

Don't ~~H~~ Make My Black Face Blue: Race, Avatars, Albescence, and the Transnational Imaginary

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If you're white, ask a colored reader of fantasy whether it matters. Ask them how often they found themselves in fantasy books or movies when they were growing up, and how they felt about it. (Ursula Le Guin 2005)

I knew that we had to walk this very fine line between too alien and too Earth-like. The audience needs to identify with the characters' environments and believe where they are, yet their look still needs to be alien and compelling enough for a film such as this. (James Cameron, qtd. in Fitzpatrick 15)

"Films," writes critical legal studies scholar Patricia Williams, "provide an expressive lexicon and romanticized reinforcement of cultural attitudes. They endow with mythic status the sights and sound of those whom the camera makes larger than life; they seduce us with, if not instruct us about, whom to love or hate or mock—and how." Unlike mainstream narratives set in the "real world," however, speculative fiction, in both its cinematic and literary forms, should by definition provide a canvas to give free rein to the imagination, to boldly go where no trope has gone before. Science fiction or fantasy, however, is deeply enmeshed in the historical moment in which it is conceived, gestated and produced. The extent to which its imagination is grounded in the quotidian becomes glaringly apparent when one examines racial representation.

While race itself remains a scientific fiction, one as potent as the white supremacist Victorian fantasies that produced and once sustained it, notions of race continue to inscribe artifacts of popular culture and perhaps no where as deeply as science fiction and fantasy, where it often assumes the guise of allegory and metaphor by which race is disguised as something else. For the most part, however, absence has characterized the genre's representation of nonwhites. For aside from an early history of superstitious natives, restless zombies, and easily frightened domestics, nonwhites in general and blacks in particular have remained invisible to western cinematic science fiction, if somewhat less so to its literary counterpart which occasionally has featured black characters. Even so, prior to the 1960s, only a few white science fiction writers—Theodore Sturgeon (*More Than Human*, 1953), Ray Bradbury (“Way in the Middle of the Air,” 1950; “The Other Foot,” 1951) and Arthur C. Clarke (*Childhood's End*, 1953)—incorporated black characters into their fictions. Although the 1960s and 1970s saw several writers—including Robert Silverberg (*Up the Line*, 1969, *Shadrach in the Furnace*, 1976), John Brunner (*Stand on Zanzibar*, 1968; *The Wrong End of Time*, 1971), and Mack Reynolds (“El Hassan” trilogy: *Blackman's Burden*, 1972; *Border, Breed nor Birth*, 1972; *The Best Ye Breed*, 1978)—introduce their readers to black characters, only one, Philip K. Dick, regularly populated his works with blacks, whom he generally depicted as genuinely human(e) and juxtaposed against white inauthenticity and artifice (Russell). On the whole, however, the genre's cinematic and graphic incarnations have consistently failed (or refused) to imagine blacks in ways that seriously challenge existing stereotypes of blackness and that subvert the imaginative and assumptive architecture of contemporary racial discourse.

To See the Invisible Man

America's cinema of the fantastic continues to exploit western associations of blackness with atavism, buffoonery, and priapic hypersexuality, even as it camouflages them in technical wizardry. The Black Other as sexual predator finds early expression in Merriam Cooper's *King Kong* (1933), an association not lost in Germany where it was re-titled *King Kong und die weisse Frau* (King Kong and the White

Woman), making explicit the film's implicit dread of miscegenation (Snead 20–22). In the 1970s, producer Dino De Laurentiis stirred controversy when his production company placed ads in Hollywood trade papers seeking black actors to don the monkey suit for his 1976 remake.¹ Arguably, the most literal incarnation of the predatory Black Other is British director Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), whose towering, ambulatory black *phallus dentata* is portrayed by a black actor in a latex suit. Swiss artist H. R. Giger, the creature's designer, has written that Scott's inspiration for the alien came from a photo of former Nazi documentarian and photographer Leni Riefenstahl posed next to a 6-foot-7-inch tall Nubian. After Scott told Giger he "wanted a man that size for the Alien," Bolaji Badejo, a 6-foot, 10 1/2-inch-tall Nigerian was cast in the role (Giger 60).² Actor Sigourney Weaver has suggested the climatic scene in which a pale, scantily clad Ripley faces off against the alien plays on images of erotic, threatening black alterity: "Ridley's original idea was that I should be nude and that the alien should make it over to me with lots of steam and lots of KY and look in the door and see the ... and be very sort of amazed by the fact that there was this soft, you know, pink creature who looks so different from him. And there should have been like some quasi-erotic moment" (Weaver). Bernardi (1998) has suggested that the alien queen in *Aliens* (1986) can be read as a "stereotype of overpopulating black women represented in the 1980s as 'welfare queens'" (82) and represents the norms of Hollywood casting and art direction where "the overpopulating evil of blackness helps define the nurturing civility of whiteness" (83–84), a trope reiterated in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* and his own 2005 remake of *King Kong*. The casting of black actors as otherworldly entities can also be seen in *Enemy Mine* (1985) in which Louis Gossett, Jr. portrays an iguana-like alien soldier, *Predator* (1987) and its sequel, whose menacing Third World-evoking dreadlocked alien headhunters—the original "inspired by a painting of a Rastafarian warrior" (Duncan 101)—were both performed by 7-foot-2-inch Kevin Peter Hall, and most recently *Avatar* (2009), in which a quartet of black, brown and red actors provides the voices and performance-captured movements for the film's computer-generated aliens.

Science fiction serves as a useful medium through which to observe how the culture's obsession with race is reproduced and its racial hierarchies projected, reinscribed, and finessed through practices of

concealment, absence, displacement, and erasure. For example, the film versions of Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes* provide a critical discourse on American race and race relations, even as they reproduce its color hierarchies. Greene (1998) notes that while ape society is depicted in the novel as egalitarian, the film's producers created a rigid racial hierarchy, a decision in part motivated by their insistence that both Zira and Cornelius, the film's simian lovers, had to be chimpanzees, lest American audiences interpret a romantic relationship between apes of different species as "ape miscegenation" (34–35). In both the quintology and the 2001 Tim Burton remake of the original, a clear racial hierarchy is retained in which lighter colored apes—blond orangutans, pink-faced chimpanzees—are positioned above black-faced gorillas. Although in the original films all the ape leads were played by white actors, the remake casts its two nonwhite supporting actors (Michael Clark Duncan and Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa) as gorillas.

