

# THE CHILD WITH A LION

## The Utopia of Interracial Intimacy

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I see daylight again . . . trying to reiterate, with others, the encounter whose dazzlement remains with me: for it is of the order of the “first pleasure” and I cannot rest until it recurs: I affirm the affirmation, I begin again, without repeating.

—Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*

### Prolegomena

#### *The Significance of the Interracial*

The first question should be, why address the sex between black and white men in America as a social, political, aesthetic, or other category? Racism stigmatizes me as a white “nigger lover” for my intimacy with black men. My video works *Ghost Body*, *IDI*, and *message from the messenger: three poems by Paul Celan* address black-white interracial male homosexuality, objectifying material from my personal life, and I have been called on publicly to articulate positions of racial identity, desire, and representation on the occasions of screenings of my videos.<sup>1</sup> My work suffers what a review of the premiere screening of *Ghost Body* calls “an already familiar debate around the uses to which white gay artists . . . put Black gay male bodies.”<sup>2</sup> In the discussion following the screening, *Ghost Body* was denounced for “the master/slave relationship” of its imagery of black hands caressing a white body.

“Sexual politics” reduces the interracial to black self-hatred and white exploitation of social disparity. I chafe against the poverty of this politics. But I am wary of the ethic of speaking from one’s place of personal contradiction. To point out the poverty of the politicization of the interracial is not sufficient to render the interracial illegible as such. Darieck Scott’s 1994 essay “Jungle Fever? Black Gay

Identity Politics, White Dick, and the Utopian Bedroom” interrogates the project of “black men loving black men,” which necessarily disavows the interracial, and states the wish to “explode the way in which interracial relationships are currently understood to be a cognizable category, an intelligible *symbol* and rhetoric.”<sup>3</sup> But desire is constituted in the symbolic, primarily of gender. Expose the myths, divest deceptively simple “identity politics” of its power, and salvage life from degradation, but the romance of socially constituted difference remains.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Writing on the Interracial***

To know that one does not write for the other, to know that these things I am going to write will never cause me to be loved by the one I love (the other), to know that writing compensates for nothing, sublimates nothing, that it is precisely *there where you are not*—this is the beginning of writing.

—Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*

“The Child with a Lion” is premised on the notion that there is work yet to be done in writing about interracial sexuality, preserving what is fruitful about the category of the interracial—and, in America, interracial means black-white. I defend the right of interracial relationships to exist as such. Living in a racist society, I can do nothing other than celebrate the fact of interracial relationships. The inevitable deformations of social oppression in which difference and desire are constituted should not consign the happiness of the bedroom to the utopia invoked by the title of Scott’s essay. “The Child with a Lion” recognizes how intimate refuge can be found between those who would otherwise be estranged by race.

“Jungle Fever?” prompted me to write an essay on black-white interracial homosexuality, ostensibly from my vantage as a white male, even as I acknowledged the dubiousness of such an attempt. “Jungle Fever?” suggests that the interracial lacks inherent significance but devolves responsibility on a reader. “The Child with a Lion” proceeds as if interracial intimacy were a problem of the text, the inexorable force of racial difference, and its traces in writing, implicating not only the writer/reader but language itself. Race functions as an enabling fiction—or remains perhaps a disabling one.

Theodor W. Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* contains a parable of lion and antelope in which biological self-interest is posited as the “radical evil” of bourgeois subjectivity: the demonization of the other in the ideological “state of nature.” In “The Child with a Lion,” what Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*

calls the physiognomic “fact of blackness” is the salient manifestation of otherness for the promise of reconciling subject and object. The union of black and white becomes an image of the redemption found in the Book of Isaiah, expressed in the philosophical writings of Hegel, Fanon, and Adorno and in the poetry of Paul Celan and Aimé Césaire. This side of redemption, however, experiences of interracial intimacy present “canonical figures” of language such as Michel Foucault describes in Raymond Roussel’s writings; the lovers’ bodies furnish “found objects” [*trouvailles*] that reveal the “never yet seen” [*jamais vu*] in the “already seen” [*déjà vu*], as in André Breton’s surrealist autobiographies *Nadja* and *Mad Love*; and erotic physiognomies become “solar,” speaking Georges Bataille’s “language of flowers.”<sup>5</sup>

In “The Child with a Lion,” experiences of interracial intimacy provide occasions for writing, and writing always presents the problem of critically reflecting experience in thought and thought in language: writing itself becomes the object. The formal qualities of “The Child with a Lion” are central to its epistemological concerns. Interracial intimacy is an occasion for writing in Walter Benjamin’s and Adorno’s allegorical and dialectical, immanently speculative mode, following, for example, the aphorisms of Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*. Racial allegories are always inadequate to interracial intimacy’s irreducibly personal experiences, which present much that would belie any racial diegesis. But the social reality of race exists prior to thought’s ability to render such individual experiences meaningful. “The Child with a Lion” states that the “only way to get at the reification of race is through its further objectification”—in this case, its objectification in writing. Like any commodity, blackness may contain ever-unfolding possibilities of polysemy, but blackness remains univocal as such. Thirty years after the social project of overthrowing race was abandoned, it is remarkable how accommodating blackness proves itself as an externalized object. In America blackness remains the object, and subjectivity remains implicitly white: blackness is constantly rehabilitated, even if sometimes under cover of self-conscious pastiche, and it functions ideologically in much the same ways regardless of the interpellated subject, black or white. That this externalization is a function of the denial of history—especially of victims’ histories—there can be no doubt. Race is ideological, blind as well as blinding to the contentious history of structured inequality in America. The rhetorical force of racial difference presses for priority over the manifest complexities of lived experiences of interracial intimacy, experiences that, like all that is not reducible to the conceptual and is thus too easily forgotten, remain otherwise inchoate, though sometimes thankfully so.<sup>6</sup> The fictive “I” calls out subjectivity and its conundrums, critically objectifying moments of

reified consciousness. Rather than treat interracial intimacy as a poorly or under-represented social phenomenon for which my writing could somehow compensate, I recognize it as simultaneously overdetermined and unrepresentable. “The Child with a Lion” remains trapped in tautologies of racial discourse, but there is no other choice. Parables and their emblematic images provide allegorical juxtapositions, whose objective possibilities are textual: sudden reversals enact the convergence of opposites that exposes their symbolic functions, for which my consciousness as writer serves as case or instance.

Emblematic images of interracial intimacy must be regarded dialectically to get at the social truth in their appearance; they must not be seen merely as false stereotypes or ideological cover for continued oppression. An image of a caress should not be held responsible for a world of beatings.<sup>7</sup> Images of racial reconciliation, even the most naive, apparently historically superseded or otherwise easily defamed, should be apprehended not only for the deformations of their social-historical origins but for the redemption they demand.

The passionate effort to express oneself in language, keeping banality at a distance, is the attempt, however hopeless, to extricate experience from its mortal enemy, which engulfs it in late bourgeois society—oblivion.<sup>8</sup>

“The Child with a Lion” follows the example of Barthes’s *Lover’s Discourse*, “trying to reiterate . . . the encounter whose dazzlement remains,” the writing of which “cannot rest until it recurs.” Through montage and bricolage, a potentially infinite series of iterations of one specific stereotype of interracial male homosexuality brings otherwise heterogeneous textual sources into writing about the situation of a “little white boy” with a “big black man,” particular instances of which become prismatic, refracting all that surrounds them.

Confronted with the other’s brilliant originality, I never feel myself to be *atopos*, but rather classified. Sometimes, though, I manage to suspend the action of unequal images; I divine that the true site of originality and strength is neither the other nor myself, but our relation itself. It is the originality of the relation which must be conquered. Most of my injuries come from the stereotype.<sup>9</sup>

“The Child with a Lion” asserts critical possibilities of writing immanently, rather than from outside the stereotype.<sup>10</sup> I seek not to authorize the stereotypical scenario with my incidental personal experiences but to redeem the utopia promised by the stereotype, the happiness the interracial symbolizes that causes it to be

stigmatized by white and black people alike.<sup>11</sup> To adapt what Adorno wrote of *Romeo and Juliet*, without the longing for a situation in which love would no longer be mutilated and condemned by patriarchal or any other powers, the presence of the two lost in one another would not have the sweetness over which the taboo that prohibits knowledge of any positive utopia remains powerless.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Attendant Emblem***

An image of a “little white boy” with a “big black man” is inevitably emblematic, but this fact is no injustice for the individuals involved. Dido’s lament “Remember me” is on the lips of one of the ubiquitous but invisible security guards at an art museum who meets the eyes of a patron in Isaac Julien’s film *The Attendant* (1992, 8 min.): an older black man singing to a younger white man across chasms of age, class, and race. Such tableaux are rehearsed in myriad instances of daily life. And I do remember. Looking up from the sidewalk, I catch the eye of a hulk of a man, gray cotton T-shirt and shorts, brow soaked with sweat, radiant skin black with sun-drenched labor, while I, pale, hide from summer in the shade. He stops, looks at me, questioning, but my embarrassed glance, inconclusive smile, and lowered eyes push him back to the moving truck and another piece of furniture for the white yuppie couple waiting in a doorway across the street. The couple’s knowing, disapproving gaze: the pathos of attraction we shared, the image we made, is no less genuine for being fully legible.

### ***The Utopia of Interracial Intimacy***

One is faced with the unhappy choice of recognizing race as a social relation produced by contingent history or recognizing race itself as a productive social relation. To call an interpersonal relationship interracial threatens to reduce it to its constitution in the social relations of race. To salvage any instance of what might otherwise be understood as interracial demands that its contingency—its individual particularity—be recognized in a way that opens onto the historical contingency of race as a social relation. But what happens when race is suspended between the two aspects—socially constituted, constitutively social—of its unhappy complexion? I do not think that there can be an adequate “theoretical discourse at the convergence of race and sexuality.”<sup>13</sup> One will always be unhappy with any given conceptual closure: in social reality, the questions remain open. The recognition of interracial desire as such, the recognition of racialized desire, can ideologically foreclose the recognition of intimacy, the longed-for mutual transparency of lover and beloved, the loss of self in the other, which, it is shameful to have to state explicitly, is as possible interracially as intraracially.

I offer “the utopia of interracial intimacy” rather than the utopian quality of interracial intimacy because I wish to contrast “the utopia [the nowhere] of interracial intimacy” with the utopian project of the interracial. The interracial should not be offered as a program counterposed, for instance, to “black men loving black men”—or to the imperative of white people loving white people that is seldom stated as such. All desire in America is racialized, but only interracial desire is required to answer for the reification of race. Social identity and hence relations with others, intra- or interracial, are racialized. Because it is endangered from without, interracial intimacy may be pressed to apologize for itself. But the solidarity that results from slogans like “Love knows no color” is paradoxical, especially when affirmed by images of interracial couples, contrasting their colors.

There are no more ideologies in the authentic sense of false consciousness, only advertisements for the world through its duplication and the provocative lie which does not seek belief but commands silence.<sup>14</sup>

Love does know color. To assert otherwise is to remain unconscious of the racial schizophrenia from which one seeks escape. Racial consciousness is not elective. But how may I understand another’s color in relation to my own? In the economy of ego- and object-libido, interracial desire displaces what Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* calls the narcissism of the racial subject, posing specific questions for interracial intimacy. Can the other constituted as racially different become part of oneself? How does the internalization, the assimilation, of difference negate oneself? What results from such negation? (Of course, these questions leave aside the ways one’s color may be affirmed by the racial other—the glow of my translucent hand on Zhari’s back.) As a white person, I may celebrate the blackness of another, in this way negating my whiteness, but doing so does not negate me. Hating one’s own race is not merely self-hatred—for who does not hate himself?—but also the hatred of one’s social condition. “Black men loving black men,” electing to love only others of one’s own race per se, is affirming only of the racial self; its silence banishes the longing for an existence beyond race. (At the same time, love does know transcendental moments, beyond the negations of difference, which I have certainly shared—with others not mentioned in these pages as well as some who are—but not here. In these pages a reader will not find true love, only its broken promise: the experiences recalled here remain trapped in the phantasmagorias of race.)<sup>15</sup>

What “the utopia of interracial intimacy” offers is the consciousness that nowhere and under no existing conditions does race disappear; the appeal of the

utopian project of the interracial is the disappearance of race. Individuals are intimate, not races: races are discrete. The concept of the interracial necessarily rests on and even supports the reification of race. But the utopian promise of racial reconciliation is precisely what does not exist—what cannot exist. One can imagine a better world without race, but the deformed imagination of this better world—deformed because it bears the marks of and is a construction of the social relations in which it originates and which it ostensibly opposes—is either a world of harmonious heterogeneity or a nonracial world where the physiognomic referents we recognize as racial do not exist, everyone being of the same race. But the actual object of such thought is the nonrecognition of racial difference, and this nonrecognition must lie outside articulation, in any other than a fleeting way. The promise of the interracial cannot be fulfilled, at least not on its own terms. The disappearance of race between two individuals, for instance, is so fragile as to precipitate race again if disturbed. If race does disappear contingently, this moment must remain unknown. This disappearance—the opacity of race rendered momentarily transparent—remains unknown and unknowable from without, but it is also unknown and unknowable from within, because it is unknowable in terms of race: the fugitive moment is not to be understood as interracial. But the presence of the interracial can serve as a sign, in the absence of the impossible moment. Hence the paradox of “the utopia of interracial intimacy” that I seek to explore.

### ***In Pianissimo***

The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the “disenchantment of the world.” Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated . . . into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. It is not accidental that our great art is intimate and not monumental, nor is it accidental that today only in the smallest and intimate circles, in personal human situations, in *pianissimo*, that something is pulsating that correctly corresponds to the prophetic *pneuma*.<sup>16</sup>

### **Essays on the Interracial: Parables of Childhood and Lions**

#### ***Little White Boy***

I am the little white boy sitting in the back of the bus. A big black man looks up from his book, meets my eyes. The presence of this gross physical difference in another is the source of my longing. I am a little white boy, my first time with

Dwight, in the big black man's apartment. I am nervous. (From *Ghost Body*: "What would a big black guy like [that/him] want to do with a scrawny white kid like me?" The next time I see Daniel, the "big black guy," he tells me that the attraction is dangerous because I am so similar, physically, to his most recent lover, Sean. A year after the fact, he watches the video. He laughs and asks, "Is that what I am to you, a 'big black man'?" "Yes," I laugh. He smiles.) Finally, the big black man walks up to the little white boy, looks down, and smiles. He reaches around my waist and pulls me to him. I rest my head on his chest. ("I am thrilled.")

### ***The Child with a Lion***

Spending the night at Dwight's apartment, I wait for him to finish showering. I flip through TV channels until I reach an image of frolicking lion cubs: an episode of *Nature*, the Public Broadcasting Service documentary series.<sup>17</sup> Tracking lions in Africa brings Anthony Hopkins to a Masai community. Hopkins's native guide and the tribal villagers provide the possibility of different human relationships to the natural world. The lions bring together Hopkins, who is animated by their natural wonder; the members of the traditional community of the veldt, for whom the lions are a daily presence; and those who straddle the divide between European and African, the Western-educated tracker and the few villagers who are pointed out for having forsaken the city and returned to traditional life. Race is apparently superseded by cultural difference when humanity is posited as a natural species.

But the charm of human physiognomic difference is cast on the images. I am struck by the affinity of the scene of Hopkins's first physical contact with a lion, his feeling the soft fur and slack skin of a lioness while she lies tranquilized during examinations by field biologists; with the scene of Hopkins's entrance into the village, the Masai touching his face and hair. Hopkins's broad, sunburned-pink face, his wide-set sparkling blue eyes beneath wind-tussled white hair, contrasts with the delicate, gaunt, smaller dark visages of the Masai. The visual juxtaposition motivates the Africans' physical contact with Hopkins. I am struck by the possibility that Hopkins is as strange and wonderful to the Africans as the lioness is to him.

Embodying, as Hopkins says, natural "majesty," the lions contrast with humanity's nervous and unwieldy members, European or African. Hopkins anthropomorphizes the lions, looking for analogues to human social behavior in the pride. But the zebras and wildebeests on which the lions prey are more akin to human beings. Is it their victimhood? The lionesses, who do the real work of the hunt, pull down their quarry as a group. Hopkins calls this sight an image of "mob rule": the lynch mob. He says that the larger, more difficult animals, such as water

buffalo, bring about cooperative effort, just as humans come together in the face of adversity. Historical footage shows a ritual hunt: a group of Masai men corner and slay a lion. I imagine a big, beautiful black man being brought down by a mob of white racists—the miserable Lilliputians!

The flight and struggle are hopeless, perfunctory, mere staging for the lackadaisical rending of the defeated body. I wonder at the documentary's lingering on this scene, a certain reversal of the sexual metaphor of the hunt in which the anxiety of pursuit eclipses the conquest itself. One lioness jumps on top of the zebra, grabbing the neck, while others grab at the mouth and anus, pulling the victim to the ground. In the footage it takes a long time to succumb, still kicking as the lionesses begin to disembowel it, tearing at the lower abdomen. Their relentless fury and firm affection: the destruction of the kill does not seem cruel or hateful. The lionesses are curiously dispassionate, opaque: what would I feel looking into that terrible face? But the image before me shows the pathetic victim, rendered down to absolute, final objecthood.

And I am in that loving embrace, caught between the claws and jaws of lions, the heat of breath drowning what would ebb away, my life. I am the zebra as it is dragged down and, in the moment that it finally succumbs, goes limp and gives itself up. Then Dwight emerges from the bathroom steam, removes his towel, and tumbles down onto me, so gently, but with terrifying strength, rolls me under his big body on the futon, under the broad, smooth, warm envelope of brown skin, and brings me back up, whole, calling me back from the splayed, eviscerated form I would readily assume. On the television screen two lions roll together and paw at each other in the drowsy glow of the tall, golden savanna grass.

