(Griffin, 12), a phrase that associates passing with passing over from life to death or passing out. Perhaps rumors of Griffin’s death due-to-passing reflect a widespread belief that, as Isaac Julien has put it, “crossing racial lines usually results in punishment” (263), or, indeed, that it should result in punishment.

Certainly, before and after their passing episodes, both Griffin and Halsell suffered from a kind of racial schizophrenia. Like Halsell, who describes herself as “two persons” or a being “cast in a twin, paradoxical role of oppressor and oppressed,” Griffin experienced himself as “two personalities, two sets of eyes, two bodies” containing “a single human heart in conflict with itself” (Halsell, 220–21). At least in part, their self-division derives from a conviction that “self-segregation...pains and cripples the white American...even more than the black American” (Halsell, 221). (Fanon also believed that “the Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (60)). Both Griffin and Halsell gain not only sympathy or understanding but a sense of community, profound societal insights, and a conviction of moral self-worth when “turned” black. Similarly, white Senator Rawkins in Finian’s Rainbow was selfish, conniving, and cutthroat; however, black Rawkins gains in sympathy and love for his fellow creatures. Plus, he’s got rhythm. (It was precisely the musicality of black communities that led Alan Lomax to put on blackface so he could accompany Zora Neale Hurston—the two thereby evading white authorities, not fooling African-Americans—to collect material for the Music Division of the Library of Congress.17) When blackness is valued as intrinsically worthwhile or superior, race change from white to black can be re-envisioned as a way to transform not only the individual conscience or consciousness but also our conceptualization of the major icons, myths, and institutions of European and American culture.

Rather than replicating a conventional system of representation that Others blacks, a number of artists and thinkers use cross-racial strategies to underline African cultural centrality in Western civilization. Countee Cullen’s “The Black Christ” (1929) performs a race change on Jesus, as do many paintings of the Harlem Renaissance in which the blackness of Jesus bespeaks his spiritual grace under inexplicable but murderous oppression.18 From Jean-Paul Sartre’s Black Orpheus (1959) to Angela Carter’s Black Venus (1985), from Martin Bernal’s Black Athena (1987, 1991) to China Galland’s Longing for Darkness: Tara and the Black Madonna (1990), twentieth-century critical and creative speculations reinvent Western legends in such a way as to restructure our ideas about race and culture. The most ambitious of these—Black Athena—argues that Greek civilization resulted from Afroasiatic influences so that, for instance, the city name of Athens as well as the divinity Athena derive from Egyptian and Semitic sources. Rooted in black experience but reinvented by racist historians who wished to attribute the glory that was Greece to European or Aryan colonization, Western civilization itself, according to Bernal’s widely acclaimed book, underwent an extraordinary whitewashing, a race change from black to white.19

If the major myths of Europeans and Americans could be imagined as black stories, so might the founding narratives of popular culture. A number of modern mu-
racial labels. In “Passing for White, Passing for Black,” the conceptual artist Adrian Piper describes any search into the ancestral past as “full of guesswork, false leads, blank spots and mysteries. For just as white Americans are largely ignorant of their African—usually maternal—ancestry, we blacks are often ignorant of our European—usually paternal—ancestry” (228). Such ignorance, at times (but certainly not always) an offshoot of the sexual exploitation of female slaves by white masters, may be more common than usually supposed. According to some geneticists, 95 percent of “white” Americans have varying degrees of black heritage and 75 percent of all “African” Americans have at least one white ancestor. In other words, concludes another genealogist named Shirlee Taylor Haizlip, “many Americans are not who they think they are; hundreds of thousands of white people in America are not ‘white’” (15). For Piper, castigated as a “paleface” (216) by visibly black and white acquaintances alike, as for Haizlip, what happened in their families “calls into question the concept of color as a means of self-definition” (Haizlip, 15).

If “you look white, act white, live white, vacation white, go to school white, marry white and die white,” perhaps race is “simply a matter of context,” concludes Haizlip, while Piper wonders “whether the very idea of racial classification is a viable one,” whether the concept of race might soon become “obsolete” (247). A comparable argument for disentangling definitions of race from skin color is mounted by two contemporary scholars who also point to cases of mistaken racial identity. In 1982, a light-skinned plaintiff named Susie Guillory Phipps, who lived her life believing she was white, failed in her lawsuit against the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records; the bureau refused to change the racial classification on her birth certificate from black to white. Michael Omi and Howard Winant conclude that the case “illustrates the inadequacy of claims that race is a mere matter of variations in human physiognomy, that it is simply a matter of skin color” (54). If this is so, then racial folk taxonomies based on complexion may soon become antiquated. Unlike Homer Plessy and Walter White, who subscribed to the idea that they could only pretend to be white (because of the one-drop rule), the lawsuit of Phipps as well as the speculations of Haizlip and Piper intimate that the dangerous concept of race itself might be detonated when color no longer codes it. The indeterminacy of racial categories, breaking down either/or approaches to difference, would generate an appreciation of pan-ethnic, transracial persons of unclassifiable colors, fitting citizens of a syncretic society.

A technological analogue to such transgressive imaginings about racial mutability or pigment mutations beyond the confines of racial categories, the new computer program Morph (for metaMORPHosisis) mixes features in such a way as to produce a picture of, say, Queen Elizabeth as a woman of color (Fig. 1.16). The regal symbol of an empire upon which the sun would not set in the nineteenth century is melded through the magic of modern science with the physiognomy of those colonized. Similarly, like a number of United Colors of Benetton ads, the computer-generated, multicultural picture of Eve that appeared on the cover of Time magazine to illustrate America’s “New Face” in the 1990s stressed the enticing glamour of ethnic diversity. The image produced by combining the features of Anglo-Saxons (15%), Middle Easterners (17.5%), Africans (17.5%), Asians (7.5%), Southern Europeans (35%), and Hispanics (7.5%) led one staff member to fall in love: “It really breaks my heart that she doesn’t exist,” exclaimed a journalist enthralled by this cybergenic, multi-ethnic offspring (see color insert and Fig. 1.17). Just as the chart of the 49 progeny produced from various combina-
Endeavoring to prove the speciousness of disabling racial pigeonholes, political pranksters had imagined such racial transformations long before they could be seen on a T.V. or computer screen. The earliest manifestation of Virginia Woolf's contempt for patriotism and militarism found expression in a racial masquerade that signaled her alienation from British imperialism. The so-called "Dreadnought hoax" occurred in 1910 when Woolf (then Virginia Stephen), her brother Adrian, and several of their friends dressed up as the emperor of Abyssinia and his entourage for an official inspection of one of the most famous ships in the British fleet (Fig. 1.18). The group was given a full tour of HMS "Dreadnought" and offered a twenty-one-gun salute as well as a Guard of Honour for their inspection. In native garb and blackface, Woolf, the Abyssinian dignitary makes a mockery not only of a preeminent symbol of British military superiority but also of the rites and rituals of imperial etiquette, the pious inanities of ambassadorial amenities. Clearly the bold impudence of this send-up expresses the racial privilege of a group of intellectuals convinced of their right to take a holiday from whiteness so as to thumb their noses at even the highest authorities. Aware of the whiteness beneath the disguise, Woolf and her friends probably relished, on the one hand, the excitement of their hidden identities as British citizens and, on the other, the exhibition of the ex-

Figure 1.17 Rebirth of a Nation in Time magazine (Special Issue, Fall 1993). Courtesy of Time magazine.

Figure 1.18 The Emperor of Abyssinia and His Suite, from the Daily Mirror (Wednesday, February 16, 1910). Standing, left to right: Guy Ridly, Horace de Vere Cole, Adrian Stephen, Duncan Grant. Seated, left to right: Virginia Stephen, Anthony Buxton.
oticized natives they enacted. Still, presenting herself as the Other, the youthful writer established the anti-establishment sympathies that would fuel her subsequent pacifism and feminism.

Anarchic or antic, the racechanger breaks taboos and pays the price with societal censure, as Woolf did, or with psychological self-division, as Griffin and Halsey did. However, what Griffin conceded in an afterword to his book—"The day was past when black people wanted any advice from white men" (177)—suggests that even the most high-minded, idealistic motivations will not save white impersonators of blackness from violating, appropriating, or compromising black subjectivity in a way that will inevitably rebound against the ethical integrity of whites, a point Dick Gregory makes in a racechanging parody of Black Like Me (Fig. 1.19). If White Like You is "the story of a Mississippi sharecropper who painted himself white and moved to Arizona" (wearing his patchwork overalls and totting watermelons), then perhaps Black Like Me presented just as blatant a counterfeit—even a stereotype—of African-American men.

Using the same title but skewed differently, Eddie Murphy's "White Like You" sketch for Saturday Night Live (1989) shows a made-up Murphy penetrating behind the facades erected before black people to understand that whites bond with each other, support each other, acclaim each other as if they were members of a club or a conspiracy. For example, the whitefaced Murphy boards a bus on which only visibly black passenger sits surrounded by silent commuters ignoring each other; as soon as the black gets off, all the whites turn to each other and begin partying, leading Murphy to speculate that all his friends should resort to cosmetics as well. One of Langston Hughes's short sketches, "Who's Passing for Who?" (1952), is equally sardonic, though in his case about the uncertainty and indeterminacy racial masquerades spawn and also the asymmetrical racial values that make passing morally acceptable only for blacks, never for whites. Whether or not whites pretend to be black in order to learn more about the mores and morals of African-American communities, according to Hughes, the counterfeit is a cheat that robs black people of their dignity and their right to privacy.

In a Harlem club, Hughes describes how he and his friends encountered some white people visiting from Iowa. When a brown-skinned man knocks down a blond woman, the red-haired man from Iowa gets up to protect her; however, he stops when he is informed "she's colored" (31). Hughes's companions are horrified that the Iowa man wouldn't defend a woman from a brute, "no matter what race she may be" (32), and banish him from the cabaret. After some speculation that the abused woman might have been "just passing for colored" and a discussion of several passing novels by Harlem Renaissance writers, the remaining white couple explain that they have "just been passing for white for the last fifteen years" (33) so as to make more money. "All at once," Hughes explains, "we dropped our professionally self-conscious 'Negro' manners... and kidded freely like colored folks do when there are no white folks around" (33). At the end of the episode, as they are getting into a cab, the tourists explain that they are really white: "We just thought we'd kid you by passing for colored a little while—just as you said Negroes sometimes pass for white." Not knowing which way he and his friends have been fooled, Hughes ends on an uneasy note:

Were they really white—passing for colored? Or colored—passing for white?
Whatever race they were, they had had too much fun at our expense—even if they did pay for the drinks.

Who is conned by whom and for what purpose? Hughes implies that it is one thing for blacks to impersonate whites, quite another for whites to masquerade as blacks. He feels exploited, his culture invaded and spied upon, his authenticity at risk. And of course he is addressing a taboo that still very much with us. Eddie Murphy elicits laughs when he uses the satiric tradition of racechange to impersonate Mr. Rogers in his parodic "Mr. Robinson's Neighborhood." Asking little boy and girl viewers if they know the meaning of two important words in the 'hood, he pulls on his cardigan, laces his shoes, faces the camera, and earnestly mouths the phrase "Eviction Notice." Even when Eddie Murphy puts on white make-up, it only signals a kind of antic clownishness, as in the photograph of Dick Gregory; however, the minstrel in blackface remains a taboo emblem of reactionary white supremacy whose shock value was seriously underestimated recently by a com-

Figure 1.19  White Like You, from Dick Gregory, What's Happening? (Dutton 1965), photographs by Jerry Yulsman. Courtesy of Dick Gregory.
panion of Whoopi Goldberg. Despite the imprimatur of Goldberg and the anything-goes atmosphere of a Friars Club roast, the actor Ted Danson could not get away with a Jolnesque appearance in blackface that caused talk show host Montel Williams to view the event as a rally for the KKK and that led New York City Mayor David Dinkins to protest jokes “way over the line” (Times, Oct. 12, 1993).28

Perhaps the title of Fanon’s classic attack on racism, Black Skin, White Masks, explains this asymmetry by suggesting that black-skinned people have to wear white masks. “[N]ot only must the black man be black,” Fanon claimed; “he must be black in relation to the white man.” And to those who would argue that this proposition has a converse, Fanon replied emphatically, “this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (110). Despite Fanon’s characteristic erasure of the black woman, he astutely maps in racial terms the difference that clusters around the issue of volition or agency. Ellen Craft needed to pass in order to obtain her freedom, whereas Virginia Woolf did so in a puckish prank; McKay’s and Schuyler’s characters can obtain life and latitude only by being black no more, while Hughes’s Harlem tourists are motivated merely by a titillating voyeurism. In other words, racial impersonation and masquerading are a destiny imposed on colonized black people who must wear the white mask—of customs and values, of norms and languages, of aesthetic standards and religious ideologies—created and enforced by an alien civilization. “We wear the mask that grins and lies, / It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—”: Paul Laurence Dunbar’s poem speaks for the heroine of Jessie Faust’s There Is Confusion (1924), who can dance the part of America on a Broadway stage only if she wears a white mask, and for the black actors of Jean Genet’s The Blacks (1960), whose imposed white masks hardly conceal but effectively intensify their racial rage.

A sardonic photograph that illuminates the title of James Clifford’s The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (1988) can serve here to summarize Fanon’s, Dunbar’s, Faust’s, and Genet’s point. “White Man” (1982), which the author originally placed between the introduction and the first chapter, now graces the cover of the paperback edition (Fig. 1.20). Herbert M. Cole’s picture displays a black man sardonically masquerading as a white man. The dark hands of the marginalized Nigerian hold a pencil and notebook to record African customs. The covered face of the subject—strikingly similar to the draped and thus blinded heads of René Magritte’s portrait of a kiss joining two curtained, faceless lovers in Les amants (The Lovers) (1928)—has rendered Cole’s subject invisible, silenced, even criminalized in his concealment. Astride a kerchief tied around the black man’s brow rides the white man’s head, a kind of amably arrogant figurehead or hood ornament featuring the power of the white man’s implacable gaze under a Doctor-Livingston-I-Presume hat. Like Fanon, this black-turned-white racechanger might think about himself, “There is no help for it: I am a white man. For unconsciously I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being” (191).

At the same time, however, the impersonator uses his face-change ironically as a weapon or retaliation against his colonization. Clearly the Doctor-Livingston observer-recorder is a satiric portrait of The Anthropologist whose geographical

Figure 1.20 Herbert M. Cole, White Man, photograph of Onyeocha, a performer at Igbo masquerades, south-east Nigeria (1982). Courtesy of Herbert M. Cole and UCLA Museum of Cultural History.
man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being. (44)

The staging of the ambivalence of the colonizer cannot be conflated with the performance of the ambivalence of the colonized; however, the recurrence of racechange allows us to see the extent to which Euro-Americans remained tethered to a dark reflection that splits and distorts their being. Although impersonation has functioned as a fate imposed upon or a strategy adopted by the disempowered, it has also operated as a means or method of disempowering others, of Othering others. Indeed, the long history of racechange demonstrates that no single effect, no simple ideology can be said to emanate from a trope that embodies the slipperiness of metamorphosis in its adoptations or adaptations as well as in its historical evolution.

Hemingway’s darkening heroine in The Garden of Eden (who tries to transform herself into an “African girl”) is the character deployed by Toni Morrison to conclude her brilliant critical book, Playing in the Dark (1992), a summons for critics to study the uses to which dark and light images have been put by the white imagination. Responses to Morrison’s call, the chapters that follow set out to understand the psychological, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of cross-racial mimicry and imagery in the American canon. Yet, from antiquity to present times, Western culture’s fascination with racial imitation, transformation, and mutability has gone unnoted because of embarrassment at what we have rightly been taught to view as racist activity and because of generalized discomfort over images that invoke while breaching conventional boundaries. On the one hand, cross-racial masquerades rely upon strategies of commodification that have historically been used by whites to subordinate people of color; and, on the other hand, they disturb not only those who wish to police the parameters of racial categories (keeping black and white in strictly segregated separate spheres) but also those who wish to eradicate altogether the demarcations of racial categories (draining the very terms “black” and “white” of efficacy). In short, such racechanges have remained largely invisible because characters like Hemingway’s blond African could trace their genealogical ancestry back to the minstrel and because of a recent theoretical emphasis on the fictionality of all racial categories.

To take this last matter first, a study of cross-racial impersonation may appear vexed from the perspective of current critical efforts to underscore the diversity of ethnicities and the social construction of race, for recent scholarship has tended to view stable racial categories as essentialist or biologicist, smack (in other words) of the racism that put racial vocabularies into place during the Enlightenment. At least in part to consolidate the so-called rainbow coalition of multi-hued people, “color” has recently made a comeback in popular as well as critical parlance, returning after “colored” gave way to “Negro,” “Negro” to “black,” “black” to “Afro-American,” and “Afro-American” to “African American.” Henry Louis Gates’s “personal statement” for his Yale application nicely captures the rapidity of changing fashions of nomenclature: “My grandfather was colored, my father was Negro, and I am black,” explained the now prominent spokesperson for

The Ethics of Racechange

What does it mean for the white scholar to enter into the intellectual marketplace of the skin trade? Is the critic of racechange—like The Anthropologist—guilty of silencing black subjects or is she an apologist for white co-optation of black culture? As the Igbo masquerade hints, the predicament of Western culture consists in its appropriation not only of black physical bodies but also of muffled black presences. The ambivalent twoness of the Janiform vase is hierarchized here, the black subordinated to the white. Certainly, too, the white-to-black racechanges to be analyzed in the subsequent chapters of this book contributed to the silencing and objectification of black people. Even though, as the preceding sections of this introduction attempted to show, a “white skin, black face” scenario could work toward libertarian ends, most people today would agree with John Howard Griffin and Langston Hughes that the time for racial impostures has passed. Yet because we have become a society more aware of how insulting such impersonations can be, the time for studying racial imitations has now begun.

For if the concept of whiteness depends—as Cole’s image suggests it does—on the appropriation of black beings, then perhaps one of the predicaments of white culture has resided in its blindness about its dependency on (and thus effaced) black bodies. Although taboos against white impersonations of blackness need to be understood, they should not stop us from appreciating the extent to which twentieth-century Western culture is indebted to African and African-American tropes, images, mimickers, and masks. “The Negro is comparison” (211), Fanon argues elsewhere in Black Skin, White Masks, again insisting that this comparison is one inflicted only on black consciousness; however, we shall see that at certain moments the white person must be white in relation to the black, that the “Negro is comparison” for whites, even if (perhaps especially when) blacks have no ontological resistance in the eyes of whites.

One of Fanon’s most interesting interpreters, Homi Bhabha, puts it this way:

The representative figure of [colonial] perversion . . . is the image of post-Enlightenment man tethered to, not confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized
“Afro-American Studies” (in an account included in his recent memoir, significantly entitled Colored People (2011)).

How can we write or speak about “black” and “white,” proponents of the rainbow coalition might ask, in the context of Egyptian, Armenian, Sri Lankan, or Jamaican ethnicities? Some time ago, Joel Williamson expressed it this way: “There are, essentially, no such things as ‘black’ people or ‘white’ people” (522). As Robyn Wiegman—speculating about racial categories rendered “real” through “naturalizing” descriptions of the body—puts it, “making the African ‘black’ reduces the racial meanings attached to flesh to a binary structure of vision, thus imprisoning African Americans in a ‘prisonhouse of epidermal inferiority’” (4, 11). Given the empirical unreality of black and white, don’t many of us feel the way the autobiographical writer Jane Lazarre does when she experiences herself as either “colorless” or “multicolored, some combination outside the known spectrum with no name to hold [us] down”? (Worlds, xiv). “Color” may be in vogue because it rejects the lure of ethnic absolutism, accepting in its stead (an also now fashionable) hybrity or plurality.

However, I do not restrict myself to the more stylish of these words because I seek to consider the imaginative prevalence black-and-white racial polarities have attained in modern culture. