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Introduction

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Introduction

Monique Roelofs

Critical accounts of race have drastically changed the landscapes of the social, the political, and the intimate. Philosophical perspectives on racial identity and difference hold out transformative possibilities for aesthetics. Revealing the entanglement of analytical concepts and day-to-day life with racial meaning, such approaches challenge the field of aesthetics to encounter its methodologies with a fresh look. How can aesthetics rethink itself by rethinking race and empire? What shape do aesthetic themes take in light of the historical, spatial, imaginative, affective, sensory, and sexual registers of racial subjectivity and the pervasiveness of racist and neocolonial constellations? How do art and the aesthetic reflect, or critically engage, racialization? What forms and idioms enable us to articulate the racial ethics and politics that shape our various conscious and unconscious aesthetic projects?

Taking up these questions, we must also turn them around to explore what aesthetic preoccupations can tell us about racial existence. Installations, sound art, literature, and other art forms are prominent participants in body politics and alternative cultural imaginaries. They can explore unenvisioned socialities and challenge the complicity of aesthetic and political regimes in systemic oppression and violence. Do aesthetic practices, which include the countless aesthetic acts shaping quotidian existence, suggest distinctive ethical and political possibilities? How can aesthetic forms call into question or affirm the apparent cogency of racial and ethnic categories, and the gender and class categories with which they intersect? How does what Linda Martín Alcoff has called “a phenomenology of racial embodiment” unfold in the modalities of aesthetics?[1] What do constructions of (trans)nationalism, ethnicity, citizenship, colonial power, cosmopolitanism, and race look like when considered as objects of aesthetic experience, imagination, judgment, desire, and value?

This volume examines the intersection of the philosophy of race, postcolonial theory, and aesthetics.[2] In editing this collection, I wanted to open up new questions in this emerging field. Contributors were asked to consider how racial readings bear on aesthetic conceptions, and what aesthetic insights suggest for accounts of race. Philosophical aesthetics has had longstanding investments in notions of race, as can be witnessed in canonical figures such as Shaftesbury, Burke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. A more recent, antiracist philosophical engagement with aesthetic concerns informs writings by, among others, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Gayatri Spivak, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cornel West, Sylvia Wynter, Adrian Piper, Homi Bhabha, Robert Gooding-Williams, and Rey Chow. At the same time, aesthetic themes have yet to become a central area of investigation within the contemporary philosophy of race and postcoloniality. Furthermore, current perspectives in aesthetics more often than not proceed at a distance from methods of inquiry and conceptual frameworks developed in critical race and postcolonial theory. They sidestep racial analyses developed in works and studies of

culture, media, the arts, technology, environmental design, and urban planning.

Juxtaposing a range of philosophical approaches, this volume aims to address these lacunae. The essays are organized around five focal points: "looks and images," "framing encounters," "the global and the cosmopolitan," "taste," and "ethics and politics." Collectively, the essays enable us to see how new areas of inquiry arise when we examine racial dimensions of subjectivity, art, and culture *in tandem with* the workings of the aesthetic as a social and political register and a determinant in a global economy of people and goods.

1. Looks and Images

Scopic regimes constitute a prominent site of convergence for racial frames of experience and aesthetic norms.^[3] This section introduces several philosophical preoccupations with subjectivity, identity, and community to the literature on this subject. Observing that the multiracial population is growing in numbers, Ronald Sundstrom explores ethical dimensions of the aesthetics of mixed-race looks. He approaches aspects of identity, such as recognition and solidarity, in light of the social power of racialized aesthetic norms that have guided racial identification and self-presentation from the seventeenth and eighteenth century to the present. Mariana Ortega argues that mainstream photographic images of Hurricane Katrina rapidly came to reiterate historically transmitted constructions of otherness, amputating possibilities for communal realignment forged by initial depictions of pain. Both authors alert us to the normative valences racial histories of representation deposit in our encounters with images.

In "Mixed-Race Looks" Sundstrom shows how the aesthetics of mixed-race looks is entwined with historical attitudes toward interracial sex and intermarriage. Objects of fascination, as in François Bernier and the Spanish *Casta* paintings, repulsion, as in François-Marie Voltaire, and moral condemnation, as in Thomas Jefferson, mixed-race looks and the interracial unions they were taken to signify have recently entered a new chapter in the history and politics of race. Today, Sundstrom points out, the visual ambiguity of multiracial models speaks to multiple audiences and proclaims ideals of racial harmony. In short, it sells. However, the commodification of mixed-race looks fails to challenge exoticizing racial scripts. Celebrations of mixed-race looks have been challenged on the grounds that they ignore the history of racial domination, betray non-white monoracial communities, and reproduce a racist image repertoire.

