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Paul Gilroy

between camps

nations, cultures
and the
allure of race



'One of the most challenging, important, even brilliant, pieces of political writing to have appeared in English in recent years'

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BETWEEN CAMPS

Paul Gilroy is Professor of Sociology and African-American studies at Yale University. Until recently he was Professor of Sociology and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is the author of *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, *The Black Atlantic* and *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*. Paul Gilroy is widely recognized for his critical commentaries on black music and vernacular culture and his work has been an inspiration to the resurgent black arts movement in Britain. His work has been translated into ten languages.



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BETWEEN CAMPS

PAUL GILROY

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NATIONS, CULTURES AND
THE ALLURE OF RACE



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THE CRISIS OF "RACE" AND RACIOLOGY

It is indeed the case that human social and political organization is a reflection of our biological being, for, after all, we are material biological objects developing under the influence of the interaction of our genes with the external world. It is certainly not the case that our biology is irrelevant to social organization. The question is, what part of our biology is relevant?

—RICHARD LEWONTIN

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

It is impossible to deny that we are living through a profound transformation in the way the idea of "race" is understood and acted upon. Underlying it there is another, possibly deeper, problem that arises from the changing mechanisms that govern how racial differences are seen, how they appear to us and prompt specific identities. Together, these historic conditions have disrupted the observance of "race" and created a crisis for raciology, the lore that brings the virtual realities of "race" to dismal and destructive life.

Any opportunities for positive change that arise from this crisis are circumscribed by the enduring effects of past catastrophe. Raciology has saturated the discourses in which it circulates. It cannot be readily re-signified or de-signified, and to imagine that its dangerous meanings can be easily re-articulated into benign, democratic forms would be to exaggerate the power of critical and oppositional interests. In contrast, the creative acts involved in destroying raciology and transcending "race" are more than warranted by the goal of authentic democracy to which they point. The political will to liberate humankind from race-thinking must be complemented by precise historical reasons why these attempts are worth making. The first task is to suggest that the demise of "race" is not something to be feared. Even this may be a hard argument to win. On the one hand, the beneficiaries of racial hierarchy do not want to give up their privileges. On the other hand, people who have been subordinated by race-thinking and its distinctive social structures (not all of which come tidily color-coded) have for centuries employed the concepts and categories of their rulers, owners, and persecutors to resist the destiny that "race" has allocated to them and to dissent from the lowly value it placed upon their lives. Under the most difficult of conditions and from imperfect materials that they surely would not have selected if they had been able to choose, these oppressed groups have built complex traditions of politics, ethics, identity, and culture. The currency of "race" has marginalized these traditions from official histories of modernity and relegated them to the backwaters of the primitive and the prepolitical. They have involved elaborate, improvised constructions that have the primary function of absorbing and deflecting abuse. But they have gone far beyond merely affording protection and reversed the polarities of insult, brutality, and contempt, which are unexpectedly turned into important sources of solidarity, joy, and collective strength. When ideas of racial particularity are inverted in this defensive manner so that they provide sources of pride rather than shame and humiliation, they become difficult to relinquish. For many racialized populations, "race" and the hard-won, oppositional identities it supports are not to be lightly or prematurely given up.

These groups will need to be persuaded very carefully that there is something worthwhile to be gained from a deliberate renunciation of "race" as the basis for belonging to one another and acting in concert. They will have to be reassured that the dramatic gestures involved in turning against racial observance can be accomplished without violating the pre-

cious forms of solidarity and community that have been created by their protracted subordination along racial lines. The idea that action against racial hierarchies can proceed more effectively when it has been purged of any lingering respect for the idea of "race" is one of the most persuasive cards in this political and ethical suit.

Historians, sociologists, and theorists of politics have not always appreciated the significance of these sometimes-hidden, modern countercultures formed by long and brutal experiences of racialized subordination through slavery and colonialism and since. The minor, dissident traditions that have been constituted against the odds amid suffering and dispossession have been overlooked by the ignorant and the indifferent as well as the actively hostile. Some initiates, who should certainly know better, have even rejected and despised these formations as insufficiently respectable, noble, or pure. Nonetheless, vernacular cultures and the stubborn social movements that were built upon their strengths and tactics have contributed important moral and political resources to modern struggles in pursuit of freedom, democracy, and justice.¹ Their powerful influences have left their imprint on an increasingly globalized popular culture. Originally tempered by the ghastly extremities of racial slavery, these dissident cultures remained strong and supple long after the formalities of emancipation, but they are now in decline and their prospects cannot be good. They are already being transformed beyond recognition by the uneven effects of globalization and planetary commerce in blackness.

Where the dangers represented by this historic decline have been recognized, the defense of communal interests has often mobilized the fantasy of a frozen culture, of arrested cultural development. Particularity can be maintained and communal interests protected if they are fixed in their most authentic and glorious postures of resistance. This understandable but inadequate response to the prospect of losing one's identity reduces cultural traditions to the simple process of invariant repetition. It has helped to secure deeply conservative notions that supply real comfort in dismal times but do little justice either to the fortitude and the improvisational skills of the slaves and their embattled descendants or to the complexities of contemporary cultural life.

We need to understand the appeal of the idea of tradition in this context. Where it is understood as little more than a closed list of rigid rules that can be applied consciously without interpretation or attention to particular historical conditions, it is a ready alibi for authoritarianism rather

than a sign of cultural viability or ethical confidence. Indeed, the defense of tradition on these grounds can, as we shall see, open a door to ultraconservative forms of political culture and social regulation.

In identifying these problems and moving beyond them, I shall try to show that the comfort zone created in the fading aura of those wonderful cultures of dissidence is already shrinking and that the cultures themselves are not as strong, complex, or effective as they once were. They do still occasionally flicker into spectacular life, urging desperate people to stand up for their rights and giving them a potent political and moral language with which to do it. However, there is no reason to suppose that they will be able to withstand all the destructive effects of globalization and localization, let alone the corrosive power of substantive political disagreements that have arisen over the nature of black particularity and its significance relative to other contending identity-claims: religion, sexuality, generation, gender, and so on.

The dissident traditions inaugurated by the struggle against slavery, a struggle for recognition as human rather than chattel, agent and person rather than object, have already been changed by translocal forces, both political and economic, that bear heavily on the symbolic currency of "race." This situation is another fundamental part of the crisis of raciology. It provides further inducements to recognize that the current disruption of race-thinking presents an important opportunity. There is here a chance to break away from the dangerous and destructive patterns that were established when the rational absurdity of "race" was elevated into an essential concept and endowed with a unique power to both determine history and explain its selective unfolding.

If we are tempted to be too celebratory in assessing the positive possibilities created by these changes in race-thinking and the resulting confusion that has enveloped raciology, we need only remind ourselves that the effects of racial discourses have become more unpredictable as the quality of their claims upon the world have become more desperate. This is a delicate situation, and "race" remains fissile material.

A CRISIS OF RACIOLOGY

Any inventory of the elements that constitute this crisis of raciology must make special mention of the rise of gene-oriented or genomic construc-

tions of "race." Their distance from the older versions of race-thinking that were produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries underlines that the meaning of racial difference is itself being changed as the relationship between human beings and nature is reconstructed by the impact of the DNA revolution and of the technological developments that have energized it.² This book is premised upon the idea that we must try to take possession of that profound transformation and somehow set it to work against the tainted logic that produced it. In other words, the argument here unfolds from the basic idea that this crisis of "race" and representation, of politics and ethics, offers a welcome cue to free ourselves from the bonds of all raciology in a novel and ambitious abolitionist project.

The pursuit of liberation from "race" is an especially urgent matter for those peoples who, like modern blacks in the period after transatlantic slavery, were assigned an inferior position in the enduring hierarchies that raciology creates. However, this opportunity is not theirs alone. There are very good reasons why it should be enthusiastically embraced by others whose antipathy to race-thinking can be defined, not so much by the way it has subordinated them, but because in endowing them with the alchemical magic of racial mastery, it has distorted and delimited their experiences and consciousness in other ways. They may not have been animalized, reified, or exterminated, but they too have suffered something by being deprived of their individuality, their humanity, and thus alienated from species life. Black and white are bonded together by the mechanisms of "race" that estrange them from each other and amputate their common humanity. Frantz Fanon, the Martiniquean psychiatrist and anticolonial activist whose work frames these concerns, observed this dismal cycle through its effects on the lives of men: "the Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation."³ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., another influential pathologist of "race," whose work counterpoints Fanon's own, was fond of pointing out that race-thinking has the capacity to make its beneficiaries inhuman even as it deprives its victims of their humanity.⁴

Here, drawing implicitly upon the combined legacies of King and Fanon, his sometime interlocutor, a rather different, postracial and postanthropological version of what it means to be human might begin to take shape. If this radically nonracial humanism is to be placed upon more stable foundations than those provided by King's open-minded and consistent Christianity or Fanon's phenomenological, existential, and psycho-

analytic interests, it must be distinguished from earlier, less satisfactory attempts to refigure humankind. Its attempt at a comprehensive break from those traditions of reflection is signaled fundamentally by a refusal to be articulated exclusively in the male gender. From this angle, the precious, patient processes that culminate in community and democracy do not exist only in the fraternal patterns that have proved so durable and so attractive to so many. The ideal of fraternity need no longer compromise or embarrass the noble dreams of liberty and equality. This willfully ungendered humanism is not reducible to demands for equality between men and women or even for reciprocity between the sexes. Those revolutionary ideas are already alive and at large in the world. They can be complemented by a change of the conceptual scale on which essential human attributes are being calculated.

This change, in turn, entails the abolition of what is conventionally thought of as sexual division. Minor differences become essentially irrelevant. The forms of narcissism they support need not retain their grip upon the world. If that aim seems to be an unduly utopian or radical aspiration, we would do well to recall the important practical example of these principles currently being pursued by the military organizations of the overdeveloped world. Forced by recruitment shortfalls and other demographic changes to accept the possibility that women are just as physically capable of front-line combat duties as their male counterparts, these organizations have undertaken a partial but nonetheless significant de-masculinization of soldiery. While Demi Moore was being incarnated as GI Jane, Western military organizations were conducting a number of technical studies of exactly how the female body can be modified by exercise and training so that its physical potential for military activities can be optimized. Scientists at Britain's Ministry of Defence Research Agency have, for example, outlined a form of basic training, cryptically known as "personnel selection standards," for their new female recruits. The British Army has emphasized that it cannot eliminate intrinsic physical differences such as hip size and varying proportions of fat and muscle; however, "initial results from the new training regime have, on average, added 2 lbs more muscle while removing 6 lbs of fat." One British officer said: "Brute strength is not a great part of military life in the 1990s."⁵ Comparable strategies are also being revealed on the other side of scarcity in the underdeveloped parts of the planet. The active and enthusiastic contribution of women to the genocide

of Tutsi and the killing of Hutu political opponents that took place in Rwanda during 1994 provides one warning against any desire to celebrate these changes as inherently progressive.⁶

Perhaps, pending the eventual sublation of governmental militarism, the ideal of military genderlessness can enhance our understanding of moral and civic agency. As a sign of transition, it hints at a universality that can exist in less belligerent forms. There need be no concessions to the flight from embodiment that has been associated with the consolidation of abstract, modern individuality.⁷ Here, the constraints of bodily existence (being in the world) are admitted and even welcomed, though there is a strong inducement to see and value them differently as sources of identification and empathy. The recurrence of pain, disease, humiliation and loss of dignity, grief, and care for those one loves can all contribute to an abstract sense of a human similarity powerful enough to make solidarities based on cultural particularity appear suddenly trivial.⁸

Some other features of this pragmatic, planetary humanism can be tentatively enumerated. Though most political philosophers who consider these questions have ignored this possibility or failed to recognize its truly subversive force, I would suggest that a certain distinctiveness might also be seen to emerge through the deliberate and self-conscious renunciation of "race" as a means to categorize and divide humankind. This radically nonracial humanism exhibits a primary concern with the forms of human dignity that race-thinking strips away. Its counteranthropological and sometimes misanthropic orientation is most powerfully articulated where it has been accompanied by a belated return to consideration of the chronic tragedy, vulnerability, and frailty that have defined our species in the melancholic art of diverse poetic figures from Leopardi and Nietzsche to Esther Phillips and Donny Hathaway. Its signature is provided by a grim determination to make that predicament of fundamentally fragile, corporeal existence into the key to a version of humanism that contradicts the triumphal tones of the anthropological discourses that were enthusiastically supportive of race-thinking in earlier, imperial times.

This is not the humanism of existentialists and phenomenologists, short-sighted Protestants or complacent scientists. Indeed, mindful of raciological associations between past humanisms and the idea of progress, this humanism is as unfriendly toward the idea of "race" as it is ambivalent about claims to identify progress that do not take the de-civilizing effects

of continuing racial division into account. I want to show that important insights can be acquired by systematically returning to the history of struggles over the limits of humanity in which the idea of "race" has been especially prominent. This humanism is conceived explicitly as a response to the sufferings that raciology has wrought. The most valuable resources for its elaboration derive from a principled, cross-cultural approach to the history and literature of extreme situations in which the boundaries of what it means to be human were being negotiated and tested minute by minute, day by day. These studies of the inhumanity inspired by and associated with the idea of "race" are not, of course, confined to slavery or the brutal forms of segregation that followed it. They have arisen from numerous episodes in colonial history and from the genocidal activities that have proved to be raciology's finest, triumphant hours. They are especially worthwhile, not because the suffering of the victims of extreme evil offers easy lessons for the redemption of the more fortunate; indeed, we cannot know what acute ethical insights the victims of race-thinking may have taken with them in death. The victims of these terrors are necessarily mute, and if there are any survivors, they will be beset by guilt, shame, and unbearably painful and unreliable memories. They will not be the best guides to the moral and political lessons involved in histories of pointless suffering, but they may still be able to yield important insight into the moral dilemmas of the present. We should therefore pay attention to the doubts that the most eloquent and perceptive survivors of systematic inhumanity have thrown on the value of their own testimony. We must be alert to its unspoken conventions and genres, for there are tacit rules governing the expectations of the reading publics that have formed around these painful, moving words and texts.

However, in an unprecedented situation in which ambivalence reigns and general laws of ethical conduct are difficult to frame, this legacy of bearing witness should not be spurned as a distraction from the laborious tasks of documentation and historical reconstruction. It is far better to make this dubious testimony our compass and to seek our bearings in the words of witnesses than to try vainly to orient ourselves with the unreliable charts supplied by covertly race-coded liberal or even socialist humanisms, which, if they did not steer us into this lost position, have offered very few ideas about how we might extricate ourselves from it and find ourselves again without the benefit of racial categories or racial lore.

GENES AND BODIES IN CONSUMER CULTURE

The contemporary focus on the largely hidden potency of genes promotes a fundamental change of scale in the perception and comprehension of the human body. This change is not an automatic product of only the most recent scientific developments and needs to be connected to an understanding of techno-science, particularly biotechnology, over a longer period of time. Its impact upon the status of old, that is, essentially eighteenth-century, racial typologies has been inexcusably neglected by most writers on "race."

The tragic story of Henrietta Lacks, an African-American mother of five from Baltimore who died of cervical cancer at the age of thirty-one in October 1951, can provide important orientation as we move away from the biopolitics of "race" and toward its nano-politics. Cells taken without consent from Lacks's body by Dr. George Gey, a cell biologist at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, were grown in tissue culture and have been used since then in countless scientific experiments all over the world. The cell-line extracted from her cancer, now known as HeLa, was the first human tumor cell-line to be cultivated. It had a number of unusual properties. The unprecedentedly virulent cells grew rapidly and proliferated, invading adjacent cultures and combining unexpectedly with other organisms in the labs where they were in use.⁹ They were soon being marketed as a "research organism" and have proved to be an indispensable tool in the burgeoning biotech industry.

The Lacks case raises important issues about when material of this type extracted from a body can be considered human tissue and the point at which it is to be identified alternatively as a form of property that belongs, not to the person in whose body it began, but to the commercial interests involved in selling it for private profit. The story of HeLa cells is also instructive for the confusion that was created when enzymes that suggested Mrs. Lacks's "blackness" revealed themselves, confounding and perplexing researchers who had assumed her "whiteness" or had, more importantly, failed to think raciolegically about her legacy or their own research. This episode can be used to mark the point at which an important threshold in thinking about "race" was crossed. The message conveyed by commerce in HeLa cells exceeds even the old familiar tale in which black patients have sometimes been abused and manipulated by the white doc-

tors employed to treat them. It would appear that race-defying cells, the body's smallest vital component, have become absolutely central to controversies over the limit and character of species life.

At the risk of sounding too anthropocentric, I would suggest that the cultivation of cells outside the body for commercial and other purposes is an epoch-making shift that requires a comprehensive rethinking of the ways we understand and analyze our vulnerable humanity. Like the speculative manipulation of genetic material between various species that has followed it with unpredictable and possibly dangerous results for all human beings, this change suggests a wholly new set of boundaries within which humanity will take shape. The "engineering" of transgenic animals and plants, some of which have supposedly benefited from the insertion of human genes into their DNA, is a related phenomenon that has also been the subject of intense debate about its potentially catastrophic consequences. The international and therefore necessarily "transracial" trade in internal organs and other body parts for transplant, sometimes obtained by dubious means, is another pertinent development. The challenges that have arisen from the manipulation and commerce in all aspects of human fertility, including the vividly contentious issue of whether mothers of one "race" might perversely choose to bear babies of another, represent yet another key change, while a number of recent attempts to patent or hold copyright in organisms, cells, and other elements of life itself would be the final sign that we have to adjust our conceptions of life and our mutable human nature.¹⁰

All these changes impact upon how "race" is understood. Awareness of the indissoluble unity of all life at the level of genetic materials leads to a stronger sense of the particularity of our species as a whole, as well as to new anxieties that its character is being fundamentally and irrevocably altered. With these symptomatic developments in mind, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that this biotechnological revolution demands a change in our understanding of "race," species, embodiment, and human specificity. In other words, it asks that we reconceptualize our relationship to ourselves, our species, our nature, and the idea of life. We need to ask, for example, whether there should be any place in this new paradigm of life for the idea of specifically *racial* differences.

The well-known and surprisingly popular portrait of human beings as an essentially irrelevant transitory medium for the dynamic agency of their

supposedly selfish genes is not the only morally and politically objectionable consequence of emergent, genomic orthodoxy. It, too, has fundamental implications for the coherence of the idea of "race" and its relationship to the increasingly complex patterns of natural variation that will no doubt be revealed in a geographically distributed species and the endlessly varying but fundamentally similar individuals who compose it. The specification of significant differences can only be calculated within specific scales, what the physicist Ilya Prigogine calls "domains of validity."¹¹ Sadly, however much common sense and popular comprehension of "race" lag behind these developments, they do not mean that ideas of "race" based upon immediate appearance have become instantly redundant, acquiring a residual status that contrasts sharply with the conspicuous power they enjoyed previously in the ages of colonial empires, mass migration, and mass extermination.

As actively de-politicized consumer culture has taken hold, the world of racialized appearances has become invested with another magic. This comes courtesy of developments like the proliferation of ever-cheaper cosmetic surgery and the routine computer enhancement and modification of visual images. These changes, which build upon a long history of technical procedures for producing and accentuating racial differences on film,¹² undermine more than the integrity of raciological representation. They interact with other processes that have added a conspicuous premium to today's planetary traffic in the imagery of blackness. Layer upon layer of easily commodified exotica have culminated in a racialized glamour and contributed an extra cachet to some degree of nonspecific, somatic difference. The perfect faces on billboards and screens and in magazines are no longer exclusively white, but as they lose that uniformity we are being pressed to consider and appreciate exactly what they have become, where they fit in the old hierarchy that is being erased, and what illicit combination of those familiar racial types combined to produce that particular look, that exotic style, or that transgressive stance. The stimulating pattern of this hyper-visibility supplies the signature of a corporate multiculturalism in which some degree of visible difference from an implicit white norm may be highly prized as a sign of timeliness, vitality, inclusivity, and global reach.

A whole new crop of black models, stylists, photographers, and now, thanks to the good offices of Spike Lee, a black advertising agency, have contributed to this change of climate in the meaning of racialized signs,

symbols, and bodies. The stardom of prominent iconic figures like Tyson Beckford, Tyra Banks, and, of course, Lee himself supplements the superhuman personalities and conspicuous physical attributes of the latest heroic wave of black athletes who built connections to the emerging planetary market in leisure, fitness, and sports products. In that domain, blackness has proved to be a substantial asset. What Fanon, pondering the iconic stardom of Joe Louis and Jesse Owens, called "the cycle of the biological"¹³ was initiated with the mythic figure of The Negro: either unthinkingly lithe and athletic or constitutionally disposed to be lethargic and lazy. That modern cycle may also be thought of as terminating in the space of black metaphysicality. Zygmunt Bauman has argued that the primal scene of postmodern social life in the overdeveloped world is being staged in a distinctive private relation to one's own corporeality, through a disciplinary custodianship that can be specified as the idea of the body "as task."¹⁴ This has unexpected consequences where the ideal of physical prowess, to which blacks were given a special title in exchange for their disassociation from the mind, assumes an enhanced significance.

It is best to be absolutely clear that the ubiquity and prominence currently accorded to exceptionally beautiful and glamorous but nonetheless racialized bodies do nothing to change the everyday forms of racial hierarchy. The historic associations of blackness with infrahumanity, brutality, crime, idleness, excessive threatening fertility, and so on remain undisturbed. But the appearance of a rich visual culture that allows blackness to be beautiful also feeds a fundamental lack of confidence in the power of the body to hold the boundaries of racial difference in place. It creates anxiety about the older racial hierarchies that made that revolutionary idea of black beauty oxymoronic, just as it requires us to forget the political movement that made its acknowledgment imperative. It is as though these images of nonwhite beauty, grace, and style somehow make the matter of "race" secondary, particularly when they are lit, filtered, textured, and toned in ways that challenge the increasingly baffled observer's sense of where racial boundaries might fall. In this anxious setting, new hatreds are created not by the ruthless enforcement of stable racial categories but from a disturbing inability to maintain them. Conforming enthusiastically to wider social patterns, the surface of black bodies must now be tattooed, pierced, and branded if they are to disclose the deepest, most compelling truths of the privatized ontology within. The words "Thug Life" famously

inked onto the eloquent torso of the late Tupac Shakur, like the hexagrams, Oriental characters, cartoon pictures, and other devices sported by a host of stars—Treach, Foxy Brown, and Dennis Rodman, to name only three—conform to this trend and have the additional significance of showing the world how far from the color black these muscled black bodies really are.