Out of the strong came forth sweetness. (Judg. 14.14)

I look into Dwight's beaming face.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (Isa. 11.6)

Weeks later I read Melvin Dixon's "Red Leaves." Lonny, the street kid who narrates the story, runs with a mean bunch, struggling with his homosexual impulses. At the climax of the story Lonny and his friends jump Metro, a young man who has been flirting with Lonny. The lionesses pounce on the zebra; the wolves slay the lamb. Lonny looks on the scene of Metro's gang rape and murder:

I try to make it to the street, but Cuddles yanks me back. He hands me a knife and I hold it, looking meaner than I am. “You ain’t never had a chance,” I’m thinking and realizing it’s for Metro, not for me. Cuddles finishes and pulls out of Metro’s dripping mouth. His fist lands against Metro’s jaw, slamming it shut. I hear the crack of bone and a weak cry. The next thing I know Maxie, still pumping Metro’s ass and slapping the cheeks with the blade broadside, draws blood, and once he finishes he shoots the blade in, gets up quickly, pulling the knife after him. Lou’s hand follows. Then a flash of metal and fists.<sup>18</sup>

I fear becoming that lamb, less than sacrificial, mere prey, existence casually revoked. Revoked, an exalted existence: I wait for actualization, to be that zebra, existence justified: but I am just a human child.

(Blindly raging, an adult male kills a cub that, approaching too closely, has unwittingly offended the lion’s claim to the zebra carcass. After a day of licking the cub’s body in a futile attempt to revive it, the cub’s mother and siblings give themselves over to devouring its tiny limp body. One sibling scrambles away, playfully pushing aside the dry grass stalks and carrying the torn skin of the dead cub’s face in its teeth. Hopkins muses lamely about the inscrutable instincts that motivate these sadly innocent events.)

***A Parable of the Lion and the Wildebeest [Gnu, or Nqu]***

The lion is the negation of the wildebeest. Their loving embrace is rehearsed again and again in the imagination of the natural world. The necessity of violence: Deon tells me that life is “the survival of the fittest.” The homage paid to nemesis: the blond lion—the white man—is a sacred animal.

je salue le vieux lion et son courroux de pierres

[I salute the old lion and his stony wrath]<sup>19</sup>

The negritude of the wildebeest: bald gray skin, wiry black mane, wide black eyes, the gnu is a sacrificial animal. The wildebeest could live well without the lion: a dream of autonomy. The lion could not live as well without the wildebeest: an anti-colonial fantasy of “one settler, one bullet”—or a settler fantasy, a white fantasy of self-abnegation? The identities of the wildebeest and the lion lie in mutual antagonism. The wildebeest does not exist in a world without lions; the lion is diminished without the wildebeest. But the lion depends on the wildebeest in a way that the wildebeest does not depend on the lion, to be killed and rendered for food. The wilde-

beest is constituted by its negation in the lion; it exists for-self and for-other, as prey.

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* questions the application of the dialectic of lordship and bondage, through which Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* establishes intersubjectivity, to racialized black subjectivity. *Black Skin, White Masks* excludes from Hegel's ontology what is posited as a nonontological black subjectivity, a subjectivity of nonbeing:

There is of course the moment of "being for others" of which Hegel speaks, but every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society. . . . For not only must the black man be black; he must also be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man.<sup>20</sup>

"Ontological resistance," the assertion of being for-self while being for-other, is crucial to Hegel's account of the slave's subjectivity and of subjectivity as such: it is the master's subjectivity that is impoverished in the relationship of slavery:

The *truth* of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman. This, it is true, appears at first *outside* of itself and not as the truth of self-consciousness. But just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness.<sup>21</sup>

*Black Skin, White Masks* asserts that the racial negation of the subjectivity of the black person makes black subjectivity an impossibility: subjectivity per se is white. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* the being for-self that knows itself through being for-other is the slave self, and *Black Skin, White Masks* understands the posited relationship of lordship and bondage to be among white people. The dialectic of lordship and bondage assumes that the lord must recognize the consciousness of the bondsman as an external object:

In this recognition the unessential consciousness is for the lord the object, which constitutes the *truth* of his certainty of himself. But it is clear that this object does not correspond to its Notion, but rather that the object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness. What now really confronts

him is not an independent consciousness, but a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-self* as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action.<sup>22</sup>

The aporia of black subjectivity proposed by *Black Skin, White Masks* reveals that black consciousness depends on its exclusion from whiteness in a way that white consciousness does not depend on blackness:

What is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact.<sup>23</sup>

The contradiction embodied by humanist racism tends toward the elimination of racial difference: black people must be recognized as human and not black, or as black and not human.

For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. (10)

The humanity of the slave is taken for granted in Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage. More: the slave's condition contains the truth of the actual condition of human self-consciousness. But what of the other, negated black self of *Black Skin, White Masks*? A protest will be raised: whiteness does not exist without blackness, as other.

The Negro is not. Any more than the white man. (231)

*Black Skin, White Masks* asserts that black must recognize white, but white need not recognize black. It is impossible to apprehend this argument without seeing that the Nazi extermination of European Jewry forms its most salient fact. Césaire joins Maurice Thorez in proclaiming at a rally in liberated Paris that "we are all German Jews!" but he knows that no one believes him.

Als uns das Weiße anfiel, nachts;  
als aus dem Spendekrug mehr  
kam als Wasser;  
als das geschundene Knie  
der Opferglocke den Wink gab:  
Flieg!—

Da  
war ich  
noch ganz.

[When whiteness attacked us, at night;  
 when from the alms jug flowed  
 more than water;  
 when the flayed knee  
 gave this hint to the offertory bell:  
 Fly!—

Then  
 I was  
 whole still.]<sup>24</sup>

Only after the collapse of the feudal caste system, under which the subjugated position of Jews was strictly delimited, could European societies become free to eliminate Jewishness. And this fratricide meant the absolute denial of the other. As a rule, masters are not free to do away with their slaves. After slavery America became more acutely racist, posing two sharply opposed possible solutions to the dialectical negation of blackness: the elimination of race as a social relation among people or the elimination of black people. But the problem of race in America remains suspended and therefore remains, at any given moment, insoluble.

Die Pole  
 sind in uns,  
 unübersteigbar  
 im Wachen,  
 wir schlafen hinüber, vors Tor  
 des Erbarmens,  
  
 ich verliere dich an dich, das  
 ist mein Schneetrost,  
  
 sag, daß Jerusalem *ist*,  
  
 sags, als wäre ich dieses  
 dein Weiß,  
 als wärst du  
 meins,  
  
 als könnten wir ohne uns wir sein,  
  
 ich blättere dich auf, für immer,

du betest, du bettest  
 uns frei.<sup>25</sup>

[The poles<sup>26</sup>  
 are inside us,  
 insurmountable  
 when we're awake,  
 we sleep across, up to the Gate  
 of Mercy,

I lose you to you, that  
 is my snowy comfort,

say that Jerusalem *is*,

say it, as though I were this  
 your whiteness,  
 as though you  
 were mine,

as though without us we could be we,

I open your leaves, for ever,

you pray, you bed  
 us free.]<sup>27</sup>

During discussion of Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage in a course titled "Self and Other," I venture that Enlightenment subjectivity, the consciousness that is aware of its own condition, succeeds Hegel's slave consciousness: "We are all the children of slaves." The one black man in the class, Reggie, is incredulous: "Excuse me?" The others—white women—laugh approval.

I flirt with Reggie. He suggests that I read Tennessee Williams's "Desire and the Black Masseur" after he watches a segment of footage from *message from the messenger*, Dwight tonguing my anus.

And meantime, slowly, with barely a thought of so doing, the earth's whole population twisted and writhed beneath the manipulation of the night's black fingers and the white ones of day with skeletons splintered and flesh reduced to a pulp, as out of this unlikely problem, the answer, perfection, was slowly evolved through torture.<sup>28</sup>

### ***A Parable of the Lion and the Antelope***

The system [idealism] in which the sovereign mind imagined itself transfigured, has its primal history in the pre-mental, the animal life of the species. Predators get hungry, but pouncing on their prey is difficult and often dangerous; additional impulses may be needed for the beast to dare it. These impulses and the unpleasantness of hunger fuse into rage at the victim. . . . In the advance to humanity this is rationalized by projection. The “rational animal” with an appetite for his opponent is already fortunate enough to have a superego and must find a reason. The more completely his actions follow the law of self-preservation, the less can he admit the primacy of that law to himself and others; if he did, his laboriously attained status of a *zoon politikon* would lose all credibility.

The animal to be devoured must be evil. The sublimation of this anthropological schema extends all the way to epistemology. Idealism gives unconscious sway to the ideology that the not-I, *l'autrui*, and finally all that reminds us of nature is inferior, so the unity of self-preserving thought may devour it without misgivings. This justifies the principle of the thought as much as it increases the appetite. The system is the belly turned mind, and rage is the mark of each and every idealism. . . . The august inexorability of the moral law [is] this kind of rationalized rage at nonidentity. . . . [The law of self-preservation is] the radical evil that irks it in another. . . .