Faces of color are conspicuously absent from most science fiction fare. *A. I.* (2001), Steven Spielberg's somber meditation on humanity, presents the viewer with an antediluvian future that is essentially white—people of color having apparently been washed away like so much flotsam in the flood—as are the majority of the robots who serve them. Despite scenes in the film that allegorize the treatment of robots to that of blacks, one in which runaway robots are captured and destroyed for the amusement of their human tormentors is undermined by the intrusion of the familiar trope of black buffoonery. The film renders all of the robots realistically humanoid in appearance, their dignity as they face destruction inviting the viewer's sympathy, with one salient exception: a black robot (voiced by Chris Rock) whose exaggerated racial features and jiving banter as he is fed into a cannon that will hurl him to a fiery oblivion are designed to elicit laughter not tears, a perverse creative decision by Spielberg given that the destruction of the other robots in the scene evokes the public spectacle of black lynchings. Spielberg's *Minority Report* (2002) is set in a predominately white Washington, DC where "potential" criminals are preemptively placed in suspended animation. Given the film's premise and contemporary stereotypes about the criminal propensities of blacks, one might assume by their absence that they have all been preventatively detained. Sinister forces are implied in the absence of blacks in "L.A. 2017" (1971), a science fiction-themed

episode of the television drama *Name of the Game* penned by social critic and science fiction author Philip Wylie and directed by a young Spielberg. Set in an American Szaszian therapeutic police state whose population has been driven underground by a global ecological catastrophe, the episode contains a scene in which a surveillance officer informs his partner of “unconfirmed reports of a Negro in Cleveland,” to which his partner responds incredulously, “There were no surface Negroes in Cleveland after the burnings of 1996” (You Tube 12:27–34), passing lines of dialogue that suggest the government relocated blacks after they rioted or, even more ominously, targeted them for mass immolation.

The absence of nonwhites also marks Dutch filmmaker Paul Verhoeven’s *Starship Troopers* (1997) whose leads, despite their character’s ethnic names, could all serve as poster children for Aryan Nations. The filmmakers are more intent on satirizing the fascism of Robert Heinlein’s controversial 1959 novel, *Nazism*, and WWII propaganda films than with reproducing the novel’s multiethnic future. Questioned about the paucity of nonwhites in the film during a promotional tour in Tokyo, Verhoeven defended the casting decision, stating, “The idea was not to worry about ethnicity in any way.... I only tried to test out who was best for the part. [I was] thinking about what’s happening in the US, a multiethnic society where names are slowly taken away from the ethnicity people have. ... After a couple of generations, you cannot even see that [ethnicity] anymore because of the genetic pool being so diverse” (qtd. in Fazio 15). Following Verhoeven’s own logic, nonwhite actors could also have been cast in the role of characters with white ethnic names. Ultimately, the film’s anti-fascist subtext is belied by its adherence to an Aryanism that, for all its faults, was not in Heinlein’s original. In Verhoeven’s *Total Recall* (1990), Benny, a mutant black cabdriver, initially appears as an innocuous comical sambo, only to be revealed as a treacherous coon before being eviscerated by Arnold Schwarzenegger.

James Cameron’s *Terminator 2* (1991) does offer a competent black computer scientist, Miles Dyson, but whatever genius he possesses is tainted by the fact that not only is he responsible for nuclear Armageddon, he is also a plagiarist whose innovations are based on technology which, unbeknownst to him, comes from the future and that he reverse engineers from the shattered remains of the original film’s killer cyborg. Like most blacks in science fiction films, he pays for his

transgressions with his life. In the scene in which a gun-toting Sarah Connor, outfitted in Ramboesque survivalist gear, stakes out Dyson for assassination and storms his home, one cannot help wonder if Connor's actions are motivated more by racial resentment than a desire to save humanity, since Dyson enjoys all the comforts she has been denied: a rewarding career, an upscale suburban home, a functional upper-middle-class nuclear family. "It's all your fault!" Connor rages, looming menacingly over the prone Dyson as she prepares to execute him. In a society that has traditionally scapegoated non-whites, particularly black men—including its first black President—for its problems, the implications of the line are unsettling.

Katherine Bigelow's *Strange Days* (1995) tries desperately to be both contemporary and prophetic; instead it ends up being merely trite, as it lacks the nerve to fully develop its subplot about racial unrest sparked by the police murder of a black activist and the conspiracy to cover it up. While blacks do not feature in *Alien Nation* (1988), it, too, aims for social relevance through allegorical treatments of slavery, racism, and the crack epidemic, only to settle safely for bromance banalities. Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* (1997) offers us Ruby Rhod (Chris Tucker), a boisterous, flamboyant DJ whose offensiveness is slightly offset by the casting of a black (Tommy "Tiny" Lister) as the relatively dignified, if ineffectual, world president (naturally, it is the white hero, Bruce Willis, who saves the world). *I Am Legend* (2007) and Roland Emmerich's *2012* (2010) offer black heroes, the latter presenting not only a black (albeit short-lived) president, as well as a black scientist who saves a significant portion of humanity and a black love interest for its hero. Several Will Smith vehicles add some color to their fantastic landscapes, although they either ignore race (*Hancock*, 2008) or obliquely allude to it, as is the case in *I Am Legend* and *I, Robot* (2004), whose black protagonists, ironically, engage in a genocidal assault on pale-skinned zombie mutants and confront feelings of personal prejudice against a translucently white robot minority, respectively. To date, however, only *The Matrix Reloaded* (2002), *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003), and the 2002 remake of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* have offered audiences futures in which blacks and browns are well-represented, although their messianic heroes remain white males.

The future depicted in George Lucas' debut work *THX1138* (1971) is starkly white both cinematographically and in racial composition. Set underground in a dystopian future, the film depicts a repressive technocratic state which employs a chrome-faced robot police force to maintain social order and uses drugs to suppress the sexual desires of its workforce. Blacks appear in the film only in the form of "holograms" that are projected to the worker's private cubicles for educational and recreational purposes. Four holographic roles are presented: newscasters, pseudo-intellectual pundits, buffoonish, slapstick comedy duos, and nude entertainers who serve as sexual anodyne. In one scene, the eponymous THX1138 (Robert Duval), exhausted after his shift on an assembly line, returns home to his cubicle where he calls up two nude black male and female holograms and appears to masturbate *via* mechanical pump to their flickering projections as they dance sensually to rhythmic tribal drums. One recalls the observation of a friend Frantz Fanon cites in *Black Skin/White Masks* (1969): "When the whites feel that they have become too mechanized, they turn to men of color and ask them for a little human sustenance" (129). The holograms, however, are not simply blue-tinged low-resolution simulacra but flesh and blood persons who have been segregated from the general (read white) population. Apparently unsatisfied with holographic s(t)imulation, THX has sex with his female roommate and is sent to a detention area. There he encounters SRT (Don Pedro Colley), a towering dim-witted hologram who has also been sent there for reasons the film fails to elucidate. The two eventually escape but the hologram, unaccustomed to the real world and its technology, is killed when he ineptly crashes a stolen car.

Even in the physical absence of black people, science fiction films may evoke their presence. In 1999, George Lucas's *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* ignited charges of racism with the digitally generated character Jar Jar Binks (whose voice and motion-captured movements were provided by black actor Ahmed Best), a patois-spouting amphibian outcast whose loping gait and dim-witted antics uncannily recall the classic coonery of Stepin Fetchit as well as the aforementioned SRT³ while the film's villains, the sibilant, oblique-eyed Trade Federation limn World War II yellow peril stereotypes. In keeping with such racial stereotypes, Binks is merely comically inept,

while the Trade Federation representatives are fiendishly cunning masters of conspiracy and misdirection.

Accusations of racism were not new to Lucas. The absence of blacks in the original *Star Wars* prompted Lucas to add the black character Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams). Ironically, Lucas had considered casting black actors for the Han Solo role but decided not to, fearing the romantic relationship that develops between Solo and Princess Leia would offend whites: "I didn't want to make *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* at that point, so I sort of backed off" (qtd. in Pollock 151). The fact that in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) Calrissian is introduced as the original owner of the Millennium Falcon, Han's spaceship, can be interpreted as a nod to this. Lucas's reluctance to populate his saga with people of color did not stop with Solo, however. A fan of the films of Kurosawa Akira, Lucas had originally considered casting Mifune Toshiro as Obi-wan Kenobi and a Eurasian actress as Leia (151). In the end, the only "black" figure of note to appear in the original *Star Wars* is Darth Vader, voiced, originally uncredited, by James Earl Jones, an omission—like the absence of blacks—that led some critics to condemn the film as racist. Lucas's decision to cast a black in the role of Mace Windu, a high-ranking member of the Jedi Council second only to Yoda, would seem to have been a preemptive strike against accusations of racism being leveled at the prequel, a prescient if ultimately unsuccessful strategy given the critical reaction to Binks.

In *Transformers* (2007) and *Transformers 2: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), director Michael Bay employs state-of-the-art CGI to transform extraterrestrial robots into massive consumer conveyances, while resorting to more traditional devices in his depictions of blacks. White is the default mode for his alien robots, unless they are racially and ethnically encoded. "Aprons, gloves, dresses, scarves, headbands, and even white teeth and eyes are all signifiers of a certain coding of race in Hollywood films that audiences soon came to recognize" (Snead 6). In *Transformers*, the autobot Jazz is raced as black, as is evident by the name, the fact that it is voiced by a black actor (Darius McCrary), and in the decision to have the character breakdance and speak jive. Naturally, as is the fate of most black characters in genre films, it meets an untimely end. In *Transformers 2*, Bay introduces two new comical "black" robots, Mudflap and Skids, illiterate, apish, cybernetic gangsta wannabes who, naturally, jive talk. Skids

even sports a gold front tooth. As in the *Star Wars* films, both *Transformers* films utilize burlesque to ethnically and racially mark robot and human characters—unless the latter are outfitted in military uniforms, national service being the great equalizer in the jingoistic films of post-9/11 Hollywood. Despite the enormous budgets lavished on elaborate special effects, the cinema of the fantastic is disinclined to present images that are “not at the expense of historically demonized groups” and has abysmally failed to “launch our children into a social galaxy far, far away from all the old prejudices” (Williams).

Vanilla Skies

The fact that blacks are absent from these films or are given circumscribed roles, however, owes less to their fantasy trappings than to the realities of how films are financed and marketed for the transnational marketplace and the fact that American films with black leads are not expected to be profitable and are thought to be a hard sell overseas. European and Japanese foreign investors who increasingly have come to finance American film production prefer to invest in films in which whites are cast in leading roles (Munoz, Waxman). Such preferences impact decisions regarding not only the ethnicity/race of characters in live action and animated films but also the appearance of “synthetic actors.” Technological advances keep pace with the prejudices of the marketplace, insuring the uninterrupted continuation of racial topologies and insuring that demand for the expected is met.

In 2001, when *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, the first fully computer-generated feature film, was released, much was made of its star Aki Ross, who was touted as the first “synthespian” or computer-generated performer. Despite her “Eurasian” roots, Ross had little in common physically with the Asian American actor (Ming Na Wen) who voices her, the film’s Japanese and American co-creators apparently believing that international audiences (including Japanese audiences reared on Caucasianized, nominally Asian animated heroes) would prefer a Caucasian countenance. Images of a bikini-clad Ross appeared in *Maxim* and promotional materials for the film. Setting aside questions of the sexual objectification of women such practices raise, one doubts that similar

campaigns would have been conceived had Ross been depicted as visibly Asian since it is her idealized “whiteness” and the ritualized iconographic display of the “white” celebrity body that viewers are expected to desire and consume.

Indeed, in the cinema of the fantastic, like black, brown and red faces, yellow faces have been marked for albescence, penitentic erasure. Despite the growing popularity of Asian popular culture in the United States and Europe, and the growing fascination with popular culture of so-called cool Japan, yellow faces, if not yellowface mimicry, in leading roles remain rare. Even when these films are based on popular Asian properties, white actors replace their Asian protagonists. Hollywood versions of *Ringu* (1998; *The Ring*, 2002), *Ju-on* (2003; *The Grudge*, 2004), *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (2002; *Dark Water*, 2005), *Kairō* (2001; *Pulse*, 2006), *Chakushin ari* (2004; *One Missed Call*, 2008), *The Last Airbender* (2010), *Dragonball Evolution* (2009), and *Speed Racer* (2009) consistently cast white actors as leads in Asian or Asian-inspired properties.

Albescence, however, is not confined to the American shore. American fantasy landscapes offer a foundation upon which Japanese fabulists have erected their own albocentric futures *writ large*. For the most part, Japanese animation is bereft of major and secondary black characters. Japanese science fiction anime set in the future such as Anno Hideaki's *Evangelion* (1995), Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell*, (1995), *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2005), and the perennial *Gundam* saga (1979-present) or in an alternate past such as Ōtomo Katsuhiro's *Steam Boy* (2004) and Oshii's *Sky Crawlers* (2008) feature mostly Caucasianized Japanese and Caucasian protagonists. In fact, until recently blacks in Japanese anime and manga tended to be depicted stereotypically as bug-eyed, thick-lipped coons and muscular, dimwitted brutes. Today, when not outright caricatures, they are depicted as having dark skin but Caucasian physiognomies. So ambiguous is the race/ethnicity of these characters that it has become a point of discussion and debate on numerous Internet sites. In the “post/transracial” *mise-en-scène* of Japanese anime and manga, all races are more or less homogenized into a quasi-Nordic or Anglo-American ideal, ethnic and racial differences marked not by physiognomy but personal name, hair style, ethnically coded attire, and geography. It should be noted, however, that with the growing popularity of hip hop in Japan, some Japanese manga such as Inoue Santa's popular

Tokyo Tribe series have begun to depict Japanese characters with black physical features and that the titular hero of Okazaki Takashi's American co-produced futuristic fantasy *Afro Samurai* is black. For the most part, however, these landscapes remain decidedly "white," with a sprinkling of token pockets of ambiguous latte-colored hybridity that suggest a racially transcendent globalism.