It should be clear that the shape-shifting and phenotype-modifying antics that abound in the world of black popular culture did not culminate in the strange case of Michael Jackson.¹⁵ His physical transformation of himself ushered in this new phase of creative possibilities. Playful mut(ill)ation did not contradict either his affirmation of an African-American heritage or his well-publicized distaste for Africa itself. Similar patterns enjoy a far more insidious afterlife in the antics of the legions of models, athletes, and performers whose beauty and strength have contributed to the postmodern translation of blackness from a badge of insult into an increasingly powerful but still very limited signifier of prestige. The ongoing activities of this group in the worlds of television, music, sports, fashion, entertainment, and, above all, advertising supply further proof that as far as "race" is concerned, what you see is not necessarily what you get.

All these developments stem from and contribute to the same uncertainties over "race." They help to call the self-evident, obvious authority of familiar racialized appearances, of common-sense racial typologies, into question. Bodies may still be the most significant determinants in fixing the social optics of "race,"¹⁶ but black bodies are now being seen—figured and imaged—differently. Thanks to Adobe Photoshop® and similar image-processing technologies, skin tones can be more readily manipulated than the indelibly marked musculatures that sell the sweated and branded products of Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Timberland, and Guess in the glossy pages of overground publications like *Vibe* and *The Source* that trade widely in aspects of black culture but are not primarily addressed to any black reading public. This crisis has ensured that racialized bodies represented as objects—objects among other objects—are never going to be enough to guarantee that racial differences remain what they were when everyone on both sides of the line between white and colored knew what "race" was supposed to be.

These timely occurrences should be placed in the context of the leveling forces of placeless development and commercial planetarization. The

meaning and status of racial categories are becoming even more uncertain now that substantial linguistic and cultural differences are being flattened out by the pressures of a global market. Where cultural continuity or overlap is recognized between different racialized groups, the smallest cultural nuances provide a major means of differentiation. Once the course of the mainstream is diverted through marginal, underexploited cultural territory, an emphasis on culture can readily displace previous attention to the receding certainties of "race." In these conditions, the relationship between cultural differences and racial particularity gets complex and fraught. Culture, no less than Mrs. Lacks's valuable cells, becomes akin to a form of property attached to the history and traditions of a particular group and regulated by anyone who dares to speak in its name. This can produce some odd conflicts over the assignment of fragments that resist all disciplinary powers. One small illustration springs to mind from the workings of the British political system. Much to the disgust of the Labour Party's black members of Parliament, Bernie Grant and Paul Boateng, who wanted to place it in other political traditions, some of Bob Marley's music was employed as the curtain raiser for a fringe meeting of the European Movement (UK) at the 1996 Conservative Party conference. The person responsible for this grave affront to Marley's inherent socialism was Sir Teddy Taylor, an eccentric, Euro-skeptic but reggae-loving right-winger who explained to the media that he "thought the song ["Three Little Birds"] summed up the Tory policy on Europe."¹⁷

The emphasis on culture as a form of property to be owned rather than lived characterizes the anxieties of the moment. It compounds rather than resolves the problems arising from associating "race" with embodied or somatic variation. Indeed, we must be alert to circumstances in which the body is reinvested with the power to arbitrate in the assignment of cultures to peoples. The bodies of a culture's practitioners can be called upon to supply the proof of where that culture fits in the inevitable hierarchy of value. The body may also provide the preeminent basis on which that culture is to be ethnically assigned. The body circulates uneasily through contemporary discussions of how one knows the group to which one belongs and of what it takes to be recognized as belonging to such a collectivity. Differences within particular groups proliferate along the obvious axes of division: gender, age, sexuality, region, class, wealth, and health. They challenge the unanimity of racialized collectivities. Exactly what, in cul-

tural terms, it takes to belong, and, more importantly, what it takes to be recognized as belonging, begin to look very uncertain. However dissimilar individual bodies are, the compelling idea of common, racially indicative bodily characteristics offers a welcome short-cut into the favored forms of solidarity and connection, even if they are effectively denied by divergent patterns in life chances and everyday experience.

Even more pernicious symptoms of the crisis of raciology are all around us. They are more pronounced in Europe now that the racial sciences are no longer muted by the memories of their active complicity in the genocide of European Jews. The special moral and political climate that arose in the aftermath of National Socialism and the deaths of millions was a transitory phenomenon. It has receded with the living memory of those frightful events. The Nazi period constitutes the most profound moral and temporal rupture in the history of the twentieth century and the pretensions of its modern civilization. Remembering it has been integral to the politics of "race" for more than fifty years, but a further cultural and ethical transition represented by war-crimes trials, financial reparations, and a host of national apologies is irreversibly under way. It aims to place this raciological catastrophe securely in an irrecoverable past, what Jean Améry called "the cold storage of history," designed more to be cited or passed en route to other happier destinations rather than deliberately summoned up, inhabited, or mourned in an open-ended manner. Official restitution promotes a sense of closure and may be welcomed as a sign that justice has been belatedly done, but it may also undercut the active capacity to remember and set the prophylactic powers of memory to work against future evils. The effects of trauma may be modified if not moderated by the passage of time. They are also vulnerable to the provision of various forms of compensation: substantive and vacuous, formal and informal, material and symbolic.

This is not a straightforward conflict between a culturally sanctioned public obligation to remember and a private desire to forget the unforgettable. The manner, style, and mood of collective remembrance are absolutely critical issues, and the memory of racial slavery in the New World is not the only history of suffering to have been belittled by the power of corrosive or trivializing commemoration. One small example suffices here. The slaves in Steven Spielberg's courtroom drama *Amistad* arrive at their Cuban auction block fresh from the horrors of the Middle Passage. They

are buffed: apparently fit and gleaming with robust good health. They enjoy the worked-out and pumped-up musculature that can only be acquired through the happy rigors of a postmodern gym routine. Against the grain of white supremacy's indifference and denial, the Middle Passage has been deliberately and provocatively recovered, but it is rendered in an impossible and deeply contentious manner that offers only the consolation of tears in place of more challenging and imaginative connections. It may be that those coveted abdominal muscles are now deemed to be an essential precondition for identifying with the superhuman figures of heroes like Spielberg's Joseph Cinqué.¹⁸

There has never been spontaneous consensus over how to commemorate and memorialize histories of suffering. Significant discrepancies have been apparent, for example, between the ways that African Americans and Ghanaians have approached the conservation of fortified sites of slave-trading activity that have recently become places of pilgrimage and cultural tourism for some of the more affluent daughters and sons of the Atlantic diaspora.¹⁹ In the very same moment that these sharp divisions have appeared inside what we were once urged to see as a single "racial" group, a torrent of images of casual death and conflict have been transmitted instantaneously from all over the African continent. For some, these dismal reports have ushered in nostalgia for the orderly world of colonial empires and threatened to make savagery something that occurs exclusively beyond the fortified borders of the new Europe. Through genocide in Rwanda and slaughter in Congo and Burundi, civil strife in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, corruption and violence in Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Mozambique, government by terror has been associated once again with infrahuman blackness reconstituted in the "half-devil, half-child" patterns favored by older colonial mentalities.²⁰ Attempts to emphasize that many of the architects of mass killing in Rwanda and Bosnia were educated to the highest standards of the Western humanities have not achieved the same prominence.²¹ Placing some of them on trial for war crimes or for the genocidal activities involved in their crimes against humanity has raised more difficult questions about the specificity and uniqueness of earlier mass killing and the central place of the "race-thinking" that has recurrently been featured as a means to justify more recent episodes.²²

Interestingly, the important work of South Africa's Truth Commission has mobilized a version of the history of Apartheid that accentuates

its political affinities as well as its concrete historical connections to the criminal governance of the Nazi period.²³ With these connections underlined, Apartheid's elaborate theories of cultural and tribal difference can be swiftly reduced to the bare bones of raciology that originally warranted them and dispatched Broederbond commissioners back to Europe during the 1930s in pursuit of an appropriate ethnic content for the ideal white culture that was being actively invented.²⁴

An even blend of those deceptively bland terms "ethnicity" and "culture" has emerged as the main element in the discourse of differentiation that is struggling to supersede crude appeals to "race" by asserting the power of tribal affiliations. These timely notions circulate in more specialized language, but any sense that they bring greater precision into the task of social division is misleading. The culturalist approach still runs the risk of naturalizing and normalizing hatred and brutality by presenting them as inevitable consequences of illegitimate attempts to mix and amalgamate primordially incompatible groups that wiser, worldlier, more authentically colonial government would have kept apart or left to meet only in the marketplace. The unfolding of recent postcolonial history has sent out a less nostalgic and more challenging message: if the status of "race" can be transformed even in South Africa, the one place on earth where its salience for politics and government could not be denied, the one location where state-sponsored racial identities were openly and positively conducted into the core of a modern civic culture and social relations, then surely it could be changed anywhere. If it is as mutable as that, what then does racial identity comprise?

The widespread appearance of forms of ultranationalist race-thinking that are not easily classified as either biologicistic or cultural but which seem to bear the significant imprint of past fascism is another dimension to the crisis of raciology. In Britain, today's patriotic neo-fascists are still undone by the memory of the 39–45 war, torn between their contradictory appeals to the figures of Churchill on one side and Hitler on the other. The French Front Nationale has included a full complement of Holocaust deniers and apologists for colonial brutality, but it also managed to stand black and Jewish candidates in the elections of May 1997. The most prominent of these, Huguette Fatna, the organization's secretary for France's overseas territories, proudly declaimed, "I'm black and proud of it . . . I'm a free woman, and I accept my difference,"²⁵ as though democratic

denunciations of her then leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, as a racist, required her to deny it. In other places, the loquacious veterans of Apartheid's death squads have protested at length that, speaking personally, they are not themselves inclined to antiblack racism. The Italian-born Belgian broadcaster Georges Ruggiu faces a trial for crimes against humanity as a result of being arrested and charged with complicity in the 1994 genocide of Tutsis. His inflammatory programs on Radio Mille Collines famously compared the Hutu assault to the French Revolution. Thus, in their genocidal confrontation with the African proxies of "Anglo-Saxon" geo-political ambition, the francophone killers seemed to have imagined themselves as an extension of the French nation to which they were bound. Gérard Prunier has described this as "the Fashoda syndrome."²⁶

The advocates of these unsettling varieties of racialized politics have been forced to become fluent in the technical, anthropological language of ethnicity and culture. Their opinions are also likely to be leavened with mechanistic determinism and neurotic hyper-patriotism. Nonetheless, these obvious ties to past raciologies should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the language produced by this crisis of race-thinking differs from its predecessors. When facing these new phenomena, what we used to be able to call an antiracist opposition must involve more than merely establishing the secret lineage that associates these contemporary groups with their radically evil, authentically fascist antecedents. What Primo Levi, with characteristic precision, referred to as "the silent Nazi diaspora" continues to go about its strategic work, but soon, mobilizing the fragmentary memories of Hitlerism will not be enough to embarrass its activists, never mind defeat them. Nazism and other related versions of populist ultranationalism have found new adherents and, more worryingly, new bands of imitators in all sorts of unlikely locations. The glamour of that particular political style and its utopian charge will be explored later on. They, too, have increased as emotional, psychological, and historical distance from the events of the Third Reich has grown.