Self-preservation . . . is truly a law of nature for all living things. Its content is the tautology of identity: what ought to be is what is anyway; the will turns back upon the willing; as a mere means of itself it becomes an end. This turn is already a turn to the false consciousness. If the lion had a consciousness, his rage at the antelope he wants to eat would be ideology.<sup>29</sup>

### ***“Sugar Baby!”***

The idealist construction of the subject founders on its falsely taking subject to be objective in the sense of something existing in-itself, precisely what it is not: measured against the standard of entities, the subject is condemned to nothingness. Subject is all the more the less it is, and all the less the more it believes itself to exist, to be for itself something objective. As an essential moment, however, it is ineradicable. Upon the elimination of the subjective moment, the object would come apart diffusely like the fleeting stirrings and twinklings of subjective life.<sup>30</sup>

“Sugar baby!” Dwight notes the light brown, fingertip-size birthmark on the skin that rides over my left hip, a part of me few ever see. Stephanie tells me about other white girls having sex with black guys at college and being surprised that black people don’t have “spotted” butts—spots of pink or tallow suggested by palms and soles? Dwight places one fingertip on my hip, covers the candy mark, and it matches the color of his skin; I call it “the one spot of you on me.” Sometimes he calls my semen “your sugar babies” and calls me his “sugar baby”—and I become that one spot of his brown on my pink skin, the real me.

### ***“Golden Gate”***

you are everything  
and everything is you<sup>31</sup>

*Golden Gate.*—Someone who has been offended, slighted, has an illumination as vivid as when agonizing pain lights up one’s own body. He becomes aware that in the innermost blindness of love, that must remain oblivious, lives a demand not to be blinded. He was wronged; from this he deduces a claim to right and must at the same time reject it, for what he desires can only be given in freedom. In such distress he who is rebuffed becomes human. Just as love uncompromisingly betrays the general to the particular in which alone justice is done to the former, so now the general, as the autonomy of others, turns fatally against it. The very rebuttal through which the general has exerted its influence appears to the individual as exclusion from the general; he who has lost love knows himself deserted by all, and this is why he scorns consolation. In the senselessness of his deprivation he is made to feel the untruth of all merely individual fulfillment. But he thereby awakens to the paradoxical consciousness of generality: of the inalienable and unindictable human right to be loved by the beloved. With his plea, founded on no titles or claims, he appeals to an unknown court, which accords to him as grace what is his own and yet not his own. The secret of justice in love is the annulment of all rights, to which love mutely points. “So forever / cheated and foolish must love be” (*So muß übervorteilt, / Albern doch überall sein die Liebe*) [Hölderlin, *Tränen*].<sup>32</sup>

### ***“Who Wouldn’t Want to Be Destroyed by Beauty?”***

I describe my relationship with Deon in an e-mail message to Stephanie: “Tonight I did get to see my boyfriend-of-the-moment, Deon (we’ve been seeing each other

about once a week for almost three months), and he charmed me, as ever—he's so beautiful, why does he bother with a wretch like me?"

I misremember a line Reginald wrote:

Who wouldn't want to be destroyed by beauty?

In fact, there are several lines:

I'm sure  
there's no one who wouldn't go down on death . . .  
what I'd want to be destroyed  
by, want to be.<sup>33</sup>

who wouldn't die for beauty  
if he could?<sup>34</sup>

Who hasn't ever wanted to be overwhelmed? . . .  
What is destroyed sends you its kisses.<sup>35</sup>

Who wouldn't wish  
to linger in the sensual world that won't spare me?<sup>36</sup>

And who wouldn't wish to live forever in the sensual  
world, but not just yet?<sup>37</sup>

### ***Deon Charms Me***

Deon charms me. Dark curve of thighs, hamstrings sway slightly behind raised knees; length of thumb's first phalange, wrist width stretched by tendon at base of hand, brown eclipses round, tallow; muscular feet curl, kneeling to mount me; pink glans flares, somber against cream sheets and white skin, bright against dark body and pigmented lip-edge of urethra mouth.

### ***The Little Death [Le Petit Mort] of the Little Prince [Le Petit Prince]***

[Raymond] Roussel belongs to a series of writers who exist in English, exist in German, exist in all languages. They are writers who have literally been obsessed with the problem of language, for whom literary construction and the "interplay of language" are directly related. I couldn't say that was a tradition because, in fact, it's a tradition that disappears with each

writer as if it were so individual to each writer that it could not be transmitted but is rediscovered every time.<sup>38</sup>

I am obsessed with the signification of negritude, the problem of race that I rehearse again and again, each time the same yet different.

It is not where the canonical figures of speech originate, but that neutral space within language where the hollowness of the word is shown as an insidious void, arid and a trap. . . . [Roussel] felt there is, beyond the quasi-liberties of expression, an absolute emptiness of being that he must surround, dominate, and overwhelm with pure invention: that is what he calls, in opposition to reality, thought.<sup>39</sup>

I am stuck, vibrating. The canon of black men is a fugue of negritude. I know the nullity of blackness, its signification emptied. “What kind of black men do you like?” What kind? It is to black that I return. The question of particularity haunts any instance of interracial desire. Whenever I tell Deon that I miss him, he challenges me: “Why?” I do not say that I miss his big black dick. It is implied in his question. I am stumped, on the spot.<sup>40</sup> I hold my breath: I know his pleasure in cornering me. The silence that suspends the question of my desire for black men is met whenever and however frequently—and by whomever—the question is put to me. Where to begin? The schoolyard of my childhood, where I am held back by friends, kept from running to play with the solitary black child, whose parents look on.<sup>41</sup> I recall a black guy saying—did he say it privately, directly to me, or publicly, to an assembled audience, or write it somewhere?—“I don’t want to be desired because I’m black. I want it to be *me* who is desired.” I start to respond: “Yes, but your blackness is inseparable from you.” But I stay silent. Deon says: “I don’t like this kind of conversation.”

Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux billard  
 [The white letters on the cushions of the old billiard table]  
 Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux pillard  
 [The white man’s letters on the hordes of the old plunderer]<sup>42</sup>

I am struck by this juxtaposition in Roussel’s “Among the Blacks” [*Parmi les noirs*], the absurd racial rhetoric produced by its automatic writing. It is an implosion of language under the “atmospheric overpressure” [*surtension atmosphérique*] of race.<sup>43</sup> The only way to get at the reification of race is through its further objectification.

Each time I see Dwight or Deon is the last time. Last time, I complain to

Deon that he hasn't fucked me in months—we see each other rarely, and then it's rushed. But we don't have any lubricant, so I am wary of making the attempt. He teases me: "Sure. Then, later, I'll be stuck watching a porno." I wonder what kind of pornography he watches: gay, straight, white, black, interracial? I am holding his dick and slowly stroking it. One small drop of precum emerges. I lean forward to suck it up. His facial expression of amused indifference: I take a moment to consider, then look at him, questioning. He shrugs.

I mount his dick. Soon he leans forward to hold me. I wrap my legs around him as he lifts me up and lays me on my back, then moves his arms under my legs and pushes them back. He fucks me with grim determination, his eyes closed, face a mask, hovering just above mine. He looks good. This is what you want. I recall Dwight fucking me with the same abandon, remote. I watch the solemn face. His eyes are closed, but my eyes are open in wonder. Sometimes it is Dwight's face of wonder looking up, watching me ride his dick—this is the image in *message from the messenger*. Deon concentrates on my body, I watch him, and I am very far away. He looks down, watching his dick slide in and out of my asshole. I do not know what he is thinking but: his big black dick in my little white ass. And I am happy.

Deon sings me a song. Embracing, we sway to Barry White, "You keep telling me this, and telling me that . . ." accusing his lover of struggling rather than giving in to passion. Deon smiles as he sings along with Barry White, urging his lover to drop the pretense and get down to business. He looks down at me out of the corners of his eyes. He sings to himself, but his singing is intimate, sotto voce, also singing to me. He sings playfully, on the edge of laughter. Is his song ironic? "You should hear me when I'm all alone."

### ***"I'm Telling My Mommy"***

I relax in Deon's arms: "Watching you fuck me is incredible. You are beautiful." "You've been talking with my mother."

I mouth and teeth his butt cheeks, anus. Face half buried in the pillow he clutches, his body flexes against the bed, his legs slowly pumping: "I'm telling. I'm telling my mommy."

### ***Just above My Head***

Deon straddles me, and I look up from the bed. Feet wrap under, toes tense against butt cheeks. He thrusts penis in and out of mouth, slides in holding hand, head popping in and out of lips. He leans over, breathes, breaths get shorter *just above my head*, sits up and pushes into mouth, with a spurt.

**"Mufasa!"**

Deon imitates *The Lion King*: "'Mufasa!' 'Ooooh [*shivering*]—do it again!'" He wants a picture of a lion for his wall—"a *blond* lion." "When the cat's away, the mouse will play"—his intimated accusation.