Yet, rejoins Sundstrom, the experience of somatic ambiguity is a prominent element of the experience of being multiracial. Affirmations of mixed-race looks by multiracial persons can be understood as expressions of personal authenticity and attempts to carve out room for existence within a social space that is governed by monoracial categories. Evoking John Stuart Mill's notion of sovereignty, and the psychologist Maria Root's declaration of the rights of multiracial individuals, Sundstrom defends the ethical legitimacy of such affirmations. At the same time, multiracial individuals should make sure not to harm monoracial groups by guarding against the reinforcement of racist aesthetic standards and by rejecting

racial skin-tone privilege. Sundstrom also recommends that multiracial persons responsibly engage with the pain that their "authentic, ethical lives" can cause others.

It is precisely an ethical and aesthetic engagement with pain that Mariana Ortega foregrounds as a condition for a racially legitimate politics of representation. Her essay "Othering the Other: The Spectacle of Katrina for Our Racial Entertainment Pleasure," documents the participation of photography in the creation of a racist visual and narrative spectacle. In line with photography's historical role as an instrument for the classification of difference, and the longstanding representational tradition that stages racial violence and exoticism as entertainment, photo reportages of the disaster in the popular media, according to Ortega, used the hurricane as an occasion to display "the otherness of the other." By reference to Susan Sontag, she indicates that photographs of people's suffering testify at one level to the outrageousness of pain, evoking grief and calling for repair, while at another level confirming that this is "what those people do . . . what happens there."

Ortega observes that in the case of Katrina the first moment was quickly superseded by the second. Images of patiently waiting victims were supplanted by representations of looting, shooting dark bodies that confirmed and explained the otherness of these disorderly, misbehaving people, and marked their difference from well-behaved light-skinned individuals. Rather than becoming a basis for a renewed form of political community by foregrounding the relational ties connecting people, a dimension of grief emphasized by Judith Butler, the space for mourning was rapidly foreclosed after the hurricane hit. Ortega notes that already vulnerable bodies, bodies of undesirable others whose pain, as Butler contends, is less grievable than that of normative subjects, were made yet more vulnerable.

Eliding the presence of the multitudes of Latinos, Latin Americans, Asians, Asian Americans, and Native Americans who were affected by the storm, visual representations of Katrina reiterated the black-white racial binary. At the same time, according to Ortega, a host of official and nonofficial decisions and commentaries that followed in the aftermath of the hurricane interrupted this rhetoric by pitting Blacks and Latinos against one another. Destabilizing the black-white dichotomy, this strategy of division added immigrant workers from the U.S., Mexico, and Central and South America under the rubric of troublemaking racial others, creating further fragmentation among already vulnerable subjects. In the post-Katrina era, Ortega indicates, the ongoing spectacle of race and racism staged a renewed othering of the other for the audience's enjoyment. While her analysis shows that visual representations and interpretations are infused with the power to oppress, in her view they can also "break the spell of our fascination with the other as a spectacle." In conclusion, Ortega alerts us the role of the aesthetic in shaping our thinking, feelings, and value claims about racialized subjects and race.

Ortega's and Sundstrom's essays both testify to the reliance of racial ideologies on aesthetic registers of image production and

consumption. As it happens, the image currently holds center stage in influential accounts of the politics of art and aesthetics.^[4] The racial dimensions of our image-based attractions and repulsions, which take shape in interaction with other categories of difference such as gender, ethnicity, and class, play a significant part in such politics. Images draw substantial macro- and micropolitical powers from the transmissibility and the solidification of their racial codings.

Sundstrom's and Ortega's discussions (along with Falguni Sheth's paper in this volume) suggest that we should attend to the specific meanings that traditions of racial perception and representation contribute to our engagements with looks and images. As their essays indicate, the ethics and politics of race--themes that run through this volume and will serve as a main area of focus in the last section--fundamentally implicate the images we use to interpret and represent our own and others' bodies. The next section considers how embodied encounters structure such readings and representations.

2. Framing Encounters

The two essays comprising this section look to the notion of encounters to call into question reified and reifying formations of identity and difference. The concept of "Othering," in Ortega's essay, discussed above, describes a process of making and becoming Other, rather than a type of being that the ethnographer can map at the limits of a Self. Along the same lines, the present section comprehends otherness not as the presumed referent of discourses of identity or the constitutive difference secured by cultural classifications, but investigates how aesthetic encounters carry out the work of creating otherness. Encounters appear in these essays, then, in their acts of aesthetic framing. At the same time, scenes of encounter are shown to reflect the imprints of (aesthetic) structures of racialization. Indeed, my own essay examines how aesthetic forms of disciplinarity that resonate with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century constructions of the aesthetic turn an encounter in the liminal space of an Amsterdam taxicab into an affirmation of a racialized, nationalist aesthetic. Mickaella Perina emphasizes the mutuality of encounters between Western, non-Western, colonialist, colonial, and postcolonial aesthetics in order to complicate the relationships between these systems. Thereby she draws attention to a multiplicity of racialized relationships that link these frameworks together and shifts our understanding of the relevant interconnections. The idea of encounters, in the present section, serves then to situate formations of identity and difference in the cultural relationships that give rise to them. Registering the productivity of these relationships, the current section also points toward elements we can deploy to reframe petrifying constellations of self and otherness.