Whether the setting is America, Japan or the global stage, the face of the future is white. One function of this albescence is to fortify perceived demographic borders. While black protagonists have occasionally appeared in Anglo American science fiction and fantasy magazines and novels, their faces have seldom graced the covers, the marketing wisdom presuming that blacks do not read such works and that blacks on covers do not sell well with whites. The black protagonists of Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* novels have been rendered white on book covers, and consequently read as such by impressionable readers. Indeed, Le Guin (2005) has been quite vocal about her efforts to reset the default mode of white normalcy by challenging such conventions. In creating the cultures of her Earthsea series, she chose to deliberately populate her landscape with "white," "black," "brown," and "red" peoples, whites appearing in the novels only as a marginal minority. "From the start," she writes, "I saw my Earthsea as a deliberate refusal to go along with the prejudice that sees white as the norm, and the fantasy tradition that accepts the prejudice." However, to Le Guin's chagrin, the 2004 television adaptation of *Earthsea* re-imagines most of its inhabitants as white.⁴ Similarly, British author Neil Gaiman has had his own run-ins with Hollywood albescence and stated that directors hoping to adapt his novel *Anansi Boys* (2005) for the screen "had real problems with a story as [*sic*] black people as leads in a fantasy movie" (qtd. in Quint). This situation, however, has shown little signs of improvement. In 2009, controversy erupted over Australian author Justine Larbalestier's *Liar* whose protagonist, whom she describes as "black with nappy hair which she wears natural and short," was transformed on the cover of the American edition into a white girl with long, light straight hair until a public outcry resulted in her repigmentation (Larbalestier).

Albescence, however, is not confined to the racial reassignment of human protagonists: but is evident in the depiction of the alien other who when not depicted as chimerically humanoid is typically

rendered Caucasian in appearance whenever it represents a morally or technologically *advanced* extraterrestrial species. Significantly, after nearly a half century of “boldly go[ing] where no man has gone before,” while *Star Trek* has in subsequent incarnations added black actors to portray Klingons, Romulans, Vulcans, and other humanoid species originally portrayed by white actors, it has yet to encounter a technologically/morally superior extraterrestrial civilization the majority of whose members are identifiable black humans in physical appearance and who lack such external markers of alien alterity as pointed ears, cranial ridges, and wrinkled nasal arches. Indeed, while the crews of various Enterprises have encountered alien societies modeled on ancient Greek, Roman, Victorian, and even Native American cultures, only one episode, *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* “Code of Honor” (1987), has featured an alien culture modeled on Africa, an episode so steeped in racial cliché that even the show’s creative consultant lamented in hindsight, “I felt like it was a ‘40s tribal African view of blacks. I think it was kind of embarrassing ... it came dangerously close to ‘Amos and Andy’” (Tracey Torme, qtd. in Altman 27). On the other hand, black actors have regularly been cast to evoke a menacing if sometimes noble alien savagery as metaphors of black rage (Klingons) and drug addiction (Jem’Hadar).

Hollywood seems equally bereft of imagination. More than fifty years after the original’s release, the remake of Robert Wise’s *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), whose intergalactic emissary Klaatu (British actor Michael Rennie), the embodiment of extraterrestrial moral and technological supremacy, comes to Washington to warn humankind against bringing its self-destructive proclivities to space, still depicts him as a more or less phenotypically white male (now portrayed by Eurasian actor Keanu Reeves), while Gort, his voiceless, faceless guardian, has evolved from seamless silver sentry to muscled, black gargantua. The Earth, it would seem, is not the only thing that has been deprived of forward momentum. To be sure, in casting Reeves in the role and Chinese American actor James Hong as a member of Klaatu’s species, the filmmakers introduce a racial diversity lacking in the original. Nonetheless, they go out of their way to establish that Jacob (Jaden Smith), the black son of the film’s widowed white heroine (Jennifer Connelly), is her stepson. Connelly could as easily have been scripted as the biological mother without

concocting an unnecessarily contrived back story that is completely incidental to the narrative but that may placate moviegoers uncomfortable with depictions of conjugal relationships between black men and white women and the fruit of such unions.

This is not to suggest that blacks as alien others do not appear in science fiction films, but the attempts themselves often reveal the inability of filmmakers to go beyond familiar constructions of “blackness.” For example, John Sayles’ *Brother from Another Planet* (1984) features Joe Morton as a mute, six-toed “black” alien but, alas, he is a slave on the run from “white” alien bounty hunters. *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* (1984) is one of the few films to imagine an extraterrestrial species that is black in both its true and assumed human forms, the film’s noble, intelligent good guys, the formicidic “Black Lectroids” adopting Rastafarian guise on Earth to battle their enemies, the evil comically inept “Red Lectroids,” who disguise themselves as geeky middle-aged white men. The subversion of tropes is mitigated, however, by the fact that in the 1980s and well into the new millennium, Rastafarians had become the genre’s new black, appearing in William Gibson’s cyberpunk novels, and the films *Predator 2* and *The Matrix Reloaded*.

The Dispossessed

Fetishism, Stuart Hall reminds us, is “a realm where fantasy intervenes in representation,” and that involves “the substitution of an ‘object’ for some dangerous and powerful but forbidden force” (266). The mobilization of alien alterity as a metaphor of blackness is on display in two recent science fiction films, Neill Bromkamp’s *District 9* and James Cameron’s *Avatar*. Both films are narratives of displacement—literal, figurative, rhetorical, and strategic. Superficially, these films are about the displacement of alien bodies by initially flawed and destructive humans. On a deeper, technical level, the narratives themselves are impelled by the displacement of black bodies by metaphoric and digitally generated alien simulacra that quite literally stand in for them. That is, the filmmakers employ displacement as a means by which alien bodies are made to do the work of black ones and, in doing so, enable patently and potentially controversial emotions invested in one object to be safely, and less controversially

transferred to another. Structurally the films are superficially similar: both describe violent conflicts between humans and alien and cast corporations as inherently evil entities whose goals involve the usurpation of alien technology and bodies. Despite these similarities, the perspectives from which they attack their narratives could not be further apart: Blomkamp's vision is mired in misanthropic cynicism, Cameron's in liberal romanticism.