All these factors contribute to a situation in which there are diminishing moral or political inhibitions against once more invoking "race" as a primary means of sorting people into hierarchies and erecting unbridgeable chasms around their discrete collective identities. Why, then, describe this situation as a crisis of raciology rather than its crowning glory? It is a crisis because the idea of "race" has lost much of its common-sense credi-

bility, because the elaborate cultural and ideological work that goes into producing and reproducing it is more visible than ever before, because it has been stripped of its moral and intellectual integrity, and because there is a chance to prevent its rehabilitation. Prompted by the impact of genomics, "race," as it has been defined in the past, has also become vulnerable to the claims of a much more elaborate, less deterministic biology. It is therefore all the more disappointing that much influential recent work in this area loses its nerve in the final furlong and opts to remain ambiguous about whether the idea of "race" can survive a critical revision of the relationship between human beings and their constantly shifting social nature.²⁷

Whether it is articulated in the more specialized tongues of biological science and pseudo-science or in a vernacular idiom of culture and common sense, the term "race" conjures up a peculiarly resistant variety of natural difference. It stands outside of, and in opposition to, most attempts to render it secondary to the overwhelming sameness that overdetermines social relationships between people and continually betrays the tragic predicaments of their common species life. The undervalued power of this crushingly obvious, almost banal human sameness, so close and basically invariant that it regularly passes unremarked upon, also confirms that the crisis of raciological reasoning presents an important opportunity where it points toward the possibility of leaving "race" behind, of setting aside its disabling use as we move out of the time in which it could have been expected to make sense.

There is a danger that this argument will be read as nothing more than a rather old-fashioned plea for disabusing ourselves of the destructive delusions of racism. Injunctions of that kind have been a recurrent feature of some liberal, religious, socialist, and feminist pronouncements on these matters since the term "race" was first coined. While I value that political pedigree, I want to try to be clear about exactly where this line of thought departs from its noble precursors in those traditions that have contributed so extensively to the ideas and the practice of antiracism. All the earlier arguments conform to the same basic architecture. They posit the particular, singular, and specific against the general, universal, and transcendent that they value more highly. In contrast, the approach I favor attempts to break up these unhappy couples. It has less to say about the unanswerable force of claims to singularity and particularity that have fueled ethnic absolutism.

Instead, it directs attention toward the other side of these simultaneous equations. We should, it suggests, become concerned once again with the notion of the human into which reluctant specificity has been repeatedly invited to dissolve itself. My position recognizes that these invitations would be more plausible and attractive if we could only confront rather than evade the comprehensive manner in which previous incarnations of exclusionary humanity were tailored to racializing codes and qualified by the operation of colonial and imperial power. In other words, the alternative version of humanism that is cautiously being proposed here simply cannot be reached via any retreat into the lofty habits and unamended assumptions of liberal thinking, particularly about juridical rights and sovereign entitlements. This is because these very resources have been tainted by a history in which they were not able to withstand the biopolitical power of the race-thinking that compromised their boldest and best ambitions. Their resulting failures, silences, lapses, and evasions must become central. They can be reinterpreted as symptoms of a struggle over the boundaries of humanity and then contribute to a counterhistory that leads up to the rough-hewn doorway through which any alternative conception of the human must pass. This can only be attained after a wholesale reckoning with the idea of "race" and with the history of raciology's destructive claims upon the very best of modernity's hopes and resources. A restoration of political culture is the evasive goal of these operations.

Another curious and perplexing effect of the crisis of raciology is a situation in which some widely divergent political interests have been able to collaborate in retaining the concept and reinvesting it with explanatory power. Strange alliances and opportunistic connections have been constructed in the name of ethnic purity and the related demand that unbridgeable cultural differences be identified and respected. This desire to cling on to "race" and go on stubbornly and unimaginatively seeing the world on the distinctive scales that it has specified makes for odd political associations as well as for less formal connections between raciological thinkers of various hues. In doing battle against all of them and their common desire to retain and reinflate the concept so that it becomes, once again, a central political and historical reference point, we must be very clear about the dimensions of this moment and the significant discrepancies that have arisen between different local settings. We should recognize that "race" has been given a variety of accents. Problems of compatibility

and translation have been multiplied by the globalization of culture in which local codes may have to fight against the encroachments of corporate multiculturalism if they are to retain their historic authority and explanatory power. For example, America's distinctive patterns of color consciousness may not be anything other than a fetter on the development of the planetary market in health, fitness, leisure, and sports products mentioned above. Certain common features, like the odd prestige attached to the metaphysical value of whiteness, do recur and continue to travel well, but they too will be vulnerable to the long-term effects of this crisis. Some distinctive local patterns undoubtedly persist, but their anachronistic longevity compounds the problem. Where communication becomes instantaneous, the crisis of racial meaning is further enhanced by the way attachments to the idea of "race" develop unevenly and remain primarily associated with the context of overdevelopment.

We cannot remind ourselves too often that the concept of "race" as it is used in common-sense, everyday language to signify connectedness and common characteristics in relation to type and descent is a relatively recent and absolutely modern invention. Though it would be foolish to suggest that evil, brutality, and terror commence with the arrival of scientific racism toward the end of the eighteenth century, it would also be wrong to overlook the significance of that moment as a break point in the development of modern thinking about humanity and its nature. Even prescientific versions of the logic of "race" multiplied the opportunities for their adherents to do evil freely and justify it to themselves and to others. That problem was compounded once confused and unsystematic race-thinking aspired to become something more coherent, rational, and authoritative. This threshold is important because it identifies the junction point of "race" with both rationality and nationality. It is the beginning of a period in which deference toward science, scientists, and scientific discourses around "race" began to create new possibilities and orchestrate new varieties of knowledge and power centered on the body, what Foucault identifies as "political anatomy."

The story of how this change was influenced by imperatives of colonial trade and government and shaped by growing imperial consciousness, how it was endorsed and then challenged by the developing science of anthropology, discredited by the catastrophic consequences of racial science, silenced by the aftereffects of Nazi genocide only to gain another

commanding voice in the wake of Watson and Crick, is a familiar one. But the most recent phases in this process—which we have already seen is not simply and straightforwardly reducible to the resurgence of biological explanations—have not been understood adequately.

BEYOND THE NEW RACISM

Some years ago, a loose group of scholars in which the English philosopher Martin Barker was especially influential began, in recognition of changed patterns in the way the discourse of racial difference was employed in politics, to speak about the emergence of what they called a New Racism. This racism was defined by its strong culturalist and nationalist inclinations. Whereas in the past raciology had been arrogant in its imperial certainty that biology was both destiny and hierarchy, this persuasive new variant was openly uncomfortable with the idea that "race" could be biologically based. Consciousness of "race" was seen instead as closely linked to the idea of nationality. Authentic, historic nations had discrete cultural fillings. Their precious homogeneity endowed them with great strength and prestige. Where large "indigestible" chunks of alien settlement had taken place, all manner of dangers were apparent. Conflict was visible, above all, along cultural lines. Of course, these regrettably transplanted aliens were not identified as inferior, less worthy, or less admirable than their "hosts." They may not have been infrahuman, but they were certainly out of place. The social, economic, and political problems that had followed their mistaken importation could only be solved by restoring the symmetry and stability that flowed from putting them back where they belonged. Nature, history, and geopolitics dictated that people should cleave to their own kind and be most comfortable in the environments that matched their distinctive cultural and therefore national modes of being in the world. Mythic versions of cultural ecology were invented to rationalize the lives of these discrete national and racial identities. The Germans became a people in their forests, whereas the British were a nation whose seafaring activity shaped their essential inner character. In all cases, fragments of self-evident truth nourished the fantasies of blood and belonging,²⁸ which in turn demanded an elaborate geopolitical cartography of nationality.²⁹

The culturalist arguments of the New Racism enjoy a lingering residual appeal. Similar patterns appeared in a number of different settings. They were evident in Britain, where cultural difference rather than biological hierarchy emerged as the core substance of the nation's postcolonial racial problems. They were audible in the United States, where five great raciocultural agglomerations (Asians, blacks, Hispanics, whites, and Native Americans) appeared and took on many of the fateful characteristics associated with eighteenth-century racial groups; and they were evident also in parts of Europe where conflicts between migrant workers and their resentful hosts were re-articulated as the grander cultural and religious opposition between Christian universalism and resurgent Islamic fundamentalism.

The historic role of these culturalist notions in the consolidation and development of Apartheid in South Africa ought to be obvious. The wider shifts from biology to culture, from species to ethnos, from rigid, predictable hierarchy toward the different perils represented by a cultural alterity that was as fascinating as it was contaminating were all to some extent pre-figured in the constitution of the Apartheid system. Whether or not these forms of power and authority were broadly representative of colonial governance in general cannot be settled here.³⁰ The pernicious fiction of separate but equal identities based in discrete homelands was an important marker of a change in which the idea of contending national and ethnic traditions was employed to legitimate and rationalize the move from natural to cultural hierarchies. This shift was not, of course, an absolute change. Nature and culture may have functioned as neatly exclusive poles in the models of early modern thought, but as the organic overtones of the word "culture" reveal, the boundaries between them have always been porous. The New Racism endorsed the annexation of the idea of natural difference by the claims of mutually exclusive, national cultures that now stood opposed to one another. In the political geometry of nation-states, culture was offset not by nature but by other cultures. What seems new about the New Racism, twenty years after this insight was first employed, is not so much the tell-tale emphasis on culture that was its intellectual hallmark but the way its ideologues refined the old opposites—nature and culture, biology and history—into a new synthesis: a bioculturalism that, as Barker had pointed out, drew its deterministic energy from the intellectual resources supplied by sociobiology.³¹

When this point is made, it is always necessary to emphasize that there are many subtle shadings between the biological and the cultural and that the culturalist versions of racial discourse—though superficially more benign than the cruder force of biological “race” theory—are no less vicious or brutal for those on the receiving end of the cruelties and terrors they promote. With these important qualifications in mind, it is better to say that the starting point of this book is that the era of that New Racism is emphatically over. This should not be interpreted as a suggestion that we are therefore traveling back toward some older, more familiar version of biological determinism. To be sure, a genomic reworking of biology has reemerged to supply the dominant pessimistic motifs in talk about “race,” but the mere presence of what is better understood as a post-biological perspective does not confirm my diagnosis. There are several new versions of determinism abroad. They place and use the human body in a number of contrasting ways. The impatient manner in which other, less mechanistic, varieties of social and historical explanation are silenced by genomics betrays the transfiguration of bio-logic into something unanticipated: a nonwholistic micromechanism in which organisms are to be engineered, tooled, and spliced and human life takes on qualities associated with the dead, menacing, but compliant world of machines.

