rough music' serenades. Such rituals continued in the United States, and newspapers with Irish-American Catholic readerships shared the concerns of Protestant reformers that 'sin, debauchery and crime [had] destroyed all natural and truthful perceptions of the roles of the white woman'. One dance hall and house of prostitution in a largely Irish section of antebellum New York City gave away Bibles to its customers. The same simultaneous defense of 'traditionalist' behavior and belief that such behavior was indefensible characterized much of Irish immigrant culture.

George Rawick’s argument that the typical early bourgeois racist constructed whiteness by imagining 'a pornography of his former life' and projecting it onto Blacks might be expanded in order to consider the racism of working class Irish-American Catholics who at times created a pornography of their present lives and at other times of their past. The Irish immigrants addressed their own divorce from connections with land and nature’s rhythms in part by attempting to define preindustrial behavior, and even longing for the past itself, as ‘Black’ behavior. When Irish immigrant minstrel entertainers sang 'Carry Me Back to Old Virginny', they both expressed feelings of loss and exile and at the same
time distanced themselves from those same feelings through blackface. Irish immigrants consistently argued that African-American workers were lazy, improvident and irresponsible. The immigrants were used to hearing such characterizations applied to themselves, and not only by political enemies but also by their own newspapers, which fretted over the need to develop a 'work ethic' among the newly arrived.

When free Blacks dramatically violated the Irish-American view of them as undisciplined and preindustrial — when they mounted temperance parades, for example — immigrant mobs stood ready to attack. But similarly mobbed were places in which Black and Irish people drank, schemed, played, made love and lived together. In part this pattern of crowd behavior reflected the violence of the urban underworld and the fact that crime and vice were arenas in which the races mixed with relative freedom. But the riotous Irish-American attacks on the common pleasures of Blacks and of fellow Irishmen — the 1863 New York City mob directed its ire not only in the murdering of African-Americans and the destruction of houses of prostitution but also in the smashing of musical instruments — also suggest how fragile and artificial was the Irish insistence on defining Blacks as preindustrial 'others'.

But the more frantically that Irish immigrants sought to distance themselves from Blacks, the more it became apparent that fascination mixed with repulsion in their attitudes toward African-Americans. The constant Civil War refrain of pro-Irish, Democratic politicians charged that Republicans and abolitionists had 'nigger on the brain'. But appeals to and by Irish immigrants betrayed a monomaniacal focus on race, and particularly on race-mixing, that the antislavery forces could not match. The failure to institute color bars to keep free Blacks away from 'white' jobs presaged not just integrated workplaces to worried Irish-American Catholics but the sexual 'amalgamation of labor'. Similarly, any application of natural rights to Blacks or advocacy of freeing the slaves was denounced as 'political amalgamation'. John H. Van Evrie's New York Day Book, which appealed to an Irish-American audience as The Caucasian and as 'The White Man's Paper', advised readers in the 'producing classes' that to cut their children's throats at once was preferable to handing them over to 'impartial freedom' and a consequent 'amalgamation with negroes'.

Sometimes Democratic biracial sexual fantasies focused on antislavery leaders. Horace Greeley, Charles Sumner, Lincoln and the beautiful young abolitionist orator Anna Dickinson were special objects of fascination to pamphleteers and minstrel performers. An extended advertisement in the New York Day Book for the 1864 pamphlet Miscegenation; or, The

Millennium of Abolition conveys several common features of such propaganda. These include the idea that emancipation would reverse racial positions and enslave poor whites, and that antislavery Germans had broken their ties with the white race. Above all, the passage shows the voyeuristic delight produced by reflection on Black sexuality and eroticism. It is alternately languid and fevered in describing a scene in which Sumner is introducing a strapping 'colored lady' to the President. A young woman (white) is being kissed by a big buck nigger, while a lady lecturer [Dickinson] sits upon the knee of a sable brother urging him to come to her lectures, while Greeley, in the very height of ecstatic enjoyment, is eating ice-cream with a female African of monstrous physique. In the background is a carriage, negroes inside, with white drivers and footmen; a white servant girl drawing a nigger baby and a newly arrived German surveying the whole scene exclamining, 'Mine Got, vot a gunny?'