The aliens of *District 9*, derogatively called "prawns" in the film (their actual name for themselves is never revealed), are violent, directionless, crustacean-like beings who, save the peculiarly named Christopher Johnson, lack any sense of agency and easily fall prey to their human exploiters. Blomkamp and co-writer Terri Tatchell have promoted the film as an allegory of xenophobia and South African apartheid. In the DVD audio commentary to the film Blomkamp states that his intent was to set a western science fiction film in South Africa (00:02:11–16), describing the film, somewhat inelegantly, as *Star Wars* "in a bad setting" (00:15: 41): "This [*District 9*] is bad *Stars Wars*. It's like ... *Star Wars* in Africa. Bad *Star Wars* is a good way to describe *District 9*" (00:15:24–32).

Blomkamp's comments recall those of Michael Resnick, an American science fiction writer who has set many of his works in Africa or incorporated African themes. In his introduction to *Future Earths: Under African Skies* (1993), an anthology of science fiction stories set in Africa, Resnick observes that the continent "provides thoroughly documented examples of some of the most fascinating people and societies any writer, searching for the new and the different and the alien, could hope to find" (12) and asks the reader to identify science fiction stories from a list of scenarios he provides that describe modern slavery, crucifixion, genocide, and genital mutilation, only to reveal them to be not science fiction but contemporary African realities, Resnick's point being that the African continent is more savage, cruel, backward, bizarre, and sadistic than any imaginary world. Blomkamp adopts the same strategy, employing the South African response to the alien newcomers as a metaphor of the violent post-apartheid confrontations between black South Africans and Zimbabwe immigrants, while the Nigerians murder of the aliens for body parts in an attempt to control their weaponry, clearly references widely reported incidents of so-called *muti* (traditional medicine) killings, whose victims are murdered and mutilated for the curative

properties their body parts are thought to possess. Ultimately, the salvation of the aliens is dependent upon Wikus Van de Merwe (Sharlto Copley), an officious, dull-witted white bureaucrat with the Department of Alien Affairs of Multi National United (MNU), the multinational company charged with relocating the 1.8 million aliens from their shantytown in Johannesburg to a concentration camp located outside of the district.

As an apartheid metaphor, *District 9* is a muddle. One source of its confusion involves whether human apartheid in South Africa has ended by the time of the events depicted in the film. Blomkamp has stated that the setting of the film is “totally the present” (qtd. in O’Hehir), a present, presumably, in which human apartheid has been abolished. In Blomkamp’s scenario, human apartheid was abolished in 1994, twelve years after arrival of the aliens. “The black government is [now] in control, and I assume that the white government ... did the same thing to the aliens” (qtd. in O’Hehir). Yet oddly the “postapartheid” society depicted in the film shows only whites in positions of power. (Wikus calls a black subordinate “boy”; a black security officer repeatedly calls him “boss.”) In the film’s *faux* documentary footage, whites consistently appear as figures of authority (sociologists, journalists, entomologists, aid workers) who dispassionately explain alien, black South African, and Nigerian ways and who are mildly sympathetic to the aliens’ plight. In contrast, black South Africans are depicted as rabidly xenophobic. “They’re spending so much money to keep them here when they could be spending it on other things, but at least they’re keeping them separate from us” (00:03: 24–33), laments an unidentified black woman.

The appearance of blacks in these sequences serve to demonstrate that black South Africans are just as xenophobic as Afrikaners, if not more so. Blomkamp has stated that the *faux* documentary “man-in-the-street” interviews in which black South Africans talk disparagingly about the alien newcomers incorporates actual footage of interviews conducted with real blacks in which they discussed undocumented foreign immigrants (Savage). Moreover, the casting of black South Africans to play Nigerians also serves to exploit black South African resentment by quite literally providing an improvisational stage for the actors to enact their stereotypes of Nigerians before the cameras as well as a political platform for the director to demonstrate that xenophobia-infused mimicry and racist parody

know no colorline. With the exception of a black female MNU PR liaison and a black male who Wikus trains as his replacement, the only black in a position of power to appear in these sequences is the MNU CEO in charge of its South African headquarters, whose American accent is clearly meant to mark him as the multinational face of the corporation. Like the film's black South Africans, however, he expresses little sympathy for the aliens.

Finally, as an allegory of apartheid, the film witnesses some telling omissions: there are no alien Bilkos or Mandelas, no international, multispecial or alien antiapartheid movements, no international pressures or threats of sanctions against the current regime, perhaps because Blomkamp believes such pressures have not been exerted to combat the social injustices that today plague South Africa under black rule. The fact that South Africa's black government has retained alien apartheid serves to reiterate Blomkamp's contention that black oppressors are as bad as white ones, a point the filmmaker cautiously finesses by making sure that the visible face of South Africa's oppressive bureaucratic and security apparatus remains white.

Blue Like Me: Didactic Xenoface

Both *District 9* and *Avatar* put forth the proposition that empathy with the Other can be achieved only through a dramatic physical transformation of the Self that ultimately leads to an epiphanic change of consciousness. In this sense, these films are not unlike literary narratives of didactic blackface and such mimetic performance as those produced during the 1960s by liberal whites such as John Howard Griffin (*Black Like Me*, 1962) and Grace Halsell (*Soul Sister*, 1969) who employed their journalistic experiments in race-crossing to expose racism in the American South. Didactic blackface refers to a rhetorical style of racial mimesis whose objective is not simply to entertain but to forge a social critique and which is premised on the belief that in order to understand the other one must become (if only temporarily) the other. In film, didactic blackface has sometimes, paradoxically, assumed a white exterior, although the aims of the performance remained the same: As in the tradition of the cinematic tragic light-skinned mulatto who passes for white (a role traditionally essayed by white female performers), these experiments in racial

masquerade invited whites to identify with the actor/author, whose travails not only limned the black experience but also served to authenticate that experience despite the obvious artifice involved in its production. That is, while didactic blackface may be motivated by a benevolent concern for social justice, it nonetheless utilized the privileged I/eye-witness testimony of white authority as a means to authenticate the black experience by making it ones own. It presumed that the recording of that experience by actual blacks themselves was somehow inadequate to the task. Rather, these narratives suggest that for those experiences to be real, they must be experienced by whites who, in turn, authenticate them to a mostly white audience. Herein lies their pernicious conceit: racism—or, in the case at hand, speciesism—cannot be understood intellectually but must first be experienced viscerally, if not by walking in the shoes of another, then by assuming, if only temporarily, his color, her physiognomy, its scales. Both films are premised on this belief and as such reproduce existing regimes of white privilege by erasing and displacing the Other and ultimately erasing the voices (real or imagined) of those they replace.