This change of perspective demonstrates that today’s raciology is no longer confined to the cognitive and perceptual habits of political anatomy. It has been drawn by technological and conceptual changes toward ever-smaller scales. Thus what appears to be the rebirth of biologism is not in fact the resurgence of older colonial and imperial codes that accentuated hierarchy rather than simple difference but part of a bigger contemporary transformation in the ways that people conceptualize the relationship between nature, culture, and society, between their freedom and their human agency. The status of “race” is inevitably transformed by this. Yes, we are once again in a period in which social and cultural differences are being coded according to the rules of a biological discourse, but it cannot be emphasized enough that this latest raciological regime differs from its predecessors. We must not approach it as though it represents a retreat behind the culturalist ambitions of the old, that is, the New, Racism. It is a distinctive phenomenon that needs to be apprehended and countered as such. “Race” can no longer be ossified, and, as may have been anticipated, it is the gene-centeredness of this discourse that defines its deterministic ap-

proach to human action in general and the formation of racial groups in particular.³²

The history of scientific writing about “races” has involved a long and meandering sequence of discourses on physical morphology. Bones, skulls, hair, lips, noses, eyes, feet, genitals, and other somatic markers of “race” have a special place in the discursive regimes that produced the truth of “race” and repeatedly discovered it lodged in and on the body. The historian of science Londa Schiebinger has demonstrated how the study of bodily components and zones first helped to focus the racializing gaze, to invest it with real scientific authority and to bring “race” into being in strongly gendered forms while simultaneously producing an understanding of gender and sex that saturated the interconnected discourses of “race,” nation, and species.³³ The textbooks of classical, eighteenth-century raciology were studded with images. Their argumentation proceeded swiftly from illustration to illustration. The enduring power of the best-known visual material—depictions of Caucasian and Nordic heads or of the various skulls to be measured, drawn, and classified—was more than an iconic counterpoint to the inscription of respectable racial science. It raises the interesting possibility that cognition of “race” was never an exclusively linguistic process and involved from its inception a distinctive visual and optical imaginary. The sheer plenitude of racialized images and icons communicates something profound about the forms of difference these discourses summoned into being. Racial differences were discovered and confirmed in fragmentary selections of physical characteristics. Because the combination of phenotypes chosen to identify a “race” so actively generated the chosen racial categories, antiraciological thinking was soon alerted to the way that particular criteria varied within the selected groups as well as between them. My concern here is not with the well-known history of those necessarily doomed attempts to produce coherent racial categories by picking representative combinations of certain phenotypes: lips, jaws, hair texture, eye-color, and so on. It is far more interesting that this race-producing activity required a synthesis of logos with icon, of formal scientific rationality with something else—something visual and aesthetic in both senses of that slippery word. Together they resulted in a specific relationship to, and mode of observing, the body.³⁴ They fixed upon a certain variety of perception that favored particular representational scales and could only follow on from the isolation, quantification, and homoge-

nization of vision. Foucault is the most famous explorer of the epistemological consequences that accompanied the institutionalization of this anthropological gaze and its "autonomization of sight."³⁵

Whether the distinguishing marks, organs, and features were discovered on the external surface of the body or were thought to dwell somewhere inside it where the hidden properties of racially differentiated blood, bone, and sinew were imagined to regulate social and cultural manifestations, the modern idea of race favored a specific representational scale and operated within the strictest of perceptual limits. We can call that distinctive ratio the scale of comparative anatomy. The idea of "race" leaked quite rapidly from the lofty confines where that scale was first codified and calibrated, but it always worked best in conjunction with those ways of looking, enumerating, dissecting, and evaluating. Abstract and metaphysical, "race" defined and consolidated its accidental typologies. In moving toward the empirical and the concrete, it (re-)produced a set of methods, regulated a certain aesthetics,³⁶ and quietly delimited the field in which color-coded ethics would operate. The most compelling truths of political anatomy were produced "performatively" from the hat that raciological science provided, like so many startled rabbits in front of an eager, noisy crowd. The idea of "race" enjoyed its greatest power to link metaphysics and scientific technology under those conditions. Reinforced by belief in separate and opposing national cultures, it would later inspire the colonial anthropologies that succeeded the earliest versions of scientific raciology. Our situation is demonstrably different. The call of racial being has been weakened by another technological and communicative revolution, by the idea that the body is nothing more than an incidental moment in the transmission of code and information, by its openness to the new imaging technologies, and by the loss of mortality as a horizon against which life is to be lived.

Blackness can now signify vital prestige rather than abjection in a global info-tainment telesector where the living residues of slave societies and the parochial traces of American racial conflict must yield to different imperatives deriving from the planetarization of profit and the cultivation of new markets far from the memory of bondage. In 1815 Cuvier, who would eventually dissect her, commissioned melancholy portraits of Saartjie Baartman depicted from several angles in a peculiarly empty landscape by Léon de Wailly. Almost two centuries later, a different encounter

with the limits of black humanity has been provided by the dubious pleasures of the animated movie *Space Jam*. Baartman's earth-bound infra-humanity has been replaced by the larger-than-life presence of a godly Michael Jordan, who collaborates in a bright extraterrestrial pas de deux with Bugs Bunny—the reductio ad absurdum of African trickster tale telling. When Jordan takes wing to persuade us that a black man can fly, can we agree that the eighteenth-century perceptual regimes that first gave us "race" have been superseded along with many of their epistemological and metaphysical pretensions? Now that the microscopic has yielded so comprehensively to the molecular, I want to ask whether these outmoded representational and observational conventions have been left behind. This would mean that much of the contemporary discourse animating "races" and producing racialized consciousness is an anachronistic, even a vestigial, phenomenon. Screens rather than lenses now mediate the pursuit of bodily truths. This is a potent sign that "race" should be approached as an afterimage—a lingering effect of looking too casually into the damaging glare emanating from colonial conflicts at home and abroad.

Disregarding for a moment the obvious dangers represented by contemporary eugenic ambitions, which neither employ the word "eugenic" nor coincide with divisions derived from the old racial categories, I want to argue that the perceptual and observational habits that have been associated with the consolidation of today's nano-science might also facilitate the development of an emphatically postracial humanism. Genomics may send out the signal to reify "race" as code and information, but there is a sense in which it also points unintentionally toward "race's" overcoming. This cannot be a single, bold act of creativity, a triumphant, once-and-for-all negation. It must be more like a gradual withering away arising from growing irrelevancy. At the smaller than microscopic scales that open up the body for scrutiny today, "race" becomes less meaningful, compelling, or salient to the basic tasks of healing and protecting ourselves. We have a chance, then, to recognize the anachronistic condition of the idea of "race" as a basis upon which human beings are distinguished and ranked. We can draw an extra measure of courage from the fact that proponents of the idea of "races" are further than ever from being able to answer the basic question that has confounded them since the dawn of raciology: if "race" is a useful way of classifying people, then how many "races" are there? It is rare nowadays to encounter talk of a "Mongoloid race."

We have already had to appreciate that it may coincide with the political desires of some people inside the imagined community of a racialized group to proceed on the basis of given or automatic unanimity and to approach their own "race" as a single, undifferentiated magnitude bound together not by the superficialities of history or language, religion or conquest, but by some underlying, essential similarity coded in their bodies. Here, of course, science and the everyday world of racial, I would prefer to say *racializing*, talk, part company and mysticism and occultism take over. The political language used to describe and justify these models of belonging has also been partially updated. Notions of the essential unity of particular "races" have similarly moved on with the times, sometimes acquiring a New Age gloss and a matching therapeutic language. We will see that these "essentialist" and "primordialist" outlooks have become all the more vicious by virtue of the wounds they have acquired as the idea of a fundamental, shared identity has been challenged by the appearance of sharp intraracial conflicts.

In the overdeveloped world, de-industrialization and brutal economic differentiation have complicated this situation still further. Everywhere, struggles arising from family, gender, and sexuality have also been clearly visible within the same groups that used to be identified as unitary racial communities. The impact of these factors of division has been intensified by shifts that have occurred in the relationship between "race" and the principle of nationality. The latter has lost some of its appeal and much of its complexity because it has been assimilated too swiftly either to the idea of closed, exclusive racialized cultures or to the biological determinisms that reduce behavior, sociality, and common interests to information inscribed in cells or arrangements of molecules.

As far as black political cultures are concerned, in the period after emancipation, essentialist approaches to building solidarity and synchronized communal mobilization have often relied upon the effects of racial hierarchy to supply the binding agent that could in turn precipitate national consciousness. Routine experiences of oppression, repression, and abuse—however widespread—could not be transferred into the political arena from which blacks were barred. Instead they became the basis for dissident cultures and an alternative public world. Togetherness produced under these conditions was inherently unreliable. Its instability added to the attractiveness of the authoritarian solutions that offered shortcuts to

solidarity, especially where everyday consciousness of racial difference fell short of the models of nationhood that had been borrowed wholesale from the Europe-centered history of the dominant group. Where the political chemistry of nation, race, and culture came together to produce these alarming results, the rebirth of fascist thinking and the reappearance of stern, uniformed political movements was not far away, as we shall see. These developments have not always been marked by the convenient emblems shamelessly borne by fascisms in the past.

ECOLOGY, ETHICS, AND RACIAL OBSERVANCE

The word "ecology" was coined in 1866 by Ernst Haeckel, the German disciple of Darwin and Lamarck who would become known for his zoology and his ultranationalist critique of the dysgenic effects of Western civilization.³⁷ The elaboration of the term in the development of racial science before and during Nazi rule should be acknowledged before it can be engaged here. It can be connected in profound ways to the notions of *Lebensraum* (living-space) that figured in but were not created by the racist population policies and agricultural and scientific planning of the Nazi period.³⁸ What can only be called "ecological sensibilities" have an elaborate role in the geo-organic, biopolitical, and governmental theories of the German geographers Friedrich Ratzel and Karl Haushofer and the early-twentieth-century Swedish geopolitician Rudolf Kjellén.³⁹ These writers supplied important conceptual resources to Nazi racial science, helping it to conceptualize the state as an organism and to specify the necessary connections between the nation and its dwelling area. We invest differently in this approach as a result of having to face its historic associations with that raciology, as well as Hitlerism and sundry other attempts to deduce the ideal form of government from organic analogies.⁴⁰ Today, building self-consciously on attempts by the botanist Sir Alfred George Tansley to theorize the ecosystem via patterned interaction between organisms and habitats in the widest possible sense, an even more complex sense of interactivity governing relations between human beings and their environments has been prompted by the more acute critics of genetic determinism. A refined ecological perspective complements those critiques with a complex, chaotic, and resolutely nonreductive

organicism. This confounds mechanistic notions of cause and effect and objects loudly to the reduction of individual human particularity to the "maps" of its DNA sequences. Richard Lewontin spoke from the critical perspective he describes as a "reverse Lamarckian position" when he emphasized that

it takes more than DNA to make a living organism . . . the organism does not compute itself from its DNA. A Living organism at any moment in its life is the unique consequence of a developmental history that results from interaction of and determination by internal and external forces. The external forces, what we usually think of as "environment," are themselves partly a consequence of the activities of the organism itself as it produces and consumes the conditions of its own existence. Organisms do not find the world in which they develop. They make it. Reciprocally, the internal forces are not autonomous, but act in response to the external. Part of the internal chemical machinery of a cell is only manufactured when external conditions demand it . . . Nor is "internal" identical with "genetic."⁴¹

A similar sensitivity to the complexity of these interactive processes can be useful when we move from focusing on the immediate environments in which individual organisms exist and turn instead to the ecological conditions in which relations between agents/actors are staged. This attention to intersubjectivity can be supplemented by yet another idea. It is drawn from Frantz Fanon's phenomenological study of "epidermalized" embodiment and directly inspired by his bitter Hegelian discovery that the curse of racial domination is the condition, not of being black, but of being black in relation to the white.⁴² The ontological complexities of the black predicament that Fanon uncovered in the workings of colonial power are no longer, if they ever were, exclusively confined to those contested locations. Indeed, the political and cultural changes I have described as part of the crisis of "race" have carried into the core of contemporary concerns the same anxieties about the basis upon which races exist. I am suggesting that the only appropriate response to this uncertainty is to demand liberation not from white supremacy alone, however urgently that is required, but from all racializing and raciological thought, from racialized seeing, racialized thinking, and racialized thinking about thinking. There is one

other overriding issue associated with these utopian aspirations. However reluctant we may feel to take the step of renouncing "race" as part of an attempt to bring political culture back to life, this course must be considered because it seems to represent the only *ethical* response to the conspicuous wrongs that raciologies continue to solicit and sanction.