My essay, "Sensation as Civilization: Reading/Riding the Taxicab," investigates the role of aesthetic norms and scripts in establishing racial and national boundaries. Exemplary of the functioning of the aesthetic as a cultural border-patrolling technology is an aesthetic confrontation between an ostensibly Arab taxi driver and his passenger, the autochthonous Dutch writer Martin Bril, as relayed by the latter in his newspaper

column. Exposed to loud "Arabic whiny music" in the driver's tropically heated, rattling and speeding, old VW Jetta, which smells of toilet cleaner, has its back seat covered in plastic, and takes a detour, the columnist loses his hold on his city, Amsterdam. In the aftermath of 9/11, in a recently deregulated taxi market, with the country still reeling from filmmaker Theo van Gogh's murder in the streets of the Dutch capital, the aesthetic offense and victimization Brill articulates in his column serve to reinstate adequate cultural boundaries in the eyes of his readers. In his article, ethnically coded aesthetic violations threaten a racial, nationalist experience of culture. Aesthetic experience and taste thereby function as technologies of race and nation. My essay examines what this tells us about the nature of aesthetic disciplinarity.

Mobilizing differentially available oppositions and integrations between mind and body, reason/imagination and emotion/sensation, public and private, individuality and sociality to shape the boundaries of "adequate" embodiment, and to control the limits of "proper" cultural citizenship, Brill's racial, nationalist aesthetic resonates with historical constructions of the aesthetic as a multi-sensory, integrative domain that both resists and reproduces enlightenment dualities. By reference to thinkers such as Joseph Addison, Alexander Baumgarten, Friedrich Schiller, and G.W.F. Hegel, I argue that aesthetic constructions of racial and national identity can draw for their disciplinary power on several fundamental characteristics of the aesthetic: its comprehensive reach, its dualist and integrative capacity to reproduce structures of hierarchy and domination, and its significance as a sensory form of cognition or ideation. The racial productivity of these aesthetic forces is revealed in the encounters between the writer and the driver in the taxicab and between the reader and the column in the forum of the newspaper.

The inflection of encounters by racial constellations reappears in Mickaella Perina's essay, "Encountering the Other: Aesthetics, Race and Relationality." In this essay, Perina locates entrenched binaries between Western, non-Western, colonialist, colonial, and postcolonial aesthetics in the mutuality of encounters among these systems. On this picture, these frameworks cannot be understood as dichotomous, one-directional polarities and periods, but are marked by multiple relations that are racialized, and that operate in several directions. According to Perina, the plural vectors of contact entailed by the idea of an encounter between Western and non-Western aesthetics imply that, insofar as non-Western aesthetics is considered "the Other of Western aesthetics," Western aesthetics must, likewise, be seen as "the Other of non-Western aesthetics." Another reason for resisting a binary understanding of relations of otherness among the above systems is that there are multiple kinds of non-Western aesthetics, and that colonial and postcolonial aesthetics comprise a variety of forms of agency and resistance that are marked by overlaying strata of influence, mimicry, multiplicity, ambiguity, and authenticity.

On the basis of the multiple relations that cut across these aesthetic frameworks, Perina rejects Gene Blocker's descriptions of non-Western aesthetics as a colonial invention and resists his emphasis on the difficulty of translating non-

Western into Western aesthetics. Blocker's picture, in her view, implicitly subscribes to a hierarchical, binary, essentialist, and racist relation between Western and non-Western aesthetics. While a Manichean understanding of the relations between colonizer and colonized has served to lend recognition to the racial dimension of colonialism in writings by Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Abdul JanMohamed, she urges that a more complex account of the role of race in aesthetics is in order, one that is capable of decentering, othering, and translating Western aesthetics. To this end, according to Perina, it is necessary to focus on communication, expression, mutual understanding, reciprocity, and collaborative exchange. Perina illustrates the importance of these potential elements of encounters through the meeting of Aimée Césaire and André Breton. Rather than a case of one-sided domination, this meeting, which was mediated by race, constituted a dialogical interaction that affected both Surrealism and Negritude.

Perina observes that the aesthetic world amounts to a racial order that features Europe as an unmarked norm and that masks racial distinctions as cultural classifications. The failure to acknowledge this hinders the construction of relationality. However, through resistance, dialogue, and a concomitant recognition of power dynamics that can only be effaced on transnational and cosmopolitan visions that ignore race, change, in her view, is to be demanded and negotiated, and can be expected to ensue.