Another fantasy appeared with equal frequency. In it, the goal of the antislavery forces, from Lincoln to Henry Ward Beecher to Clinton Rowan Helper, was to require interracial sex, and particularly Black–Irish sex. In part, this fantasy was used to explain real Black–Irish liaisons. The Day Book, for example, blamed 'Black Republicans' for the existence of 'the sexual conjunction of a Negro and a white woman', a relationship that was 'lust, but diseased, monstrous, hideous lust'. It reported that in the largely Irish Five Points area 'whites, negroes and mongrels readily "intermarry"', while blaming such relationships on the influence of the 'Abolition idea'.

More broadly, the idea of an antislavery plot to force intimacy between the Irish and Blacks enabled political conspiracy theorists to reproduce, in highly sexualized form, the appeal of minstrelsy. It was possible to reflect on Black–Irish similarities, and even on Irish desires to recapture that part of themselves they had defined as 'Black', while vigorously denying any affinity to African-Americans. One could imagine anything — as illustrated by the example of a New York World editorial that held that the 'logical outgrowth of . . . extravagant negrophilia' was the breaking of the incest taboo — and lay all guilt at the door of Blacks and 'Black Republicans'.

The process by which the word miscegenation entered American usage to become a pivotal issue in the 1864 presidential campaign is most revealing in this connection. Coining the term were the Irish immigrant Democrat D.G. Croly and his coauthor, George Wakeman, who produced a sensational 1863 pamphlet titled Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro.
Croly and Wakeman combined the Latin words *miscere* (‘to mix’) and *genus* (‘race’) in a neologism designed to replace the older term *amalgamation*. Miscegenation’s scientific ring gave it advantages, as did its success in conjuring up the ‘mongrelization’ of the United States as a political issue. By racist Democratic logic, Republican policies in 1864 threatened literally to establish a ‘miscegen’ nation. But Croly and Wakeman did not claim credit for this linguistic creativity. They instead anonymously wrote the pamphlet as an elaborate hoax, posing as pro-Republican abolitionists who saw mixing of the races as a ‘rich blending of blood’. Croly then sent copies to prominent antislavery leaders. He hoped to secure their endorsements for theories that could then be used to embarrass the Republicans in the coming elections.

As Sidney Kaplan’s able discussion of the pamphlet has shown, ‘the specific relationship of the Irish working-people and the Negro’ formed the core of the hoax. The authors of *Miscegenation* purported to believe that Black–Irish mixing was already rife. They especially stressed ‘con-nubial relations...between the black men and white Irish women...pleasant to both parties.’ When a ‘melanoleucic union’ of Blacks and Irish took place, they added, it would ‘be of infinite service to the Irish...a more brutal race and lower in civilization than the negro.’

*Miscegenation* succeeded briefly as a political dirty trick designed to produce a backlash among Irish and other white workers. Its effectiveness rested on Croly and Wakeman’s understanding that their audience was not only ready to believe in Republican plots but was also fascinated by the prospects of Black–Irish sexuality. In a curious twist, Croly attacked his own unsigned pamphlet in a editorial in the New York *World*, holding that it showed that ‘any man who chooses can write and cause to be printed whatever freak may come into his head’ and that anonymity can protect designing authors. It should be added that in constructing images of Blacks, opportunities abounded for Irish immigrants and for whites generally to indulge ‘whatever freak’ desire they imagined or to express perfectly understandable longings, without claiming authorship of those sentiments as their own.

Notes


Chapter 7

The Wages of Whiteness


20. Oosofsky, "Romantic Nationalism", 905 and 897-906 passim.

21. Ibid., 902 and 899-903 passim; Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, 133; Heron, Celts, Catholics and Copperheads, 62-65.


24. Quoted in Litwack, North of Slavery, 163; Knoebel, Paddy and the Republic, 10-12; Miller, Emigrants and Exiles, 197-204; Ralph Mann, "Community Change and Caucasian Attitudes toward the Chinese: The Case of Two California Mining Towns, 1850-1870" in Milton Cantor, ed., American Working Class Culture: Explorations in American Labor and Social History, Westport, Conn. 1976, 410 and 416-17.


29. Heron, Celts, Catholics and Copperheads, 62 and 67; Oosofsky, "Romantic Nationalism", 907-08; David Brion Davis, Slavery and Human Progress, New York 1984, 185.