In their explorations of race and racism, *District 9* and *Avatar* employ a variation of didactic blackface—didactic xenoface—although how they employ it differs significantly. While *District 9* substitutes aliens for black South Africans, it does not erase blacks from the narrative: black Africans do appear in the film if, as we have seen, only to embody a virulent xenophobia. Indeed, *District 9* is less an allegory of apartheid and anti-black white oppression than a cautionary tale of post-apartheid South African social disintegration and black South African racism. It is less a critique of apartheid than of the social conditions that have arisen following its demise. As such, its portrait of blacks, whether in the guise of aliens or hapless township blacks, is unequivocally and unrelentingly negative. With the exception of the sympathetic and uncharacteristically intelligent Christopher Johnson and his nameless offspring, all the aliens are depicted as violent creatures of limited intelligence who have no respect for private property and personal hygiene (Wikus admonishes an alien who urinates on his own shack), abduct human women, “take the sneakers you are wearing off you...[after] they check the brand” (*District 9* DVD 00:05:35–38), steal cellphones—and kill their victims, ironically, the same criminal proclivities once ascribed to the

inhabitants of the real District 6 and used by South African authorities as justification to force their relocation. Indeed, *District 9*'s aliens are remarkably bereft of culture; whatever culture they do possess is fashioned eclectically from the detritus of their dilapidated surroundings. Still, Blomkamp's intent is not to depict the aliens as subversive Hebrigean or savagely cognitive Levi-Strausseau *bricoleurs*. If anything, they emerge as little more than dull-witted, thieving magpies and brand-conscious slum-dwelling ETs on the prowl for human bling. Had Blomkamp's intent been to satirize such stereotypes he might have revealed them as such and pointed out the political machinations that deliberately manipulate them to the aliens' detriment. However, not only are the aliens depicted as undeserving of our sympathies—nothing in the film ever suggests that their behavior is a response to the wretched conditions under which they are compelled to live—rather, everything suggests that the negative stereotypes about them are accurate. It is, in fact, the utter depravity of the aliens, their complete lack of any redemptive qualities, which unites black and white South Africans in their total abhorrence of them.

An argument may be made that no one—human or alien—emerges from *District 9* unscathed. Yet the negative traits ascribed to the film's human villains trace all too familiar patterns of racialized villainy. While both white South Africans and Nigerians seek to exploit the aliens' advanced weaponry, white villainy is depicted as cold, detached, scientifically and militarily methodical, Mengelean in its calculated sadism. Like most Hollywood films, *District 9* carries an anti-corporatist message: corporations, particularly multinationals, are greedy, scowling, malevolent, quintessentially white entities programmed by their corporate DNA to seek whatever lucrative "unobtainium" the screenwriters can envision—structurally "perfect" killer xenomorphs (the Alien series), cybernetic fascists (*RoboCop*), cloned dinosaurs (*Jurassic Park*), lucrative gravity-defying minerals (*Avatar*), eco-friendly helium-3 (*Moon*), or, in the case at hand, alien DNA-triggered weaponry. Conversely, black villains, as embodied by Nigerians, are depicted as mindless, grinning, superstitious brutes, scarred and scary boom-box blasting bogeymen who do not simply vivisection their victims but ingest them in an attempt to absorb their power. Acts viewed as repulsive, such as interspecies sex, are presented as merely another facet of Nigerian exploitation and subhumanity. In his DVD commentary, Blomkamp claims that his

depiction of Nigerians arose out of a desire to “poke fun at” popular associations in South Africa of Nigerians with crime (00:32:50–33:10), apparently unaware that his depictions serve to reinforce them. Indeed, at one point Blomkamp expresses concern that North American audiences unfamiliar with *muti* would not be able to make sense of it, only to have his fears allayed by the fact that, as he observes all too accurately, “There’s enough films with voodoo and everything else, even though it’s Haitian and Jamaican, for the [American] audience to just grasp it right away” (01:07:58–08:05). In fact, images of frenzied, irrational blacks are such a staple of Anglo American popular culture (the MNU raid on the Nigerian compound toward the end of the film recalls another cinematic slur, *Black Hawk Down* (2001), and its depiction of Somalis as savages) that Blomkamp’s culturalist slander is neither original nor particularly obtuse. Asked whether as a “white guy from South Africa” he thought his depiction of Nigerians might “push some buttons,” Blomkamp responds, unapologetically: “Sure, I’m totally aware of that. I know those buttons are going to be pushed. Unfortunately, that’s the reality of it, and it doesn’t matter how politically correct or politically incorrect you are. The bottom line is that there are huge Nigerian crime syndicates in Johannesburg. I wanted the film to feel real, to feel grounded, and I was going to incorporate as much of contemporary South Africa as I wanted to, and that’s just how it is” (qtd. in O’Hehir).

By the end of the film, the transformed Wikus emerges as a redeemed figure; black South Africans, however, are denied such redemption. The new Wikus has been taken by many of the film’s commentators to symbolize a transcendence of racism and identification with the aliens he once oppressed, but a more accurate reading of his transformation (one arguably closer to Blomkamp’s true intent) is that it represents the transformation of a white South Africa which under postapartheid has become more and more like those whom it once ruled. As such, the narrative is not about redemption but about the loss of white privilege (and, not incidentally, the social collapse that ensues). In *District 9*, the actions of the white male protagonist are initially self-serving: Wikus aids the aliens not out of sympathy but because he wants to regain his humanity, the irony being, of course, that the more alien Wikus becomes the more human he becomes.⁵ Similarly, in *Avatar*, paraplegic marine Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) initially cooperates with the Na’vi’s military-industrial

oppressors to regain the use of his legs, a purer, more self-sacrificial motive emerging only toward the film's conclusion. However, unlike *District 9*, where black is the color of barbaric xenophobia, in *Avatar* it is *color* itself that is rendered warm, human, liberating, an anodyne to rapacious whiteness. For not only are the Na'vi blue, they are assisted in their rebellion against white corporate cupidity by brown-skinned humans (Dileep Rao and Michelle Rodriguez) and blue-skinned avatars like Jake, Dr. Augustus (Sigourney Weaver), and Norm Spellman (Joel Moore)—that is, whites who on gaining color regain the use of their atrophied humanity and are redeemed.