Both essays in the present section situate configurations of identity and difference in the relational dimensions of racial encounters that enact aesthetic power. Categorized and experienced as aesthetic styles and epochs, positions of racial selfhood and otherness are slotted into the delineations of social cartographies. Yet thrusting against this organizing spree is the messy mutuality of encounters, which is not so readily pinned down and belies the disciplinary stabilizations of race accredited by ossified aesthetic regimes. How do cosmopolitan and transnational registers of contemporary global cultural exchanges affect the dynamic between aesthetic institutionalization and established racial formations?

3. The Global and the Cosmopolitan

In the West, an uninhibited global reach and boundless cosmopolitanism have long been presumed to be the proper sphere of good art, artists, and critics. That the transnational traffic of people and signs does not in fact fulfill the public aspirations European Enlightenment thinkers have attached to the aesthetic is shown by the exclusions late capitalism sustains through its division of labor and disparities of wealth, health, and education. Critiques of modalities of power inherent in aesthetic dispositions by theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Sylvia Wynter, and Cornel West have exposed universalizing stances as articulations of culturally specific, privileged positions.^[5] Yet cosmopolitanism and globalization constitute aesthetic and artistic realities. They necessitate fine-grained models of cultural analysis for the structures of *poiesis*, desire, affiliation, and capital they imply. Examining local and transnational lines of influence that converge in paintings and clothing (and, more specifically, figurations of women's bodies), the essays in this section identify racial

restrictions as well as possibilities that attach to cosmopolitan, globalized aesthetic forms.

In "Toward the Development of a Cosmopolitan Aesthetic in Colonial India," Nalini Bhushan explores the role of a racialized aesthetic discourse of authenticity in shaping evaluations of art in colonial India. The racial aesthetic she sees at work in the period from 1847-1947 demands that good art be both authentic and creative. This requirement poses a dilemma for artists: their art can be authentically Indian only at the cost of its creativity; alternatively, it can succeed at being creative, but this entails surrendering the claim to its being really Indian art.

Bhushan traces how this racialized frame of interpretation is exemplified in the reception of the work of Ravi Varma (1848-1906) and Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), even as these artists try to escape its deadlock. In her reading, both artists reveal a cosmopolitan outlook in their deployment of formal vocabularies from multiple cultures. Conjoining a hybrid style with the conscious intent of remaining authentically Indian, the popular Varma was considered an "Indian Renoir" in the eyes of elite aesthetes or, in Bhushan's words, "a Renoir manqué; one *who merely happened to be* Indian." Thus he was deemed to fall short as an artist on the count of creativity as well as that of authenticity. Ironically, by the same measure, Tagore, who drew upon Japanese formal influences, arose as the unparalleled, quintessentially Indian artistic genius. Bhushan shows how in contrast to Varma's and Tagore's cosmopolitan styles, which remain preoccupied with national and racial identity, the work of Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941) achieves a "multiply rooted" form of cosmopolitanism that escapes the grip of the racialized aesthetic. Sher-Gil's multiracial, Hungarian Jewish and Indian Sikh identity and her migrant existence are among the factors that enabled her to develop a highly individualized interest in subjects pertaining to the body, gender, and intimacy, and in "the range of actual experiences she has in the country she loves, India, and with which she so strongly identifies." Her cosmopolitan stance, Bhushan concludes, supplants a racial delimitation of the aesthetic by an aesthetic exploration of race.

As Perina has indicated, conceptions of cosmopolitanism can obfuscate racial dynamics. Yet, linking biographical facts to racial contents of art, Bhushan describes how a cosmopolitan identification can free an artist from the clasp of entwined racial and artistic requirements. Furthermore, she suggests that Sher-Gil's "multiply rooted" cosmopolitanism makes possible an aesthetic vision that counters normative racial, gendered, class-inflected, and perhaps sexual mores. In order to take note of the aesthetic effects of Sher-Gil's cosmopolitanism, it is not necessary to assume that her artistic individualism immunizes her against class advantage, casts off the benefits of cross-cultural mobility, or dismisses the complex webs of racial privilege and disadvantage enveloping her specific multiracial identity. These interconnected dimensions of artistic subject formation underscore that the question to which Bhushan's discussion directs us, of how cosmopolitanism and race manifest themselves in Sher-Gil's work, is a complicated one. Without

further entering into this, we can remind ourselves of the fundamental methodological point that while, as Bhushan argues, Sher-Gil's social background influences her artistic outlook, her artistic engagement with race eludes a full determination by such contextual factors. Her art calls for readings of its particular racial dimensions that would escape us if our interpretive efforts stopped at the realities of her social position. The theme of the aesthetic significance of transnational exchanges recurs in Falguni Sheth's article in this section.