Making this ethical point has an additional significance. Students of "race" have not always been sufficiently alive to the ethical dimensions of our own practice, particularly when analyzing the recurrent association between raciology and evil. This overdue reform of our own thinking has become imperative as the memory of the Nazi genocide has ceased to form the constellation under which we work. The deliberate wholesale renunciation of "race" proposed here even views the appearance of an alternative, metaphysical humanism premised on face-to-face relations between different actors—beings of equal worth—as preferable to the problems of inhumanity that raciology creates. If this metaphysics ultimately acquires a religious cast, as in the very different cases presented by the more philosophical writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., on one hand and the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas on the other, it can be rescued from the worst excesses of idealism if only it is recognized as incorporating a provocative attempt to reactivate political sensibilities so that they flow outside the patterns set for them in a world of fortified nation-states and antagonistic ethnic groups. The spaces in which "races" come to life are a field from which political interaction has been banished. It is usually replaced by enthusiasm for the cheapest pseudo-solidarities: forms of connection that are imagined to arise effortlessly from shared phenotypes, cultures, and bio-nationalities. This is a period in which the easy invocation of "race" supplies regular confirmation of the retreat of political activity, defined here not as statecraft but as the exercise of power in a reasoned public culture capable of simultaneously promoting both self and social development. If we choose the testing route I favor, toward the evasive goal of multicultural democracy, the rehabilitation of politics requires bold and expansive gestures. The demand for liberation from "race" becomes still more eloquent in the special context provided by this ethical and political project. It becomes an essential prerequisite if we are to give effective answers to the pathological problems represented by genomic racism, the glamour of sameness, and the eugenic projects currently nurtured by their confluence.

OBSERVING "RACE"

Once the dimensions of the crisis of raciology have been fully appreciated, we can turn to the other principal aim of this opening chapter: to question and explore some of the tensions arising from a critical consideration of how "race" is beheld. This is intended to contribute to an account of how the signs and symbols of racial difference have become apparent. As you may anticipate, the "postracial" stance I have been trying to develop does not admit the integrity of any avowedly natural perceptual schemes. It does not concede the possibility that "race" could be seen spontaneously, unmediated by technical and social processes. There will be individual variation, but that is not "race." There is no raw, untrained perception dwelling in the body. The human sensorium has had to be educated to the appreciation of racial differences. When it comes to the visualization of discrete racial groups, a great deal of fine-tuning has been required.

This stage of the argument is underpinned by a desire to link the historical and critical study of raciologies and "racial" metaphysics to the new histories of visibility and perception that are being produced. It seeks to connect them with some timely critiques of absolute or integral ethnic identity and the genealogies of subjectivity with which it has been associated. Above all, I want to link the critical study of "race" with an equally critical understanding of the technoscientific means that have fostered and mediated particular relations with our racialized selves in the modern past. The founding *absurdity* of "race" as a principle of power, differentiation, and classification must now remain persistently, obstinately in view. That initial move is, as I don't need to remind you, patently out of fashion. "Race"-entrenching pragmatism has been allied with the simplistic versions of racial phenomenology mistakenly attributed to Fanon by critics who seek a leak-proof ontology in his work. These developments have been complemented by the appeal of articulate but brittle traveling nationalisms firmly rooted in African-American circumstances, as well as by cynicism and opportunism. These interlinked tendencies agree that the cold, corporeal fact of "race" cannot and should not be theorized out of sight in the very ways that I propose.

You are still feeling doubtful. Perhaps it will help to appreciate that aspects of "race" as it has been understood in the past are already being conjured away by new technologies of self and of species being, and that the

use of those technologies, particularly in the medical field, has already precipitated significant political consequences. The old, modern representational economies that reproduced "race" subdermally and epidermally are today being transformed on one side by the scientific and technological changes that have followed the revolution in molecular biology, and on the other by a similarly profound transformation in the ways that bodies are imaged. Both have extensive ontological implications. Bodies are now routinely opened up to new forms of scrutiny by multidimensional medical imaging that uses ultrasound and electromagnetic radiation as well as light, natural and artificial. Have you, has your body, your child's body, ever been scanned? Do you recognize its changing optic density? If so, perhaps you could consider that development another compelling sign that we have begun to let the old visual signatures of "race" go. Having waved them farewell, we may do a better job of countering the injustices that they brought into being if we make a more consistent effort to de-nature and de-ontologize "race," thereby disaggregating raciologies.

This is not an easy option. It necessitates the reconstitution of antiracist hopes. In future, they will have to operate easily across the boundaries erected between text and discourse, spectacle and performance. They will have to move outside the angles of vision, the truth-seeking strategies, the moral and political choices that still offer too many hostages to the normative claims of raciology. This line of attack on racial observance demands frank reflection on the interest in reifying "race" that has repeatedly arisen in academic analysis—something that was not possible when the link between antiracist politics and interventionist scholarship was stronger and closer than it is today. Pursuing this path leads back to the hard work involved in identifying and exploring the political technologies that govern our relation to our selves, our humanity, and our species. As suggested, these tasks take us beyond the discourses and the semiotics of "race" into a confrontation with theories and histories of spectatorship and observation, visual apparatuses and optics. They ask us to rethink the development of a racial imaginary in ways that are more distant from the reasoned authority of logos and closely attuned to the different power of visual and visualizing technologies. The politics of "race" has relied upon and coordinated both.

I have already alluded to the profound transformations in the ways the body is understood, experienced, and observed that followed the emer-

gence of molecular biology. The use of computers as modeling and imaging technologies prosthetically extending sight onto nano-scales can be linked to the impact of digital processing and other allied approaches to the body that allow it to be seen and understood in new ways, principally as code and information. We must be especially attentive to the ways in which the body is being imaged in approaches to health and disease, which have a paramount importance in the workings of contemporary culture. These new ways of seeing, understanding, and relating to ourselves point once again to the possibility that the time of "race" may be coming to a close even while racisms appear to proliferate.

Michel Foucault's early work explored significant historical precedents for the contemporary emergence of new fields of visibility that operate on nano-scales. However, he is both an inspiring and a frustrating guide to recent changes in seeing, observing, and knowing the racialized body. For all his great historical insight into the problem of the individual observer as a locus of knowledge, the formation of epistemologies with novel investments in observation, and the shift "signaled by the passage from geometrical optics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the physiological optics, which dominates both scientific and philosophical discussion of vision in the nineteenth century,"⁴³ he seems to have been insufficiently attuned to the significance of protracted struggles over the raciological disunity of mankind that attended the emergence of biopolitics. The human and the infrahuman emerged together, and "race" was the line between them.

Regrettably, Foucault was not really interested in the meaning of racial differences or in the tests that they provided for eighteenth-century "nomination of the visible" and other related attempts to "bring language as close as possible to the observing gaze."⁴⁴ Although his analysis, which witnesses the birth of biopower, seems ripe for a decisive confrontation with the idea of "race," this never happens. To put it simply, he identified the figure of man as both the pivot and the product of the new relationship between words and things but then moved too swiftly toward a sense of modern humanity as unified by its immiserating passage from sanguinity to sexuality. He failed, for example, to consider how the idea that *Asiaticus luridus*, *Americanus rubescus*, and *Afer niger* were less than human might have affected this transformation and its epistemic correlates. Perhaps he was not haunted, as I believe we should still be, by the famous image of an

orangutan carrying off a Negro girl that provides the frontispiece for Linnaeus' *Genuine and Universal System of Natural History*. The central, inescapable problem in that famous picture is the suggested kinship between these sub- and infrahuman species rather than the fact that their conflictual interrelation is gendered and figured through the trope of rape. The picture's historic setting and the interpretative puzzle it presents point to the unresolved issue of how "race" interrelates with sex, gender, and sexuality—something that is further than ever from being settled and that defines a new and urgent need for future work. The picture's relation to that foundational text of raciology raises other uncomfortable matters: the characteristics of the new, post-Vesalian semiotics of the body, and the relationship between text and image in the performative constitution of "races" that was not one in which words were simply or consistently able to dominate the images—icons—that went far beyond any merely illustrative function.

The extensive debate as to whether Negroes should be accorded membership in the family of mankind (a group whose particularity was inaugurated, proved, produced, and celebrated by the transformed relationship between words and things that crystallized at the end of the eighteenth century) might have been more central to the formation and reproduction of modern scientific thinking than Foucault appreciated. I raise this, neither to pillory him nor to reopen discussion of how that process has been reconstructed by historians of science, but rather because his study of that fateful change in the workings of science and the production of truth is an important resource in our own situation, where comparable changes in the technologies of the body can be observed.

Nobody fills old skulls with lead shot these days. It bears repetition that the truths of racial difference are being sought by other means and produced by technologies that operate on other, less immediate scales. The semiosis of anthropology has been transformed several times since the high point of skull-filling activity. Here, we must acknowledge the impact of vernacular observational codes that have a tangential or ambivalent relationship to racial science proper. There are "one drop of blood" rules with their unsentimental disjunctions between insides and outsides, "pencil tests" and other shadowy technologies of alterity that purport to discover symptoms of degeneration in the special tones of pink and red to be found at the base of fingernails. However, with Kuhn's history and philosophy of

science in our book bags, we comprehend the contingencies of truth-seeking, the pressures of institutional location, the active power of language to shape inquiry, and the provisional status of all scientific enterprises.