Unlike *District 9*, however, *Avatar*'s blacks are out of sight if not out of mind, for black and brown actors—Zoe Saldana, C.C.H. Pounder, Wes Studi, Laz Alonso—give voice to the Na'vi and provide them a physical, digitally altered, palimpsest upon which to etch their movements. Although the color of the other has changed, the template of otherness remains grounded in contemporary racial representation. *Avatar* shares with *District 9* a curious double vision wherein nonwhites are viewed as alien, primitively savage/savagely noble outsiders, while whiteness seeks refuge in redemptive normativity. As many critics of the film have noted, the film's narrative slavishly adheres to the conventions of such precursors as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Dances with Wolves*, *The Last Samurai*, and *Pocahontas*, as well as such pulpish, Burroughsean narratives as *Tarzan*, *John Carter of Mars*, and Frank Herbert's *Dune*, wherein white males master alien climes and assume the mantle of messianic liberator. There is something else that sets *Avatar* apart from *District 9*: Cameron's aliens are far more photogenic, so much so that the notion of interspecies sex, a nauseating prospect in *District 9*, is presented as a palatable if unconsummated tease, whose full promise is subsequently realized in the extended DVD and theatrical re-release.

Xenoface in *Avatar* sees African and Native Americans serving as palimpsestic inspiration for Na'vi culture, physiognomy, and kinetics. Just as nineteenth- and twentieth-century audiences accepted the transparent fakery of whites in blackface, so, too, the Na'vi are aware that the humans who, through the manipulation of DNA, have appropriated their form are imposters but grudgingly admit them into their world. Similarly, modern audiences, beguiled by the manipulation of pixels, accept the film's racial legerdemain. Such representation must be camouflaged, since having nonwhite actors

play these roles unaltered would not only dampen the allegorical import of the film by making it an explicitly literal/liberal comment on race and race-relations, but in doing so undermine it by stripping it of all allegorical pretense and invite viewer discomfort. Best that these faces be reconfigured to more safely address the issues of colonial exploitation and racism in the guise of an escapist entertainment that as such enables the filmmakers to assuage white guilt and elicit facile compassion for the plight of imagined others. Here, the use of cinematic avatars strategically enables the transference of extant racial stereotypes upon reel others, lessening the risk of offending the real others on whom they are modeled, while simultaneously creating allegorical others with whom audiences can sympathize without having to confront directly their own attitudes toward the groups they are meant, however obliquely, to suggest: *agape* in abstract.

Yet as an anti-racist, anti-colonialist allegory, one discerns in *Avatar* what cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has termed “imperialist nostalgia,” which he defines as the nostalgia agents of colonialism “often display ... for the colonized culture as it was ‘traditionally’ (that is, when they first encountered it)” (69). “Imperialist nostalgia,” he writes, “revolves around a paradox: A person kills somebody, and then mourns the victim. In more attenuated form, someone deliberately alters a form of life, and regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention. At one more remove, people destroy the environment, and then they worship nature. In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of ‘innocent yearning’ both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination” (69–70). Cameron captures this yearning even as he ostensibly critiques the ideology that fuels it. Ironically, his critique of technological excess is accomplished by marshalling the same environmentally destructive technophilia and corporatism it attacks. The vast array of computing electronics that allows audiences to share vicariously Sully’s experiences of alien fauna and flora is itself dependent on the exploitation by multinational corporations of “conflict minerals” in the Congo such as coltan and tantalum which have fueled conflicts that have despoiled actual environments and claimed the lives of over six million Congolese and displaced millions more since 1996 (Musavuli, Delevigne).

“Allegorical mechanisms,” Toni Morrison reminds us, can be used “not only to confront and explore ... but to evade and simultaneously

register the *cul de sac*, the estrangement, the non-sequitur that is entailed in racial difference" (69). In the case of *Avatar*, at the same time that the Na'vi evoke nonwhite otherness and stereotypes associated with it (primitivism, noble savagery, ecological utopianism), their re-imagining as catlike, cyan-skinned Others makes it safer to navigate notions of imaged racial alterity in the twenty-second century, while evading the tumultuous realities of race relations in the twenty-first. It also allows Cameron to discuss what the film is really about—whiteness—without drawing too much attention to itself, 3D virtuosity serving up the illusion of depth to what still remains a stereoscopic vision of white male heroics.

These limits on the imaginary are largely self-imposed. As Cameron points out in the epigraph to this essay, the object of science fiction, is to defamiliarize the familiar. Science fiction and fantasy films attempt this without alienating their target audience. Like sound and gravity in the weightless vacuum of space and inertia defying faster-than-light propulsion systems, the conventions of the genre dictate that alien species assume roughly humanoid form and that familiar markers of race and gender be retained so as not to introduce realities that would otherwise distract audiences from the narrative or so completely alienate them that they would presumably find it too difficult to relate to them otherwise. "Let's focus on things that can create otherness but are not off-putting," Cameron has said, explaining his decision to give his Na'vi heroine breasts, "She's got to have tits, even though that makes no sense because her race, the Na'vi, aren't placental mammals"⁶ (qtd. in *Huffington Post*). Such admittedly nonsensical strategic catering fails to challenge the audience's imaginative palates and ultimately serves to reinscribe comfortable (and comforting) notions of race and gender.

Would *Avatar* have entered the event horizon of box office earnings had the inhabitants of Pandora been black and not blue? Would audiences have accepted the film had its human protagonist been portrayed by, say, a little-known Aborigine actor, his Na'vi lover by an equally obscure white actress and her primitive, tribal clan by a troupe of digitalized, motion-captured white character actors? Indeed, what if the gender roles had been reversed or transgressed? What one sees here is the disinclination of filmmakers to transgress the line between the "too alien and the too Earth-like," particularly if it requires the deconstruction of perdurable conventions of racial and

gender representation in which whiteness, maleness, and heterosexuality occupy the center and where audiences the world over are expected to identify vicariously with that center.⁷

In these films we glimpse a new kind of racial performativity in which actors of color assume a guise more palatable to whites than their true form and provide white filmmakers an opportunity to play with issues of race in a more “entertaining” and less controversial manner while providing themselves plausible deniability should it prove otherwise. As Michael Bay has said in defense of the appearance of his sambots in *Transformers 2*, “I don’t know if it’s stereotypes—they are robots, by the way” and, echoing Cameron rationale for Neytiri’s “tits,” adds, “I purely did it for kids. ... Young kids love these robots, because it makes it more accessible to them” (qtd. in Vejvoda). As with blackface and other tintured performances of generations past, one is presented with an image of the Other that is acceptable to the gatekeepers of American popular culture and to transnational audiences, an image whose racial nuances can be plausibly denied if they prove unacceptable to those who see beyond the manipulated pixels to discern the lingering of old ghosts in new machines, as, to quote Williams again, “they endow with mythic status the sight and sound of those whom the camera makes larger than life [and] they seduce us with, if not instruct us about, whom to love or hate or mock—and how.”