In "The Hijab and the Sari: The Strange and the Sexy between Colonialism and Global Capitalism," Sheth compares Western attitudes toward what are taken to be the "strange" hijab and the "sexy" sari. She argues that the veil, in its many varieties, represents an aesthetic and political transgression of the liberal demand for transparency and publicity. Contrary to this, an extended history of colonialist domestication has prepared the sari for uptake into a global capitalist culture of consumption. Sheth observes that longstanding sartorial codes regulated the social significance of clothing in the Indian caste system before the arrival of the British. During the colonial administration, matters of dress became subjects of crosscultural negotiation. British tastes and rules of etiquette imposed changes on men's and to a lesser extent on women's clothing. The ensuing history of politicized negotiation includes strata of forced Indian compliance with, as well as resistance to, British norms, as can be seen in the case of Mohandas K. Gandhi's leadership, under which wearing *khadi*, or locally woven cloth, signaled an anti-colonial politics and an oppositional cultural identification. Sheth argues that it is against this background of adaptation and change that the sari becomes a cosmopolitan consumer good, alongside other allegedly "ethnic" commodities, such as Bollywood films and so-called Indian food. Its adjustment to European "sensibilities, fabric, print, and design" and standards of "modesty and decency" prepared the ground for its aesthetic status as an exotic, glamorous, and sexually alluring piece of clothing. Nowadays wearing a sari can give expression to "an ethnic hipness that resonates with Bollywood and Hollywood aspirations for an 'apolitical,' 'cosmopolitan,' and 'ethnically chic' glamour." Indeed, new sari varieties emerge, and the garment has made it as an element of "cutting-edge haute couture."

At the same time, the hijab, which so long has eluded colonial, Christian, and capitalist control, lies at the center of ongoing struggles for power. Though the sari, as Sheth points out, hides far more of the body than moderate versions of the hijab, the latter practice is comprehended as an offensive form of concealment. Mired in connotations of strangeness, it symbolizes "noncompliance, unwillingness, intolerance, aloofness, and general 'unneighborliness'" in dominant Western eyes. According to Sheth, a further difference between the sari and the hijab is that the latter has no prominent everyday counterpart in mainstream Western clothing rites and fails to follow stylized procedures of concealing and revealing. Owing to these multiple factors, the garment essentially remains "uncosmopolitan," even as certain hijab styles adapt themselves to "capitalistic/cosmopolitan fashion whims." In Sheth's view, a parallel between the historical vicissitudes of

the sari and the present-day battles over the hijab is the presence of a racial aesthetic that governs readings of populations, pronounces judgments about a group's civilized, human, and sexual status, and establishes what count as adequate forms and modifications of clothing practices.

Sheth's analysis gives rise to suggestive questions pertaining to the connections between racial aesthetics and racial politics. Gesturing toward the opening section of this volume on looks and images as well as to the closing section on ethics and politics, we can ask to what extent the ostensible depoliticization of a racialized look or image (as in the case of the sari) depends on its deracialization or on its reracialization in white, hegemonic terms. [6] Relatedly, we can ask in what ways the politicization of an aesthetic form (as in the case of the hijab) is contingent on the racial contents that this form is perceived to sustain. Does a history of aesthetic negotiation and regimentation of a racialized aesthetic form generally coincide with its political and racial neutralization, or are there tendencies that counteract this? Correlatively, does aesthetic and racial unassimilability, as measured by hegemonic criteria, broadly signify politicization, or might it also create means of eluding assumed boundaries of the political, running under the radar of official surveillance techniques?

Wherever these questions ultimately take us, synthesizing Bhushan's and Sheth's approaches, we can see that aesthetic forms (and specifically the material idioms through which women represent and render legible their and others' bodies) rely for their meanings and interpretations on a multifaceted racial dynamic of local and transnational modes of symbolic exchange. The relevant modes of aesthetic production and consumption build upon global histories of colonialism, as well as individual trajectories of migration and identificatory choices.

4. Taste

Where does dismantling the universalist commitments of taste leave the concept of taste? One response to taste's racial and colonial implications is to artistically re-envision what artists and theorists have taken to be universal, utopian idioms. For the painter Mariángeles Soto-Díaz, taste functions as a source of embodied engagement and pleasure that interrupts the formalist boundaries of abstraction and yields a space for the articulation of a Latin American feminist imaginary. Novel embodiments of taste are crucial to the critical transformation of racialized and colonial delimitations of aesthetic form, feeling, and power. At the same time, we can witness the continued workings of taste in the service of white social and political norms. On Robin James's analysis, taste shares with whiteness a paradoxical logic of embodiment and disembodiment that works to maintain the normativity of whiteness. In conjunction, the two essays in this section illustrate how the problems of taste necessitate a multidimensional response across media and modes of analysis.