35. Frank Murray, "The Irish and Afro-Americans in US History", Freedoomsday 22 (First Quarter 1982): 27-28; Oosofsky, "Romantic Nationalism", 892-93; Potter, Golden Door, 372. See also Dennis Clark, Hibernia America: the Irish and Regional Cultures, New York 1986, 91-116, but esp. p. 112 n.20 for commentary on how the desire to avoid being confeated with slaves "imparted a special individualism" to the behavior of Irish workers in the South.


74. Laurie, Working People, 124.


80. Berlin and Gutman, ‘Natives and Immigrants’, esp. 1191; Hirsch, Roots, 47; Rorabaugh, Craft Apprentices, 133 and 140, Welford, Chants Democratic, 118-19; Lane, Solidarity or Survival?, 28.


84. Gibson, New York Irish, 86-87; Edward Everett Hale, Letters on Irish Immigration, Boston 1852, 8; Voice of Industry, 7 May 1847; Thomas Ainge Devy, The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century; or, ‘Chivalry in Modern Days’, Greenpoint, N.Y. 1882, 101; Irish American, 21 January 1860, Murphy, Attitudes of American Catholics, 40-41; and Chapter 5 above.

85. Douglass, as reprinted in Herbert Aptheker, ed., A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, New York 1951, 1:312; Miller, ‘Green over Black’, 81-83. However, see also Devy, Odd Book, 164 and 168.

86. Wittke, Irish, 125; Rubin, ‘Black Nationalism’, 199; Freeman’s Journal (New York), 4 November 1843.

87. Very suggestive in this connection are Paul A. Gilje’s comments on antebellum racism as, in part, a focus for a more general hatred and contempt for unskilled workers. The Irish obviously had an interest in keeping that focus on Blacks. See Gilje, The Road to
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89. Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Mask, New York 1967, 159 and 165.

90. Ibid., 159-66.


93. Clark, Irish in Philadelphia, 26-7; Miller, Emigrants and Exiles, 251, and 'Green over Black', 48.

94. Quoted in Herbert Gutman, Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, New York 1976, 21; see also p. 63; Bernstein, Draft Riots, 30; Ernst, Immigrant Life, 71.


97. Laurie, Working People, 159; Bernstein, Draft Riot, 78-79 and notes 63-66 above. On Irish work rhythms, see Miller, Emigrants and Exiles, 270 and 274.

98. Clark, 'Babes in Bondage', 482; Prude, Coming, 117-18 and 215.

99. Wilentz, Chants Democratic, 267; Gutman, Work, Culture and Society, 21; Commons et al., Documentary History, 2:183; P. Foner, Life and Writings, 2:249-50; Shugg, Class Struggle, 93-119.


104. Stansell, City of Women, 83 and 178; Miller, 'Green over Black', 72; Hirsch, Roots, 57; Brace, Dangerous Classes, 41-42; D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 136; Diner, Erin's Daughters, 58; Elizabeth Blackman, Manhattan for Rent, 1787-1850, Ithaca, N.Y. 1989, 124.


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106. Asbury, Gangs, 56-60.


111. Bernstein, Draft Riots, 32-34 and passim.


114. Man, 'Irish in New York', 100; Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 321-22 and m.49 above.

115. Wood, Black Scare, 59-60 and 73; Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 275 and 316; Alexander Saxton, 'Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology', American Quarterly 27 (March 1975): 22-23. On the idea that emancipation would utterly reverse roles and even enslave whites, see Baker, Affairs of Party, 251-53; Seaman, What Miscegenation Is, 4-5; Potter, Golden Door, 377; Miller, 'Green over Black', 46, 64 and 99; Wood, Black Scare, 10.


117. Quoted in Miller, 'Green over Black', 68 and 73; see also Herron, Cults, Catholics and Copperheads, 65; Democratic Campaign Document No. 11, New York 1864, 2-3; Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 320.

118. See Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 325 and, for the quote, 109.

119. [Croly and Wakeman], Miscegenation, ii; Wood, Black Scare, 54-58; Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 278 n.6.

120. Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 278 n.6; [Croly and Wakeman], Miscegenation, 18.

121. [Croly and Wakeman], Miscegenation, 29-31; Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 281.

122. Quoted in Kaplan, 'Miscegenation Issue', 308.