Let me propose that the dismal orders of power and differentiation—defined by their persistent intention to make the mute body disclose and conform to the truths of its racial identity—can be roughly periodized. The critical notion of “epidermalization” bequeathed to our time by Frantz Fanon is valuable here. It was born from a philosopher-psychologist’s phenomenological ambitions and their distinctive way of seeing as well as of understanding the importance of sight. It refers to a historically specific system for making bodies meaningful by endowing them with qualities of “color.” It suggests a perceptual regime in which the racialized body is bounded and protected by its enclosing skin. The observer’s gaze does not penetrate that membrane but rests upon it and, in doing so, receives the truths of racial difference from the other body. Whatever phrenology and physiognomy may have meant to Hegel, an enthusiastic reader of Lavater, the skull beneath the skin is now an irrelevancy. This is not the scale of comparative anatomy that arose in moving from natural history to the science of biology. The skin has no independent life. It is not a piece or component of the body but its fateful wrapping. Dermo-politics succeeded biopolitics. Both preceded nano-politics.⁴⁵

Fanon’s term “epidermalization” deserves a wider application than its firmly colonial origins would suggest. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze and Christian M. Neugebauer have reminded us recently that Immanuel Kant’s *Physische Geographie* said more than his contemporary celebrants like to admit about the distinctive attributes of tough Negro skin and the practical problems it presented to slave husbandry when pain had to be inflicted on stock with a split bamboo cane.⁴⁶ Like Hegel’s well-known opinions on the aesthetic deficiencies and intellectual limitations of the Negro, these sentiments can be thought of as exemplifying epidermal thinking in its emergent forms. In an era in which colonial power had made epidermalizing into a dominant principle of political power, Fanon used the idea to index the estrangement from authentic human being in the body and being in the world that colonial social relations had wrought. For him epidermalized power violated the human body in its symmetrical, intersubjective, social humanity, in its species being: in its fragile relationship to other fragile bodies and in its connection to the redemptive poten-

tial dormant in the wholesome or perhaps suffering corporeality. What he glimpsed as a “real dialectic between (the) body and the world” might be re-articulated, in a less triumphal mode, as our being toward death.⁴⁷

Fanon’s notion supplies an interesting footnote to the whole history of racial sciences and the exclusive notions of color-coded humanity that they specified. How many skin colors are there? How exactly, scientifically, is skin shade supposed to correspond to the variety of “races”? You may recall that Buffon had counted thirty races of dogs. Linnaeus, Kant’s ideal reader, thought that *Homo sapiens* included four varieties, whereas the other species that constituted the genus *Homo* had its own numerous subspecies, including *Homo troglodytes*. Kant identified four races of man: the white, the black, the Hun, and the Hindustani. All these raciologists dealt differently with the question of whether the variations they noted within races were as significant as the differences that might exist between them.

In the period since, these distinctively modern raciologies with their strong scientific flavors have joined hands with common-sense perception and made the external surface of the body the focus of their inquiring gaze. When the body becomes absolutely penetrable, and is refigured as the transient, epiphenomenon of coded invisible information, that aesthetic, that gaze, and that regime of power are irrecoverably over. The idea of epidermalization points toward one intermediate stage in a critical theory of body scales in the making of “race.” Today skin is no longer privileged as the threshold of either identity or particularity. There are good reasons to suppose that the line between inside and out now falls elsewhere. The boundaries of “race” have moved across the threshold of the skin. They are cellular and molecular, not dermal. If “race” is to endure, it will be in a new form, estranged from the scales respectively associated with political anatomy and epidermalization.

We have been made more skeptical than ever about the status of easily visible differences and are now obliged to ask on what scale human sameness and human diversity are to be calibrated. Can a different sense of scale and scaling form a counterweight to the appeal of absolute particularity currently celebrated under the fading sign of “race”? Can it answer the seductions of self and kind projected onto the surface of the body but stubbornly repudiated inside it by the proliferation of invisible differences that produce catastrophic consequences where people are not what they seem to be? In the instability of scale that characterizes our time, how is

racialized and racializing identity being imagined? Is there still place for "race" on the new scale at which human life and human difference is contemplated? We can cut this long story short by posing the central question even more starkly. What does that long-lived trope "race" mean in the age of molecular biology?

We have seen that on their journey away from modernity's inaugural catastrophes, raciological ways of organizing and classifying the world have retained a special baggage of perspectival inclinations, perceptual habits, and scalar assumptions. Their anthropologies depended and still depend upon observations that cannot be wholly disassociated from the technological means that have both fostered and mediated them. This is where anatomical scale was first broken. Long ago, microscopes transformed what could be seen, but the latest technologies for observing on smaller and smaller scales changed the threshold of visibility and contributed to an enhanced sense of the power of the unseen and the unseeable. The eugenic ravings of Francis Crick, the Nobel-Prize-winning co-discoverer of DNA, demonstrate exactly how the change of scale involved in the founding of molecular biology and the redefinition of life in terms of information, messages, and code was recognized as having cataclysmic moral and political consequences.⁴⁸ Biopolitics laid the foundations for and was superseded by "nano-politics."

Skin, bone, and even blood are no longer the primary referents of racial discourse. If the modern episteme was constituted through processes that forsook the integrity of the whole body and moved inside the threshold of the skin to enumerate organs and describe their functional relationship to an organic totality, the situation today is very different. The same inward direction has been maintained and the momentum increased. Forget totality: the aspiration to perceive and explain through recourse to the power of the minute, the microscopic, and now the molecular has been consolidated. In a space beyond comparative anatomy and all dermo-political concerns, the body and its obvious, functional components no longer delimit the scale upon which assessments of the unity and variation of the species are to be made. The naked eye was long ago recognized to be insufficient to the tasks of evaluation and description demanded by the beleaguered condition of everyday life and the popular eugenic answers to its manifold problems. It is more than technological changes that make what was hitherto invisible not only visible but also decisive.

Nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (NMR), positron emission tomography (PET), and computerized tomography (CT) are several of the technical innovations in medical imaging that have transformed the relationship between the seen and the unseen. Whether it is the IBM logo being spelled out in atoms of xenon or a less specific dream of gaining control over the big world "by fiddling with the nanoscale entities of which it is composed," the movement is always in one direction: downward and inward. Our foundational question should be this: Where do these changes leave the idea of racial difference, particularly when it cannot be readily correlated with complex genetic variation? Current wisdom seems to suggest that up to six pairs of genes are implicated in the outcome of skin "color." They do not constitute a single switch.

Several years ago Stephen Lawrence, a young black man, was brutally murdered by several young white men at a bus stop in South East London. His tragic death was but one fatality in a sequence of racial attacks that had been perpetrated in the same area. Two others, Rolan Adams and Rohit Duggal, had been killed in comparable circumstances, but it was the Lawrence murder that became a landmark in the politics of "race" in Britain.⁴⁹

The whole story of political action around these and other similar deaths cannot be recapitulated here. For these limited purposes, it is enough to say that a small but dynamic movement grew up around these terrible tragedies and that the actions of the bereaved families and their various groups of supporters took place both inside and outside the formal institutions of government, publicity, and legislation. Tactical actions were intended to project anger, amplify grief, win support, change consciousness, and raise money for legal fees. Political initiatives included a demand for the justice that had been effectively denied when police, courts, and prosecutors refused to act with speed and diligence against the attackers. They also encompassed a demand for sympathy for the plight of the families in their loss and their sadness that has left a substantial mark on the life of our nation. These actions articulated a further sequence of supplementary demands: for recognition of the seriousness of the offense and for acknowledgment of the humanity of the victims and the distinctively unwholesome nature of the brutal offenses that had left them to die on the pavement while their blood drained away. A government-sponsored judicial inquiry into Lawrence's murder and the way the police and the criminal justice system had responded to it raised the disturbing

issue that "institutional racism" had conditioned the workings of Britain's government agencies.

Although most aspects of the forbiddingly complex case of Stephen Lawrence cannot be explored here, that does not mean they have been forgotten. There are also solid moral and political reasons why that bitter episode and the events that followed it should not be used as illustrative material on the way toward a more general and inevitably speculative argument about the nature of racial categories and the limits of racialized explanation. Nevertheless, that is what I wish to do.

The British National Party—an openly neo-fascist group—had been very active in the area where Stephen Lawrence was murdered. Their national headquarters was close to the spot where he died, and it was not surprising that the group's presence in the neighborhood and its possible role in legitimating white supremacist terror there became the focus of political activity directed toward the police and the local state. In the names of antifascism and antiracism, activists demanded that the party's well-fortified headquarters be shut down. There were tactical divisions within the campaign as to how this might be achieved. One group favored localized direct action, another preferred to pursue more familiar patterns of protest. Rather than march against the bunker, they chose to make their public demands in the central area of the city where government buildings are located and where the media would attend. Another, local demonstration was held outside the fortified building. This action was animated by the suggestion that if the authorities were unable to move against the group and their headquarters (which had become powerful symbols of the malevolent forces of racism and fascism), antiracist demonstrators would do so. This demonstration, held on Saturday, October 16, 1993, pitted a large number of protesters against a considerable formation of police in riot gear that had been deployed to protect the neo-fascists from the wrath of the antiracists.

The details of the violence that followed are interesting but not essential to the points being explored here. As a result of the physical confrontation between these groups, forty-one demonstrators were injured. Nineteen police officers were treated for their injuries, and four of them spent the night in the hospital. Conflict over the behavior of the marchers erupted after the event. This was something more than the routine cycle of mutual denunciation. In particular, the police claimed that antiracist

marchers had singled out black officers and made them special targets for hostility and attack. One of these policemen, deployed by his superiors in defense of the rights of an organization that does not recognize him as belonging to the national community or upholding its laws, was Constable Leslie Turner. Turner said he had been attacked because he was black. He told the newspapers, "It was white demonstrators. There were no black people there that I could see. They singled me out as being a traitor." Whatever his thoughts to the contrary, it is possible that Officer Turner's plight might well have been worse if there had been larger numbers of black protesters around that day. On the scale of human suffering that ends with brutal murder, his experiences are slight, even trivial. His story of victimage may even have been fabricated to win new legitimacy for a dubious police operation. But I want to proceed as if, almost irrespective of what really happened, there was indeed a measure of truth in what he said about that demonstration. What if he *was* attacked as a traitor? What kind of traitor would he have been? What if he *was* assaulted by angry people on the basis that by being a black police officer he had somehow violated the political position that they imagined to match his uniformed black body? What is the currency of what are sometimes called "coconut," "choc-ice," or "oreo cookie" ontologies with their strict and pernicious divisions between "inside" and "outside"? What if the mob was not alive to the irony of his being deployed in defense of the local neo-Nazis? What if they, too, succumbed to the vicious logic of race-thinking?

I am telling this tale here in order to conjure up some of the substantive problems lodged in the way people conceptualize and act upon racial difference. If dedicated antiracist and antifascist activists remain wedded to the most basic mythologies and morphologies of racial difference, what chance do the rest of us have to escape its allure? If the brutal simplicity of racial typology remains alive even in the most deliberate and assertive of antifascist gestures, then perhaps critical, avowedly "anti-essentialist" intellectuals are asking too much when we inquire about the renunciation of "race," or when we aspire to polychromatic and multiethnic utopias in which the color of skin makes no more difference than the color of eyes or hair. It would probably be inappropriate to assume too much common ground between this readership and those anti-Nazi demonstrators. But it is not illegitimate to inquire into where professional and academic interests might resonate in this narrative. Have we, too, become complicit in

the reification of racial difference? What has happened to the antiracist assumptions that governed our scholarly activities in previous times? Have they been beaten back by the gains of postbiological determinism, which is claiming the right to account for human behavior back from the social sciences? This argument should not be misunderstood. It seeks to initiate a period of reflection and clarification about our intellectual, ethical, and political projects in the critical scholarship of "races" and raciologies.

I am alive to all the ironies of my position. I understand that taking antipathy toward "race" beyond the unstable equilibrium represented by my liberal use of scare quotes might be viewed as a betrayal of those groups whose oppositional, legal, and even democratic claims have come to rest on identities and solidarities forged at great cost from the categories given to them by their oppressors. But to renounce "race" for analytical purposes is not to judge all appeals to it in the profane world of political cultures as formally equivalent. Less defensively, I think that our perilous predicament, in the midst of a political and technological sea-change that somehow strengthens ethnic absolutism and primordialism, demands a radical and dramatic response. This must step away from the pious ritual in which we always agree that "race" is invented but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world and to accept that the demand for justice requires us nevertheless innocently to enter the political arenas it helps to mark out.