Notes

A longer, somewhat different version of this paper was presented at the “Politics of Popular Culture,” Anthropology of Japan in Japan Annual Conference, Temple University Japan Campus, June 2010.

1. “Black Actors Say Kong Film Won’t Make Them Monkeys,” *Jet*, 12 February 49.2 (1976): 62.
2. In his production diary, Giger describes a scene in which a shorter white stunt double is used during rehearsal for an attack scene in the film: “The Alien, a bit too short ... is hauled skywards on steel wires so that it can dive down and grab its prey.... The black, Bolaji, is standing beside me and enjoying himself because for once *a white man has to play the part of a black*” (Giger 70; emphasis added).
3. SRT can be regarded as the prototype of Jar Jar Binks. Both are technological incompetents who are ill-prepared for the hi-tech worlds they inhabit. Indeed, at one point in the film, SRT confides to THX: “Cybernetics, genetics, lasers and all those things. I guess I’ll never understand any of that stuff. Guess maybe holograms are not supposed to” (*THX1138* 01:11:23–32).

4. While Japanese producers of the 2006 theatric anime version of the saga also whitened its characters, Le Guin (2008) gives them the benefit of the doubt, noting that while “most of the characters look white to me,” she had been told that Japanese, “perceive Ged [her tale’s protagonist] as darker than my eye does.”
5. An alternative reading, hinted at by Blomkamp in his DVD commentary, suggests Wikus assists the aliens only because as he becomes more like them a genetically programmed sense of racial self-preservation kicks in. Like the robotic alien armor that automatically attacks the Nigerians when they attempt to amputate his mutated arm, the infected Wikus is programmed to protect the very aliens he abhors.
6. This also begs the question, why, if they are not placental mammals, do they have navels?
7. Since the late 1970s women in science fiction and action films have been reconfigured as ass-kicking amazons, from *Alien*’s Ellen Ripley and *Resident Evil*’s Alice to pretty much Cameron’s entire *oeuvre*. Nevertheless, this opening up of gender roles has been decidedly one-sided. Significantly, the “masculinization” of heroines has not been matched by the “feminization” of heroes. As with whiteness, male-modeled heroics—if not males themselves—remain the default mode. Moreover, while white and Asian women have emerged as action heroes, black women and black men remain underrepresented, suggesting that Hollywood does not expect audiences to identify with them in these roles. Although the last decade has seen a few black men in such roles—typically partnered with a more level-headed white male or a sexually unavailable white female, black women, with the exceptions of Angela Bassett (*Strange Days*), Tina Turner (*Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*), and Sonaa Lathan (*Alien vs. Predator*) are rare, an ironic omission given that the female action hero trope was first introduced in 1970s blaxploitation films such as *Coffy* and *Cleopatra Jones*.

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John G. Russell is professor of Cultural Anthropology in the Faculty of Regional Studies at Gifu University, Japan. He is the author of *Nihonjin no kokujin-kan* [Japanese Perceptions of Blacks] (Shinhyōron, 1991) and *Henken to sabetsu ga dono yō ni tsukurareru ka* [How are Prejudice and Discrimination Produced?] (Akashi Shoten, 1995). His articles on representations of blacks in Japanese and American popular culture have appeared in journals, including *Japan Quarterly*, *Cultural Anthropology*, and *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*. His most recent publication is "Playing with Race/Authenticating Alterity: Authenticity, Mimesis, and Racial Performance in the Transcultural Diaspora" (*CR: New Centennial Review* 12, no. 1, 2012). He is currently researching constructions of race in contemporary American and Japanese science fiction.

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I don't ask anyone to be a watcher but if you're going to ask for a request, at least look through and maybe drop a fave or comment if anything catches your eye. -nothing nsfw. Blood is fine tho. -Mostly anything else goes. Your ocs, others' ocs, I'm not good with cartoonish styles but if you see something similar in my gallery I can definitely try. If you lack a reference you can just drop a written description and I'll make it work. -you can drop multiple ideas if you want to. See More by Imaginary-Blue. Requests that were not done before the closing of a previous journal are denied, new ones can be made on each opened journal. Reply. JamesTDG. 4 days ago. Hello there, I spent some time looking at what you got, you make some pretty great stuff! Don't It Make My Black Face Blue: Race, Avatars, Albescence, and the Transnational Imaginary. February 2013. The Journal of Popular Culture 46(1):192-217. Code of Honor Star Trek and History: Race-ing toward a White Future Black Actors Say Kong Film Won't Make Them Monkeys. Jan 1990. 27. Race-face preferences in infants Developmental timetable and influence of the kind of picture. May 2016. Claire Holvoet. Don't It Make My Black Face Blue: Race, Avatars, Albescence, and the Transnational Imaginary. Article. Feb 2013. John G. Russell. View. Playing with Race/Authenticating Alterity: Authenticity, Mimesis, and Racial Performance in the Transcultural Diaspora. Article. Mar 2012. Race as Ricorso: Blackface(s), Racial Representation, and the Transnational Apologetics of Historical Amnesia in the United States and Japan. Chapter. Jan 2011. John G. Russell. View. Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture. Article. Oct 2009. John G. Russell. View. Embracing the Other : Race, Redemption, and the Black Other in the Life and Works of Philip K. Dick. Article. Full-text available. That what made the recent viral video of Ty so powerful and shocking. In it, he slammed the inclusion of Critical Race Theory the idea that racist outcomes are the result of complex institutional dynamics in children's education, during a routine public school board meeting. He attended as a concerned citizen (he was also the only black person there not on the school board) and another attendee filmed Ty's powerful words. Speaking to RT, Ty said, "As the meeting progressed, it was completely blowing my mind. You had all these white people getting up talking about the things black people are suffering, but the reasons they said is what got me fired up. They started blaming white people and what they did in the slave days as the reason why black people are suffering now. Define albescence. albescence synonyms, albescence pronunciation, albescence translation, English dictionary definition of albescence. the condition of being or becoming white or whitish. albescent , adj . See also: Color -Ologies & -Isms. Copyright 2008 The Gale Group, Inc. "Don't It Make My Black Face Blue: Race, Avatars, Albescence, and the Transnational Imaginary." JPC 46.1 (2013): 192-217. Annual bibliography of film studies--2013. Sharkov further announced that the UDF National Executive Council, NIS, has scheduled a meeting for Monday in the albescence of the two UDF MPs who are also NIS members. Constitution Court Bid Deepens Bulgaria's Right Wing Rift. Dictionary browser ?