**A New Kind-ness**

the useless objectivity of things<sup>44</sup>

Philosophy after Hegel is characterized by the crisis of thought that calls into question both the existence of the object in itself and the existence of consciousness in itself. The autonomy that the object asserts and the constitution of the subject in the encounter with the recalcitrant object, discussed as "sense certainty" in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, suffer from the increasingly rationalized prior conceptual digestion of the object. The apparently total conceptual domination of the object is expressed by the understanding of its "always already" existing "textual" construction in discourse, which precedes the subject's encounter and circumscribes any resistance the object could offer. The tautology of the idea and its object appears complete. "The useless objectivity of things" could express despair at the emptiness of the "thing-in-itself," mourning a lost objectivity. Or "the useless objectivity of things" could be a critique of useful objectivity. The objectivity that is useless, which appears to be the emptiness of the object, is what remains after the rendering of the object for use. The object has a mute and blind existence that resists conceptual digestion, including that of the *ratio* of its remainder as the "thing-in-itself" of Kantian aesthetics. The recognition of "the useless objectivity of things" can thus become an avowal of the object's emancipation from instrumental conceptualization: the "thing-in-itself" is "useless," and hence it is saved.

Et j'oppose à l'amour des images toutes faites au lieu d'images à faire.

[And I object to the love of ready-made images in place of images to be made.]<sup>45</sup>

A black man's negritude precedes him. The ready-made image of the black man—even the phrase *the black man*—precedes any particular black man, any particular instance of blackness: what *Black Skin, White Masks* calls "the fact of blackness."<sup>46</sup> Charles asks me if I'm attracted to black men exclusively. "Not exclusively. But it feels most familiar to me. And I always imagine myself in a relationship with a black man." He tells me that he's never been with a white guy

before. I don't believe him. He is lying beside me, head propped up, looking down at me. He leans down, takes me in his arms, and opens his mouth, but hesitantly. I raise my head to kiss him, our lips touch, but he suddenly turns away, nuzzles my neck, and laughs. "I've never kissed a white guy before." "Do you think it will be different?" "No. I don't know." We are representations of blackness and whiteness: for one another but also each for himself. Our hesitant kiss: are my lips too small, too thin? I wonder what about me is significantly white. And I know that he is wondering the same about his blackness. How do we measure up? Later he says that he likes my little white hands on his big black dick. The next day he tells me that, before being with me, white guys were just photos in magazines.

I awake and see indistinct movement in a window across the courtyard. Is it an early riser, moving about in the opposite apartment, or a cat lying on the windowsill? As I watch, I realize that I am seeing a reflection in the other window of two pigeons on the roof of my building. I think: I am not seeing what I think I am seeing. Two pigeons alight on the roof opposite my window. I cannot return to sleep. I am thinking anxiously of Charles: how to keep him in my life? The two pigeons stand beside each other, tranquil. I see only two silhouettes against a gray dawn sky. One pigeon turns its head to scratch its back—new feathers, dry skin, or lice?—then pauses, moves closer to the second, and scratches the other's back with its beak. The nipping motion, one grooming the other, is evocative: the two birds are mates. Soon a third arrives and moves in, but it is chased off, and the two pigeons begin again: one moves closer, the other moves away or stands still and allows physical contact, but only briefly. The game they play, moving closer, then apart, must invoke notions of courtship: the mating dance. How do these two pigeons regard each other? I wonder why two animals would remain bonded after mating. Some remain mated for life. For some, the bond is necessary for the survival of offspring. The attraction must be compelling for some reason. Is it chemistry, the compatibility of proteins and antigens, indicated by scent? In what ways do these two pigeons apprehend one another? What is crucial; what is arbitrary? I realize that what is happening between the two pigeons has almost no relationship to human behavior, to my life. But I ponder their mating, what it is and why. Whatever our involuntary impulses, we are driven by concepts and images present in consciousness, understood and rationalized. These desires that are named preexist the encounter, tender or mocking: the photos in a magazine. Ready-made images, the images of which I am aware, which appear to me contained, represented and representable, threaten to overwhelm what is unknown and unknowable to me. And the already seen [*déjà vu*] eclipses the never yet seen [*jamais vu*].<sup>47</sup>

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.

“Please—tame me!” he said.

“I want to, very much,” the little prince replied. “But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand.”

“One only understands the things one tames,” said the fox. “Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things all ready made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends anymore. If you want a friend, tame me.”<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps memory and its return impel the pigeons as well: an image, a sound, a scent recalling a parent or former mate. Charles wears hazel-colored contact lenses, masking the brown eyes I would see, my mother’s eyes. What, whom do I recall for Charles? I am his first white partner: can I be familiar?

The mind chooses to believe that the loved object is a *unique* being, whereas often social conditions of life can destroy such an illusion.<sup>49</sup>

His textures recall other black men who have been significant to me. Each one of them has changed my desire, changed the black man to whom I return. Remembering all the black men in my life, I discover at the same time in all these faces one face only: the *last* face loved.<sup>50</sup> His pubic hair I find on my body the following morning, his smell on me, what is different and familiar, warms me: the image of him I would make.

The beloved would then be the one in whom would mingle a certain number of particular qualities considered more appealing than the others and appreciated separately, successively, in all the beings loved to some extent previously. This proposition corroborates in a dogmatic form the popular notion of the “type” of woman or man or of the individual man or woman considered alone.<sup>51</sup>

On the ledge opposite my window, one pigeon flies away. The other remains, indifferent.

A new kind-ness is ceaselessly growing on the horizon.<sup>52</sup>

All week I take notice of the ubiquitous pigeons. I wait for a bus, and a solitary pigeon pecks the ground at my feet. On the bus there is a man who resembles what I imagine Deon will look like in ten years: short-cropped salt-and-pepper hair

and dark brown skin, dressed in a nylon jumpsuit and basketball shoes. I sit across from him. He sits across from me, stolid. His faraway stare: What is he thinking? From where is he coming; to where is he going? He is carrying a workout bag, riding the bus at midday. His ascetic, unassuming appearance is what recalls Deon most for me: the man seems to be very much alone. I would interrupt his fatal infinity, if only for a moment. As he steps off the bus, he turns to look at me and our eyes meet, but his face is inscrutable. I want to believe that he is acknowledging me, however shyly. He's probably thinking, why is this white kid looking at me? The bus driver, another black man, looking through a mirror, notices me watching the man step off the bus. When I stand to get off at my stop, the driver looks back at me through the mirror, our eyes meet, and he smiles, nods, and winks. I step out into the misty day.

il n'est pas question de livrer le monde aux assassins d'aube  
 la vie-mort  
 la mort-vie  
 les souffleteurs de crépuscule  
 les routes pendent à leur cou d'écorcheurs  
 comme des chaussures trop neuves  
 il ne peut s'agir de dérouté  
 seuls les panneaux ont été de nuit escamotés  
 pour le reste  
 des chevaux qui n'ont laissé sur le sol  
 que leurs empreintes furieuses  
 des mufles braqués de sang lapé  
 le dégainement des couteaux de justice  
 et des cornes inspirées  
 des oiseaux vampires tout bec allumé  
 se jouant des apparences  
 mais aussi des seins qui allaitent des rivières  
 et les Calebasses douces au creux des mains d'offrande  
 une nouvelle bonté ne cesse de croître à l'horizon

[to deliver the world to the assassins of dawn is out of the question  
 death-life  
 life-death  
 those who slap dusk in the face  
 roads hang from their flayer necks  
 like shoes too new

we're not dealing with a rout  
 only the traps have been whisked away during the night  
 as for the rest  
 horses that have left nothing more in the ground  
 than their furious hoofprints  
 muzzles aimed with lapped-up blood  
 the unsheathing of the knives of justice  
 and of the inspired horns  
 of vampire birds their entire beaks lit up  
 defying appearances  
 but also breasts nursing rivers  
 and sweet calabashes in the hollows of offering hands  
 a new kindness is ceaselessly growing on the horizon]<sup>53</sup>

### ***"You Did It"***

Deon's erection presses against me. "You did it." "I know what you want to do. Put it inside me." "No, that's what *you* want me to do."

### ***The Salt, Burning***

After orgasm Deon clicks his tongue in contentment. Hours later my anus, *the salt, burning*,<sup>54</sup> semen oozes, lubricating mucus. Inside, the smell of a seashell washes up on a faraway shore.

### ***I Am Weightless***

Very small standing before Deon. He crouches down, looks into eyes ("beautiful blue eyes"), holds at the waist. Eyes sparkle, smile, dimples. "Laddie boy!" Little hands rest on his shoulders as he lifts up the hips and long fingers flare against buttock sides. I am weightless.

### ***"The Loss Which Is Unknown Is No Loss at All"***

A fortune cookie contains the message:

The loss which is unknown is no loss at all.  
 The boss which is unknown is no boss at all.  
 The cost which is unknown is no cost at all.  
 The cove which is unknown is no cove at all.  
 The cross which is unknown is no cross at all.  
 The cross which is unknown is not cross at all.