Mariángeles Soto-Díaz' artist's essay traverses theoretical concepts and historical ideas that she visually explores in her series of paintings, *The Divine Geometry of Chocolate* (2006-present). Soto-Díaz, whose work is grounded in the tradition

of Latin American abstraction, takes as her starting point the failure of notions of universality advocated by European and Latin American modernists, who defined their art in contradistinction to the primitive. Resisting the erasure of Latin American art in the European worldview and flaunting the taboo that renders abstraction the prerogative of white Anglo/European males, she situates her work in the utopian avant-garde movement that considers art a democratic site for the creation of value and pleasure. Soto-Díaz' contribution to this movement finds inspiration in Oswald de Andrade's notion of "antropofagia," which symbolizes the vanguard gesture of "devouring" dominant cultural modes with the intent of overturning colonial power relations.

Refusing the postmodernist decision to jettison the universal, she recruits Carlos Basualdo's reexamined concept of the "universal," which is designed as a corrective to modernism's false and historically specific, contextually bound universalism. Soto-Díaz then advocates an imaginative, deconstructive engagement with modern dreams of universality. For example, in a feminist reclamation of corporeal joy, she proposes to move out "the cold chocolate grinder" in Duchamp's *The Large Glass* "before the bachelors." Aspiring to generate new "universals" through an antropofagic rite, she steeps the formalist vocabulary of Ad Reinhardt's *25 Lines of Words on Art* in the idioms of material pleasure and desire. Soto-Díaz riff on these lines, *Chocolate for Ad* (section 4 of her essay), turns to taste as a dimension of aesthetic experience in an emphatically embodied, gustatory sense of the term. Where Reinhardt asserts "[i]con as image as idea as symbol as ideal as form as icon,"^[7] Soto-Díaz declares "[c]hocolate as experience as matter as idea as taste as plane as delight." Reinhardt's dictum "[m]atter only to the mind"^[8] translates as "[m]atter only to the taste" in her sensualist lexicon.

Deploying a more densely layered tactic of aesthetic disruption, her paintings use modernist strategies to advance their own utopian sites and pleasures. Soto-Díaz imagines a savoring of the ambivalent, semi-bitter elements of chocolate, such as sugar, the sweat of slaves, and the substance's historically double function of medicine and currency. *The Divine Geometry of Chocolate* foregrounds material correspondences between paint and chocolate, such as "overflow, excess, melted drip, solid repetition." "Tasting" the paintings' materiality, the viewer is invited to relish it affectively. Thereby Soto-Díaz aims to locate the viewer in a "generative" universal standpoint, from which distinctions between the modern and the postmodern dissolve.

The retooling of taste and sensory perception is a vital political and aesthetic move. At the same time, a critical aesthetics must contend with the tendency of taste and affiliated concepts to entrench white norms in ever-renewing ways. Robin James's essay, "In but not of, of but not in: on Taste, Hipness, and White Embodiment," explores the paradoxical figuration of the body by discourses of aesthetic taste and whiteness. For Richard Dyer, white identity is "in but not of the body." Invisible, unmarked, and abstract, whiteness, in other words, is located in white bodies but lacks a corporeal origin, remaining incorporeal. James observes that a complementary paradox of embodiment attaches traditionally to taste.

According to feminist philosophers such as Carolyn Korsmeyer and Julia Kristeva, as read by James, taste is historically understood to be “of but not in the body.” That is, taste is considered to originate in the body without being part of it: initially grounded in the gustatory and olfactory senses, it has been imagined to transcend the intimacy of bodily experience to be realized in the non-corporeal realm of publicity and intellect. More specifically, via Kristeva’s notion of taste as an “always already socialized sensation” and Angela Davis’s correlation between an acculturation in white, allegedly universal music and feelings of distaste for the blues, James argues that taste and whiteness both function as “‘in’ and ‘not in,’ ‘of’ and ‘not of’ the body.” In the symmetrical and complimentary paradoxical logic of embodiment exemplified by whiteness and taste she finds the reason for their powerful collaboration in constructing white bodies and rendering them normative.

James next turns to hipness to show how the hipster’s attempt to claim the embodiment disavowed by taste deploys the logic of being “of” but not “in” black male bodies and “in” but not “of” white bodies in order to recuperate white heterosexual masculinity in the face of white postindustrial cultural alienation, while warding off the threats associated with black male alienated bodies. Positioning himself as “Almost Black,” as in James Chance’s song by that title, the hipster situates himself as “in,” “not in,” “of,” and “not of” the white social body, adopting in relation to this social body the same white logic of embodiment that taste assumes in relation to the individual body. Thereby the hipster asserts his white elite status. In conclusion, she observes that the politics of embodiment, as analyzed in the essay, calls for the conceptual tools of aesthetics and constitutes “a baseline from which change must depart.”