Simply to raise these issues may be to violate a tacit scholarly agreement. The link between antiracist practice and intellectual work in this area is certainly not what it was twenty years ago, and yet there are precious few reflections on the changes signaled along the road that leads through municipal antiracism and beyond it into the barren terrain where work on "race" is overshadowed by privatized, corporate multiculturalism and cultures of simulation in which racial alterity has acquired an important commercial value. This just might be a suitable time to break the foundational oscillation between biology and culture, to open the closed circuit that analyses of what we used to call the New Racism have become. It will be more fruitful in future to trace the history of racial metaphysics—or rather of a metaphysical raciology—as an underlying precondition for various versions of determinism: biological, nationalistic, cultural, and now, genomic.

It has become commonplace to remark that, however noble, the idea of antiracism does not communicate any positive or affirmative notes.

What, after all, are antiracists in favor of? What are we committed to and how does it connect with the necessary moment of negativity that defines our political hopes? There are difficulties in framing those objectives, utopian and otherwise. I see this as another small symptom of the larger, chronic condition involved in the crisis of "race" and attempts to escape it by refiguring humanism. The history of racism is a narrative in which the congruency of micro- and macrocosm has been disrupted at the point of their analogical intersection: the human body. The order of active differentiation that gets called "race" may be modernity's most pernicious signature. It articulates reason and unreason. It knits together science and superstition. Its specious ontologies are anything but spontaneous and natural. They should be awarded no immunity from prosecution amid the reveries of reflexivity and the comfortable forms of inertia induced by capitulation to the lazy essentialisms that postmodern sages inform us we cannot escape.

NOTES

I. THE CRISIS OF "RACE" AND RACIOLOGY

1. C. Peter Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 4 vols.
2. "The fact that the development of computer technology, with its demands on information theory, has occurred contemporaneously with the growth of molecular biology has not merely provided the physical technology, in instrumentation and computing power, without which the dramatic advances of the decades since the 1960s would not have been possible. It has also given the organising metaphors within which the data was analysed and the theories created." Steven Rose, *Lifelines* (Penguin, 1997), p. 120.
3. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam (Markman, Pluto Press, 1986 [1952]), p. 60.
4. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Harper and Row, 1967), p. 53.
5. "Recent tests at the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine in Massachusetts showed that 78% of women who underwent similar training qualified for 'very heavy' military jobs." Hugh McManners, "Army Sets Out to Build a Better Breed of Woman," *Sunday Times*, March 17, 1996.
6. African Rights, *Rwanda Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers* (1975).
7. Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (Stanford University Press, 1989), esp. chapter 2.
8. Richard Rorty, "Cruelty and Solidarity," in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
9. Beverley Merz, "Whose Cells Are They, Anyway?" *American Medical News* (March 23-30, 1990), pp. 7-8; "Modern Times: The Way of All Flesh," BBC 2 Television, March 19, 1997.

10. Jeremy Rifkin, *The Bio-Tech Century: Harnessing the Gene and Re-Making the World* (Tarcher Putnam, 1998).
11. Ilya Prigogine, *The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos and the New Laws of Nature* (Free Press, 1997), p. 29.
12. Richard Dyer, *White* (Routledge, 1997), chapter 3.
13. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 161.
14. "Bodily fitness as the supreme goal, meant to be pursued, yet never reached, by means of self-coercion, is bound to be forever shot through with anxiety seeking an outlet, but generating a constantly growing demand for ever new yet untested outlets. I propose that this product of the 'privatisation' of the body and of the agencies of social production of the body is the 'primal scene' of postmodern ambivalence. It lends postmodern culture its unheard-of energy, an inner compulsion to be on the move. It is also a crucial cause, perhaps the prime cause, of its inbuilt tendency to instant ageing." Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments* (Polity Press, 1995), p. 119.
15. Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (Routledge, 1997) p. 262.
16. "The glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye." Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 109.
17. *The Voice*, issue 724 (October 15, 1996).
18. Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad* (Oxford University Press, 1987).
19. Stephen Buckley, "Heritage Battle Rages at Slavery's Sacred Sites," *Guardian* (August 1, 1995).
20. "The trouble with the NPFL is that, in battle, they may capture a street corner, but then they go for a beer, and when they come back they're surprised to find that they've lost it again," Lemuel Potty told reporters in Monrovia. "They're rubbish, but at least they're better than their rivals the Krahn. They go into battle wearing women's wigs, necklaces and rubber overcoats." Potty, a National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) sympathizer who owned a nightclub in the Mamba Point district, was describing the civil war raging in his country which has so far killed over 150,000 people. "I'm not saying that the war isn't going full pelt. There are quite a few dead people lying around in the streets, but actually the gunmen are far more interested in looting luxury goods than killing each other. Shops selling trainers were the first to be looted, but they also like robbing tailors' shops. The NPFL wear brightly coloured sailors' life vests, or T shirts they've looted from the Save The Children Fund. Their basic look is ghetto rap musician. You can always spot them because they all wear blue berets, stolen from the Army and Navy store, but the Krahn are more flamboyant. One Krahn fighter dresses in wellington boots and a woman's head scarf, and calls himself Lieutenant Colonel Double Trouble. They do the real fighting in the countryside. When they come to Monrovia they don't really come to fight. They come to shop." *Eastern Express*, April 24, 1996.

21. Michael Chege, the director of African Studies at the University of Florida, has repeatedly drawn attention to the role of elite academics in formulating the genocidal doctrines implemented in Rwanda. See Tim Cornwell's "Rwandan Scholars Conspired," *Times Higher Education Supplement* (February 28, 1997). The suicide of Nikola Koljevic, prolific Shakespearean scholar, ideologue of "ethnic cleansing," and prime architect of the destruction of Sarajevo, raises similar issues in a different setting. See Janine di Giovanni's article "The Cleanser" in *Guardian Weekend* (March 1, 1997).
22. As I write, only two men, Jean-Paul Akayesu and Jean Kambanda, have been found guilty for their roles in the mass killing.
23. Kader Asmal et al., *Reconciliation through Truth: A Reckoning with Apartheid's Criminal Governance* (James Currey, 1997). See also Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Wesleyan, New England, 1991); and Carlos Santiago Nino, *Radical Evil on Trial* (Yale University Press, 1996).
24. June Goodwin and Ben Schiff, *Heart of Whiteness: Afrikaners Face Black Rule in the New South Africa* (Scribner, 1995), p. 177.
25. Jonathan Steele, "National Effrontery," *Guardian* (May 24, 1997).
26. Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of Genocide* (Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 103-106.
27. Marek Kohn's *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science* (Cape, 1995) and John Hoberman's *Darwin's Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997) are two important books that against much of the momentum of their own arguments remain determined to hold on to the idea of racial science.
28. Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (Verso, 1995).
29. Guntram Henrik Herb, *Under the Map of Germany: Nationalism and Propaganda, 1918-1945* (Routledge, 1997); Jeremy Black, *Maps and History* (Yale University Press, 1997), especially chapter 4.
30. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton University Press, 1997).
31. Martin Barker, *The New Racism* (Junction Books, 1980).
32. Steven Rose, *Lifelines: Biology, Freedom, Determinism* (Penguin Books, 1997).
33. Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Beacon Press, 1993).
34. Martin Kemp, "Temples of the Body and Temples of the Cosmos: Vision and Visualization in the Vesalian and Copernican Revolutions," in Brian S. Baigrie, ed., *Picturing Knowledge: Historical and Philosophical Problems Concerning the Use of Art in Science* (University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 40-85.
35. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (MIT Press, 1992).
36. Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (Yale University Press, 1994), esp. sections IV and V.

37. Howard Kaye points out that Haeckel's *Welträtsel*, a treatise of "national socialism in support of racial community," sold more than 300,000 copies between 1900 and 1914. Howard Kaye, *The Social Meaning of Modern Biology* (Yale University Press, 1986), p. 38.
38. Mechtild Rössler, "'Area Research' and 'Spatial Planning' from the Weimar Republic to the German Federal Republic: Creating a Society with a Spatial Order under National Socialism," in Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker, eds., *Science, Technology and National Socialism* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 126-138.
39. Sven Holdar, "The Ideal State and the Power of Geography: The Life-Work of Rudolf Kjellén," *Political Geography* 11 (1992), pp. 307-323; Herb, *Under the Map of Germany*.
40. Anna Bramwell, *The History of Ecology in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press, 1989), p. 50.
41. Richard Lewontin, *The Doctrine of DNA: Biology as Ideology* (Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 63-64.
42. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 110.
43. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (MIT Press, 1992), p. 16.
44. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Tavistock, 1970), p. 132.
45. Hegel's discussion of phrenology and physiognomy affords some insight into the troubling coexistence of these different perceptual and observational regimes.
46. "Alle Bewohner der heibesten Zonen sind ausnehmend trÑge. Bey einigen wird diese Faulheit noch etwas durch die Regierung und Zwang gemÑbigt." Kant, *Physische Geographie*, 1802, quoted by Christian M. Neugebauer, "The Racism of Kant and Hegel," in H. Odera Oruka, ed., *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy* (Brill, 1990).
47. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 111.
48. G. Wolstenhome, ed., *Man and His Future* (Little, Brown, 1963), pp. 275-276, 294-295.
49. Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, "A Report into the Death of Stephen Lawrence" (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1999).

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1. Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State Building and Extra-Territorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton University Press, 1994).
2. William E. Connolly, "Democracy and Territoriality," in Marjorie Ringrose and Adam J. Lerner, eds., *Reimagining the Nation* (Open University Press, 1993).

3. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters* (Methuen, 1986).
4. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Penguin, 1985), p. 232.
5. Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c1500-c1800* (Yale University Press, 1995).
6. Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individuality: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan and Robinson Crusoe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
7. Josef Chytry, *The Aesthetic State: A Quest in Modern German Thought* (University of California Press, 1989); Earl W. Count, *This Is Race: An Anthology Selected from the International Literature on the Races of Man* (Schuman, 1950); Christian Neugebauer, "The Racism of Kant And Hegel," in *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy*, ed. H. Odera Oruka (Brill, 1990).
8. George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Wisconsin University Press, 1985), esp. chapter 2.
9. Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," in Stuart Barnett, ed., *Hegel after Derrida* (Routledge, 1998).
10. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Dover Books, 1956), p. 96.
11. This term is taken from Thongchai Winichakul's *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
12. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge, 1992).
13. Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black* (Norton, 1977); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Johns Hopkins, 1996).
14. I have in mind the work of Eric Voegelin, Martin Bernal, and Ivan Hannaford.
15. Eric Voegelin, "The Growth of the Race Idea," *Review of Politics* (July 1940), p. 284.
16. Ronald A. T. Judy, *(Dis)forming the American Canon: African-Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), chapter 4, section 3, "Kant and the Critique of Pure Negro."
17. I. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (University of California Press, 1960).
18. I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).
19. Kant, *Observations*, p. 111.
20. Emily Hobhouse, *Report on a Visit to the Camps* (London, 1901); *Report of Dame Millicent Fawcett's Committee of Ladies* (Cmnd. Cd 893); Louis Perez, Jr., *Cuba Between the Empires, 1878-1902* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), and *Lords of the Mountain: Social Banditry and Protest in Cuba, 1878-1918* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989). I am grateful to Peter Fraser for the Cuban material.