The dove which is unknown is no dove at all.  
 The dross which is unknown is no dross at all.  
 The foss which is unknown is no foss at all.  
 The gosh! which is unknown is no gosh! at all.  
 The gross which is unknown is no gross at all.  
 The gross which is unknown is not gross at all.  
 The grove which is unknown is no grove at all.  
 The host which is unknown is no host at all.  
 The joss which is unknown is no joss at all.  
 The josh which is unknown is no josh at all.  
 The Jove which is unknown is no Jove at all.  
 The loss which is unknown is no loss at all.  
 The lost which is unknown is not lost at all.  
 The loft which is unknown is no loft at all.  
 The love which is unknown is no love at all.  
 The moss which is unknown is no moss at all.  
 The most which is unknown is not most at all.  
 The move which is unknown is no move at all.  
 The poss. which is unknown is no poss. at all.  
 The poss. which is unknown is not poss. at all.  
 The post which is unknown is no post at all.  
 The soft which is unknown is not soft at all.  
 The toss which is unknown is no toss at all.  
 The trove which is unknown is no trove at all.

### ***Stubby Lump***

The stubby lump beside Deon's pinky finger: "It was a sixth finger. They chopped it off"—he mimes the action.

I rest my head on his chest and listen to his breaths, heartbeats. He pounds his fingers on his chest, a heartbeatlike rhythm, not the rhythm of his heart. "I wasn't supposed to live more than five years." "Why?" "A heart murmur. Lump-lump, lump-lump, lump-lump," he says, pounding his fingers.

I apologize for not offering him a drink of water. He chides me: "And I need to drink a lot of water." "Why?" "I have sickle-cell trait"—another signifier of his negritude. I imagine the dark factory of his body, endlessly producing blackness, the imperfect cells dying off.

**Lost Puppy**

Deon straddles me. “Are you looking into my big . . .” —he pauses, mocking— “*ugly* brown eyes?” I start. “Big, *beautiful* brown eyes.” I sit up, reaching to touch his face, and he collapses back onto the bed, averting his gaze: “No. My mother and my sisters have lighter eyes. I’m the ugly duckling of the family. I’m the dark one. My mother and my sisters, even my brothers are lighter than me. My brothers have nice curly hair.” (He has a different father.) I hover over him. Lying back, he holds his hands in front of his eyes and turns away, slowly rubbing them with the back of his hands: “They have nice, long eyelashes.” I push his arms away from his face and lift him up, cradling his head. I kiss his closed eyelids. He keeps his eyes closed: “I’m a lost puppy, splashed by cars on the side of the street.”

**“What Are We without the Help of That Which Does Not Exist?”**

als könnten wir ohne uns wir sein

[as though without us we could be we]<sup>55</sup>

que sommes-nous donc sans le secours de ce qui n'existe pas?

[what are we without the help of that which does not exist?]<sup>56</sup>

**“Is She Black or White?”**

I ask Deon about his ex-fiancée: “Is she black or white?” “Black. But not really black. She’s yellow,” he reassures me.

**Blondes**

A dream. At a banquet or conference I sit among those with whom I feel familiar, peers, acquaintances: people whom I know but who do not appear exactly as they do in life. The conversation turns to the subject of “blondes.” Testimonials are offered: “They act like the world was made for them.” “They are so fussy.” “They are so delicate.” “They demand to be treated just so.” I feel self-conscious. I turn to another blonde, a young Australian woman. She averts her gaze and says, “Of course, I’m not a *natural* blonde.” All eyes turn toward me, expectant. A handsome, light-complexioned black man looks at me with green eyes and a wry grin, then turns away. I awake.

A television advertisement. A white woman speaks: “My son and my husband have fair skin. I use [a brand-name detergent], without the dyes or perfumes that can irritate their sensitive skin.” The three family members frolic in the spring air. The photograph of a Benetton ad: “The united colors of Benetton.”

Shiny black men of an African tribe congregate, forming a circle around a young woman, the center of the composition. She's a black albino. How is she regarded by the dark men: revered, or an outcast? What I remember: her ruddy, sunburned skin, a rash of acne; she's vulnerable, like me.

### ***Becoming What the Flower Is***

“Good morning,” he said.

He was standing before a garden, all a-bloom with roses.

“Good morning,” said the roses.

The little prince gazed at them. They all looked like his flower.

“Who are you?” he demanded, thunderstruck.

“We are roses,” the roses said.

And he was overcome with sadness. His flower had told him that she was the only one of her kind in all the universe. And here were five thousand of them, all alike, in one single garden!<sup>57</sup>

At a screening of *message from the messenger* a woman tells me that the video shows a man—me—to have two “flowers,” two sexual organs, penis and anus. I do not say that a man may consider the anus just another avenue to the prostate gland's bulb, the orgasmic heart. A flower given to me is a trophy. Does it offer a substitute penis: my own, my lover's? Something I've never said: “I want your flower.” Charles says: “Give me your beautiful penis.”

A man who finds himself among others is irritated because he does not know why he is not one of the others.

I stare into the recesses of the orchid. Its motivated geometry resembles that of a Georgia O'Keeffe painting. Again, the thing is preceded by its representation. A man presents a woman with a rose: does he offer a totem of the coveted phallus, or a sacrificial devotion to the vaginal narcissus?

In bed next to the girl he loves, he forgets that he does not know why he is himself instead of the body he touches.

Conventionally, women do not offer men flowers. A calla lily, white unfolding at the head the curve of its long, thick stem, is a deep protrusion, reaching, inviting. Copulation: the meeting of two flowers. Dwight feels the distended membrane, touching his finger to the wet edge.

Without knowing it, he suffers from the mental darkness that keeps him from screaming that he himself is the girl who forgets his presence while shuddering in his arms.

Copulation: becoming what the flower is.<sup>58</sup> Pink or purple lips enfold the dark or bright stamen. Charles says, "It looks so natural." Deon's penis pulls at the rough mouth of my anus, leaving in order to enter. I look up at his face, and he looks down at his penis, my anus. *The sticky sun is you.*<sup>59</sup> Closed, the anus pouts, round and radial as a bulb, but it opens its exultant, multifarious recesses like any flower. Charles asks, "Do you feel me?" But the vegetal flower is autoerotic, hermaphroditic. I contemplate the motionless dream of its perpetual excitation: a busy bee fucks the priapic throat.

It is impossible for her to know whom she will rediscover when I hold her, because she obstinately attains a complete forgetting.<sup>60</sup>

### ***"Darkest Dreams"***

Home after school, I listen to music. Outside, it rains. The first song is "Sweetness and Light"; the last is "Darkest Dreams."<sup>61</sup> My sweetness is light, and my dreams are dark.

the darkest dreams  
are the ones that come true<sup>62</sup>

My dreams are given and all come true.<sup>63</sup>

## **Epilegomena**

### ***Antinomy of Race***

The development of self-conscious blackness claims the right to self-determination, to autonomy. But *Black Skin, White Masks* demonstrates the dependence of blackness on whiteness that presents an aporia of black subjectivity where it would be asserted against white. The perennial defeat of specifically black consciousness demands the dissolution of racial difference: enlightenment demands dispelling the darkness of race. Black subjectivity is not an aspiration but a tragedy. But this does not mean that it is constituted as racism would have it, as no subjectivity at all: black subjectivity embodies the contradiction of humanist racism—as does white subjectivity, though it seldom knows it. If, as a white person, my subjectivity is given credence only as an extension of sameness by white others, then this fact

mocks the autonomous selfhood—however illusory, a necessary illusion—that consciousness aware of its own condition, enlightened subjectivity, demands. Physical intimacy with a black man subjects me to a specific form of external determination, the heteronomy of the racial other. Giving myself as an object of whiteness for the apprehension of a black subject is a protest against the social relations of race to the extent that whiteness can be redeemed as it is constituted from without by blackness. Allegiance to white supremacy means no less subjecting oneself to white objecthood. A young white man, the tenant living on the third floor of my mother's house, posts on his bedroom wall "The most endangered species is the white race." An older black woman confides to Reginald: "We don't hate white people, we *love* them. We're just angry that they don't love us in return."<sup>64</sup> These statements invert blackness as endangered species and white patrician benevolence: I recognize their truth even if I sympathize differently with their deformations. Black people believe in whiteness more than I ever could: to this extent I give credence to the commonplace that black people know white people better than they know themselves. Tina Turner says that white love is prettier than black: any white person could tell her otherwise, but, nonetheless, this utopia of whiteness calls for redemption. The desire to live in the big house meets the justice of tearing it down. The subjectivity that whiteness arrogates to itself calls for destroying whiteness, not the unfulfilled claim of subjectivity.