In the present section, taste cuts a number of ways: as a modality of embodiment, it recontextualizes colonial encounters in support of a utopian, postcolonial imaginary; in the role of a paradoxically disembodied subjective and social regimen, it consolidates racial privilege. Both essays foreground the status of corporeality. Given the centrality of the body to questions of race, exploration of additional determinants of embodiment, such as the media programming, marketing, commodification, aestheticization, and technological regimentation of bodies can be expected to bring out further registers of taste’s racial functioning.^[9]

5. Ethics and Politics

If the politics of race entails an aesthetic politics, as the above essays suggest, and the process of racial subjectification recruits a political aesthetics, what frameworks of analysis are adequate to this understanding? What terminologies suggest themselves? What objects of inquiry come into view? This final section turns to the problematic of the political, a continuing theme throughout the volume.

In recognition of the fact that films borrow from and reinforce patterns of meaning that organize social life outside the cinema, Paul Taylor describes a practice of cultural criticism that adopts an ethically perfectionist approach to the racial politics of cultural productions. Concerning the topic of

methodology, he advances the more general view that aesthetic criticism must be a part of critical race theory, and philosophy must take up Toni Morrison's call for a form of cultural criticism that exposes the effects of racial mythologies. Crispin Sartwell proposes that political ideologies constitute multimedia aesthetic environments, a point he illustrates through a discussion of the multiple, interrelated manifestations of twentieth-century Black Nationalism. In Namita Goswami's reading of Indian and Indian diasporic films, the aesthetics of the Bollywood film/song exemplifies a postcolonial politics that is effaced by prominent, overly politicized attempts to justify the picturized song in terms of national and identitarian spectacle. Notwithstanding the contrasting methodologies articulated in this volume, the key concepts advanced in the final section (the vision of a transcultural aesthetic politics, the idea of a multisensory art-political environment, and the emphasis on the perfectionist pedagogy of an ethics of racial representation) markedly resonate with the preceding perspectives on images, encounters, embodiment, transnationalism, taste, and otherness.

In "The Last King of Scotland or the Last N---r on Earth: the Ethics of Race on Film," Paul Taylor analyzes the structure of what he calls "the narrative of moral gentrification" in contemporary historical fiction film. Moral gentrification stories about black people make use of what Toni Morrison has named "Africanist" motifs. In other words, they deploy black characters as narrative materials for shaping the concerns of whites, while downplaying the complexity of black people and ignoring the central part they play in modern history. Taylor sees this dynamic at work in a current, post-racist genre of historical films that conjoins a liberal ideology of multiculturalism with aspirations to a post-supremacist notion of what it means to be white or, in Robin Wiegman's terms, a stance of "counter-whiteness." Like urban gentrification processes, films of this kind address problems of racial history, but decouple these problems from the historical and political realities of white supremacy. Thereby these films achieve an evasive disaffiliation from whiteness.

Africanist themes and forms facilitate a disconnection from politics and history. They enable the films in question to deploy black characters to cater to white narrative needs, in particular to the white desire for a morally respectable position. In Taylor's words, moral gentrification fictions set out to "reclaim and reshape history in the name of white innocence, much the way contemporary urban 'homesteaders' reclaim urban spaces." The racial project of postracist, multicultural cinematic counter-whiteness purports to salvage whites' moral standing, without requiring or encouraging a white reorientation to history. Taylor closes by identifying three philosophical aspects of ideology critiques of the sort undertaken in his paper, even of bad movies: cultural artifacts can generate awareness of habitual perceptions and thereby get us to question them; cultural criticism can contribute to an ethical practice of self-care that takes responsibility for the cultural meanings we inhabit; and it can enhance our moral education by improving our ethical skills and concepts and by enabling us to identify and revise problematic habits and ideas.

Crispin Sartwell's "Red, Gold, Black and Green: Black Nationalist Aesthetics" illustrates the notion of a "multisensory artpolitical environment" through a reading of figures, forms, and themes comprised under the heading of black nationalism. By interweaving aesthetic, religious, and political dimensions of the black nationalist movement, Sartwell reveals how they are inextricable from one another. Part and parcel of this artpolitical system is what he describes as a liberatory black racial consciousness, one that, like other resistance movements, also had oppressive implications, pertaining particularly to gender. Reviewing symbolic strategies, central figures, and key developments characterizing the Marcus Garvey movement, Rastifarianism, the Nation of Gods and Earths, reggae, and hip hop, Sartwell shows how black nationalism has prominently influenced the world's auditory and visual culture. Its manifestations take place across an expansive scope of media that have ineradicably left their mark on our environments: clothing, hairstyles, languages, images, poetry, painting, parades, festivals, ceremonies, sound technologies, music, advertising, typestyles, DJing, rapping, dancing, graffiti, cinematic forms, and poetic self-design through invented naming. In the improvisational environments and reconstructive repetitions generated by dub mixes and sampling, Sartwell sees the circulation of "snatches of a torn-up revolutionary consciousness, a black nation in disintegration and re cohesion." Sartwell concludes that political systems and ideologies "are systems of all the arts." Their contents, their modes of dissemination, and their affective implications all fundamentally reside in multisensory material surrounds, which constitute the "very locus of political life."

Commenting specifically on the relation between aesthetics and race, Sartwell contends that race must be conceived as "an aesthetic repertoire." He notes that "the concept of race is constantly articulated in aesthetic terms." Observing that the reverse also holds, he indicates that the arts and the data of aesthetics reflect racial concepts and social, political, and historical practices, from which art and aesthetics cannot be separated.

In "The Empire Sings Back: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Whimsy," Namita Goswami rejects politically overdetermined accounts of Indian and Indian diasporic films, prominent in postcolonial and cultural studies, in favor of a reading of the Bollywood film/song as an exemplification of "postcolonial whimsy." Her essay comprehends the picturized song's frequently devalued qualities, such as emotionality, effeminacy, irrationality, and fantasy, as whimsical elements that enable a free play of the imagination and generate novel economies of pleasure. The film/songs invite participation and permit affect without literal linguistic understanding. Inherently hybrid, they produce meaning, not through the identitarian differentiation of musical structures, but by combining melodic and non-melodic components. It is, then, in virtue of their aesthetic dimensions that the picturized song sequences achieve an "unmoored transnational quality." The film/songs' unique aesthetic qualities make possible alternative forms of public culture and imagined community that are not based on calculability, exploitation, or predetermined national boundaries. By embodying everyday dreams and hopes, Bollywood's postcolonial whimsy engages in local negotiations

with “grand narratives” of nationalism and postmodernism.

Political readings that fail to attend to the aesthetic dimension, Goswami argues, recuperate the film’s affective and affiliative functioning within an already constituted “Indian” community. These approaches constitute identity-based and implicitly nationalist readings that reduce Bollywood film to national allegory. They project a flawed political vision of the films: by equating modernity and postmodernity with national crisis management, recoding nation as culture, and translating migrancy for class advancement as victimized minority status, they downplay the aesthetic politics of postcolonial whimsy. These interpretations tacitly valorize Hollywood’s “realism” over Bollywood’s “melodrama,” diminishing not only the latter genre’s conventions but also its spectators. What is more, such interpretations reinforce an image of Hollywood as the obverse of Bollywood, and of the U.S. as a finished product in opposition to the “undeveloped” nation of India. They fail to recognize Hollywood’s function as a national allegory, overlook Hollywood’s own diasporic hybridity, and betray a unidirectional vision of the global. Through a detailed study of the whimsical aesthetics of the Bollywood film/song, coupled with a reading of *Bride and Prejudice*, which privileges limited political and documentary registers of meaning, Goswami affirms the distinctively aesthetic postcolonial character of the Bollywood picturized song sequences.

While the essays in this volume do not yield a synoptic viewpoint, they can be read as strands of conversations that have begun to take place across disciplines. Discontinuities and parallels among the approaches included here reflect broader lines of affiliation and controversy. We can look forward to changing our concepts and methods as we engage the yet unforeseen gaps, contradictions, and convergences at the core of our developing debates about aesthetics and race.

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Endnotes

[1] Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 179-194.

[2] I thank Arnold Berleant and Yuriko Saito for inviting this collection, and for their encouragement, enthusiasm, and advice throughout the process of bringing it to completion. I am also grateful to Ivan Gaskell, Robert Gooding-Williams, Ted Gracyk, Norman S. Holland, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Susana Loza, Sheetal Majithia, Charles Mills, and Eva Rueschmann for their rigorous peer review reports on the essays for this volume.

[3] As shown by, among others, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Cornel West, “A Genealogy of Modern Racism,” in *Prophesy Deliverance! Towards an Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); and bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

[4] These include Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London: Verso, 2007 [2003]); W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

[5] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice," in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye Cham (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), pp. 237-279; and Cornel West, *op. cit.*

[6] For the questions posed here I am indebted to the questions Naomi Schor raises about the connections between the contemporary gendering of aesthetic detail and the reevaluated status currently enjoyed by such detail. Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 6.

[7] Ad Reinhardt, "25 Lines of Words on Art: Statement" (1958) in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, eds. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (California: University of California Press, 1996), p. 90, line 7.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 91, line 19.

[9] For a suggestive discussion of the racial implications of the commodification and biopolitical monitoring of bodies see Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).