The "jungle savage" is not what I have in mind. That is because for him certain factors have not yet acquired importance.<sup>65</sup>

Subjectivity's claim to autonomy remains unfulfilled. But this is not to be explained away by cynically regarding enlightenment as an illusion bought by white people at the expense of black. This is not to say that subjectivity should be taken solely at its word: to be true to itself, it must be redeemed from its necessary—and telling—deforming contradiction, its rivenness. The subject knows itself as an object. Subjectivity's opposition of autonomy and heteronomy—the autonomy that subjectivity claims against its external object, the heteronomous apprehension by the subject that the recalcitrant object resists—presents an antinomy: is self-rule identical with rule by the same; what becomes of rule by another when understood as a relation of incommensurable difference? The dialectic of lordship and bondage in *Phenomenology of Spirit* should not be racialized, white master and black slave. If there can be no black autonomy, it is because social relations among white people are marked no less by heteronomy than relations between people of different "races." The subject's experience of heteronomy suggests the negative

utopia of autonomy, but redeeming subjectivity's dream of self-identity would mean transcending both conditions. The model for this redemption is provided by Adorno's "primacy of the object," following Hegel's dialectic of subject and object: the dissolution of the subject in its object that would be an end to objectivity as well as subjectivity, autonomy as well as heteronomy—objectification as well as subjection. As a moment of social life resistant to representation, interracial intimacy finds expression in what Adorno calls "non-conceptual knowledge," the sympathy between subject and object to which the work of art, in this case, that of writing, gives form. The impulse to aesthetic autonomy expresses what the subject has been denied. The social problem of race becomes a problem of aesthetics: the problem of identity and nonidentity in the work of art becomes the problem of the racial subject-object.

***"I Don't Wanna Be Your Lion . . ."***

Deon sings me a song:

I don't wanna be your tiger, 'cause tigers play too rough.  
I don't wanna be your lion, 'cause lions ain't the kind you love enough.<sup>66</sup>

***Envoi***

The price of being an artist is to experience that which all non-artists call form, as content, as "the real thing" [*die Sache selbst*]. Then however one belongs to an inverted world; because now the content, our own life included, becomes something merely formal.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*

"The Child with a Lion" hopes to convey some of the restlessness that thought can have even in the constitutive confines of its articulation in language, exactly what, according to Adorno, saves Hegel's immanently speculative—dialectical—philosophy from total determinism. Allowing restive language to manifest its inadequacy to thought is a specific task of writing, even if this task is usually restricted to poetry. Making felt the irrational inherence of thought in language allows a protest to be registered against the rationalization of thought. One must risk the identity of thought and language, despite the evident arbitrary and self-satisfied closure of language: what, failing thought, can produce such a terrifying formula as "what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" [*was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*].<sup>67</sup> One must resist surrendering restive thought to what is merely rational or actual, and struggle with the

identity of the idea and its object. The longed-for loss of self in the other, the obsession with an object with which the subject feels incommensurable and which both is and is not a projection of consciousness, is the signal moment. You, reader of these parables, may take offense at what another reader describes as “the perennial force” of the text’s “exotification and objectification of black men.” But as the writer of “The Child with a Lion”—for whom black men are not exotic but familiar—writes in response: “I wish to both enact and discuss the problem of racial reification in terms of the dialectical crisis of subject and object after Hegel. . . . Rather than struggle against racial objectification, I wish to work through it, redeeming both myself and the black men in my life as racial objects.” This statement should not be read alongside “The Child with a Lion” to inform it; it should be read, rather, as yet another instance of the larger text of racial inscription of which “The Child with a Lion” and this apology, admittedly, form but a small, wayside part.

You, reader, must allow “The Child with a Lion” the voice on its own behalf, the text’s own implication of the subject, of its reader and writer, and, ultimately, of itself, that erupts in lines such as “You keep telling me this, and telling me that . . .,” “You should hear me when I’m all alone,” and “You did it.” These lines should not be entirely resolved, as they are narratively, with the voice of a black man addressing the white subject; they should be allowed to implicate the racial subject itself, of which the particular black man speaking is, of course, no less representative than the white writer of his lines. Such lines can speak along with, as well as address themselves to, the reading/writing subject; these lines can speak, on behalf of unresolved thought, back to the text itself. The text throws the accusation “You did it” back at the subject and shifts uncomfortably in its constitutive confines. But this redemptive self-implication demands stepping into the trap. The text, as well as the subject, must do it. What may appear to be lost to “The Child with a Lion,” what lies outside the tautologies of race, remains, happily, “unknown”: it is, as a Chinese fortune cookie says, “no loss at all.” “The Child with a Lion” states of its subject “I am weightless” and insists on the primacy of its object, the “he,” Dwight, Deon, Charles, and others, struggling with the racial identity of these men, with the identity of black men as such. The impulse of “The Child with a Lion” is to be found not in the peculiarly deformed consciousness of its empirical writer but in the impossible possibilities of the dissolution of the racial subject in its object: “I become that one spot of his brown on my pink skin, the real me.”

Give the word.<sup>68</sup>

### *"It's Supposed to Be This Way"*

Charles says, "You know the difference turns me on." Watching me ride his dick, he says, "It's supposed to be this way."

### Notes

This essay was written in Chicago from March to July 1998, except the following sections: "The Child with a Lion," written in March 1996; "Writing on the Interracial" and "Attendant Emblem," in July 1999; and certain passages on love and color in "The Utopia of Interracial Intimacy," in July 1999 and January 2000. Thanks to Alton (Zhari) Cromartie, Stephanie A. Karamitsos, James F. Lastra, Margaret R. Olin, Richard E. Rubin, Reginald Shepherd, and Kenneth W. Warren. The title "The Child with a Lion" is taken from a work on the 1988 *White Arcades* compact disc by the American New Music composer Harold Budd.

1. *Ghost Body* (1993, 20 min.) is a personal meditation on the ambivalences of interracial male homosexuality. Caressing black hands trace a white body. Poems, letters, and personal reminiscences evoke interracial encounters. Aimé Césaire conjures Robert Mapplethorpe's black male nudes in a poetic rendering of the word *nigger*. Angry letters from a black man to his white suitor disavow interracial love. Snow falls, and the wistful piano of Erik Satie's *enfantines* sets the mood for Claude McKay's evening with a visiting "snow fairy." *IDI* (1995, 7 min.) is an elegiac reverie on images of interracial male homosexuality, enacting the imbrication of fantasy and memory. One brief scrap of home video is reflected in a scene from commercial porn, juxtaposed with lyrical imagery of floating autumn leaves, ludic recombinations structured by cyclical washes of electronic music. Imaging the sex of two male lovers, one black, one white, against three short poems by Holocaust survivor Paul Celan, *message from the messenger: three poems by Paul Celan* (1996, 17 min.) explores otherness and reconciliation through metaphor and the graphics of white and black. Composed of long takes in real time, looped and digitally processed, with a minimal, synthesized sound track of portentous rumble and crackling noise, the video invokes the wistful utopia of intimacy without "race" and sex without death.
2. Robert Reid-Pharr, "MIX: The Seventh New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film and Video Festival," *FUSE* 17, no. 2 (1993–94): 43.
3. Darieck Scott, "Jungle Fever? Black Gay Identity Politics, White Dick, and the Utopian Bedroom," *GLQ* 1 (1994): 303, 318.
4. "The utopia of the qualitative—the things which through their difference and uniqueness cannot be absorbed into the prevalent exchange relationships—takes refuge under capitalism in the traits of fetishism" [*In den Fetischcharakter flüchtet sich unterm Kapitalismus die Utopia des Qualitativen: was vermöge seiner Differenz und Einzigkeit nicht eingeht ins herrschende Tauschverhältnis*] (Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*:

- Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971], 155, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* [London: Verso, 1978], 120). Indeed, the activity of fetishism is substitution—exchange—as much as occlusion, fixing a generic attribute as irreducibly particular, obscuring the denied object of affection, and reifying the symbol, which becomes tantalizingly ubiquitous. Hence the “utopia” of the qualitative, which remains nowhere to be found.
5. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967); Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, trans. Charles Ruas (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1986); André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove, 1960); Breton, *Mad Love*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988); Georges Bataille, “The Solar Anus” and “The Language of Flowers,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
  6. “Dialectical thought is an attempt to break through the coercion of logic by its own means. . . . Stringency and totality, the bourgeois intellectual ideals of necessity and generality, do indeed circumscribe the formula of history. . . . If Benjamin said that history had hitherto been written from the standpoint of the victor, and needed to be written from the standpoint of the vanquished, we might add that knowledge must indeed present the fatally rectilinear succession of victory and defeat, but should also address itself to those things which were not embraced by this dynamic, which fell by the way-side—what might be called the waste products and blind spots that have escaped the dialectic. It is in the nature of the defeated to appear, in their impotence, irrelevant, eccentric, derisory. What transcends the ruling society is not only the potentiality it develops but also all that which did not fit properly into the laws of historical movement. Theory must needs deal with cross-grained, opaque, unassimilated material, which as such admittedly has from the start an anachronistic quality, but is not wholly obsolete since it has outwitted the historical dynamic” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 150–51).
  7. Nevertheless, “the significance of the hand negligently stroking a child’s head, or an animal’s back, is that it could just as easily destroy them. One victim is fondly stroked shortly before the other is struck down. . . . The petting demonstrates that all are equal in the presence of power, that none is a being in its own right. A creature is merely material for the master’s bloody purposes” (Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “Man and Animal,” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming [New York: Continuum, 1982], 253).
  8. Theodor W. Adorno, “George-Hofmannsthal Correspondence,” in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 224.
  9. Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 198, 35.
  10. *Impression à fic* [publication at the author’s own expense]: “the sacred flame of

genius / which makes the one chosen by it so arrogant / that he finds the very stars in the sky pitiful / compared with the new star that burns upon his forehead [*l'étoile au front*]” (Raymond Roussel, *Nouvelles impressions d’Afrique*, canto 4, trans. Andrew Huggill). And I have paid a certain price in writing and publishing this essay. Whatever the results or nature of the arrogance in writing “The Child with a Lion,” it should not be confused with personal arrogance. Any expressive license necessary to conform to the inevitable stereotype—necessary for the immanent critique of the stereotype being attempted—distorts both the persons and the experiences represented in the text, not least of all my own.

11. “Something of our poor brief childhood is in it, something of lost happiness that can never be found again, but also something of active daily life, of its small gaieties, unaccountable and yet springing up and not to be obliterated. And indeed this is all expressed not in full round tones but softly, in whispers, confidentially, sometimes a little hoarsely” (Franz Kafka, “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories* [New York: Schocken, 1946], 370).
12. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 247.
13. Scott, “Jungle Fever?” 318.
14. Theodor W. Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” in *Prisms*, 34.
15. “Humanity will be prey to a mythic anguish so long as phantasmagoria occupies a place in it” (Walter Benjamin, “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century [Exposé of 1939],” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999], 15).
16. “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155.
17. *In the Lion’s Den with Anthony Hopkins*, Tigress Productions for Meridian and Thirteen/WNET, 1995; PBS Home Video, 1996.
18. Melvin Dixon, “Red Leaves,” in *Men on Men 2: Best New Gay Fiction*, ed. George Stambolian (New York: New American Library, 1988), 295.
19. Aimé Césaire, *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 146–47.
20. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109–10.
21. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 117.
22. *Ibid.*, 116–17.
23. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 14.
24. *Poems of Paul Celan*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea, 1988), 234–35.
25. *Ibid.*, 344.
26. “During the day, angelic caresses hide in secret regions, adjacent to the poles” [*Pendant le jour, les caresses angéliques se retirent dans les régions secrètes, voisines des pôles*] (Max Ernst, *The Hundred Headless Woman = La Femme 100 têtes* [New York:

- Braziller, 1981], 70–71).
27. *Poems of Paul Celan*, 344–45.
  28. Tennessee Williams, “Desire and the Black Masseur,” in *One Arm, and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1967), 94.
  29. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 22–23, 349.
  30. Theodor W. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 257.
  31. Mary J. Blige, “Everything,” on *Share My World*, UNI/MCA compact disc, 1997.
  32. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 164–65.
  33. Reginald Shepherd, “Hygiene,” unpublished version, c. 1997.
  34. Reginald Shepherd, “Antibody,” in *Wrong* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 12.
  35. Reginald Shepherd, “The Angel of Interruptions,” in *Angel, Interrupted* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 3.
  36. Reginald Shepherd, “A Plague for Kit Marlowe,” *ibid.*, 72.
  37. Reginald Shepherd, “West Willow,” *ibid.*, 92.
  38. Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, 175–76.
  39. *Ibid.*, 16.
  40. “He still hesitated a little; then he got up. He took one step. I could not move. . . . He remained motionless for an instant. He did not cry out. . . . He fell as gently as a tree falls” (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods [New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1943], 88–89).
  41. “COME BACK! ALL IS FORGIVEN.—Like someone performing the giant swing on the horizontal bar, each boy spins for himself the wheel of fortune from which, sooner or later, the momentous lot shall fall. For only that which we knew or practiced at fifteen will one day constitute our attraction. And one thing, therefore, can never be made good: having neglected to run away from home. From forty-eight hours’ exposure in those years, as in a caustic solution, the crystal of life’s happiness forms” (Walter Benjamin, “One Way Street,” in *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott [New York: Schocken, 1986], 64).

“Hatred of civilization is not only an irrational projection of personal psychological difficulties onto the world. The adolescent learns that the renunciation of instinctual urges expected from him are not adequately compensated, that, for instance, the sublimation of sexual goals required by civilization fails to obtain for him the material security in the name of which it is preached. . . . the conflict centers about the ideals for the sake of which renunciation is enforced. What fills the adolescent with distress is, above all, his dim and confused realization of the close connection or near-identity of reason, self, domination, and nature. He feels the gap between the ideals taught to him and the expectations that they arouse in him on the one hand, and the reality principle to which he is compelled to submit on the other. . . . The resistant individual will

oppose any pragmatic attempt to reconcile the demands of truth and the irrationalities of existence. Rather than to sacrifice truth by conforming to prevailing standards, he will insist on expressing in his life as much truth as he can, both in theory and in practice. His will be a life of conflict; he must be ready to run the risk of utter loneliness. The irrational hostility that would incline him to project his inner difficulties upon the world is overcome by the passion to realize what his [parents] represented in his childish imagination, namely, truth. . . . He at least is successful in the process of internalization to the extent of turning against outside authority and the blind cult of so-called reality. He does not shrink from persistently confronting reality with truth, from unveiling the antagonism between ideals and actualities. His criticism itself, theoretical and practical, is a negative reassertion of the positive faith he had as a child" (Max Horkheimer, "The Revolt of Nature," in *Eclipse of Reason* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1947], 111–13).

42. Raymond Roussel and Ron Padgett, *Among the Blacks: Two Works* (Bolinias, Calif.: Avenue B, 1988), 41.
43. Césaire, *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, 126–27.
44. "Perhaps our true sexual act consists in this: *in verifying to the point of giddiness the useless objectivity of things*. . . . There is without doubt a collective giddiness of escape into the obscenity of a pure and empty form, characterized simultaneously by the excessiveness of sex and its disqualification, as well as by the excessiveness and degradation of the visible" (Jean Baudrillard, *L'Autre par lui-même* [Paris: Galilée, 1987], trans. Bernard Schutze and Caroline Schutze, *The Ecstasy of Communication* [New York: Semiotext(e), 1988], 31–33).
45. Paul Eluard, "Comme deux gouttes d'eau," in Max Ernst, *Une Semaine de bonté*, trans. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover, 1976), 179–80.
46. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109.
47. Breton, *Mad Love*, 90.
48. Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 67.
49. Breton, *Mad Love*, 7.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, 7–8.
52. Césaire, *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, 231.
53. *Ibid.*, 230–31.
54. His Name Is Alive, "Love's a Fish Eye," on *Home Is in Your Head*, 4AD compact disc, 1991.
55. *Poems of Paul Celan*, 344–45.
56. Paul Valéry, *Œuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris: Pléiade), 966, trans. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon, 1960), xi.
57. Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 62.
58. "It is clear that the world is purely parodic, in other words, that each thing seen is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form. Ever since sentences

started to *circulate* in brains devoted to reflection, an effort at total identification has been made, because with the aid of a *copula* each sentence ties one thing to another; all things would be visibly connected if one could discover at a single glance and in its totality the tracings of an Ariadne's thread leading thought into its own labyrinth. But the *copula* of terms is no less irritating than the *copulation* of bodies. And when I scream I AM THE SUN an integral erection results, because the verb *to be* is the vehicle of amorous frenzy" (Bataille, "Solar Anus," 5).

59. ESP Summer, "Sticky Sun," on *ESP Summer LP*, Perdition Plastics compact disc, 1996.
60. For this and the preceding three block quotations see Bataille, "Solar Anus," 6–7: "A man who finds himself among others is irritated because he does not know why he is not one of the others. In bed next to the girl he loves, he forgets that he does not know why he is himself instead of the body he touches. Without knowing it, he suffers from the mental darkness that keeps him from screaming that he himself is the girl who forgets his presence while shuddering in his arms. Love, or infantile rage, or a provincial dowager's vanity, or clerical pornography, or the diamond of a soprano bewilder individuals forgotten in dusty apartments. They can very well try to find each other; they will never find anything but parodic images, and they will fall asleep as empty as mirrors. . . . The absent and inert girl hanging dreamless from my arms is no more foreign to me than the door or window through which I can look or pass. I rediscover indifference (allowing her to leave me) when I fall asleep, through an inability to love what happens. It is impossible for her to know whom she will rediscover when I hold her, because she obstinately attains a complete forgetting. . . . Movement is the figure of love, incapable of stopping at a particular being, and rapidly passing from one to another. But the forgetting that determines it in this way is only a subterfuge of memory."
61. Lush, "Sweetness and Light," on *Gala*, 4AD/Reprise compact disc, 1990; His Name Is Alive, "Darkest Dreams," on *Livonia*, 4AD compact disc, 1990.
62. His Name Is Alive, "Darkest Dreams."
63. "Wait for a time, exactly under the star. Then, if a little man appears who laughs, who has golden hair and who refuses to answer questions, you will know who he is. If this should happen, please comfort me. Send me word that he has come back" (Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 93).
64. Paraphrased from Reginald Shepherd, "Coloring outside the Lines: An Essay at Definition," *Callaloo* 22 (1999): 139.
65. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 12.
66. Elvis Presley, "Teddy Bear," written by Kal Mann and Bernie Lowe.
67. Hegel, quoted in Adorno, *Critical Models*, 317 n. 3.
68. *Poems of Paul Celan*, 264–65.

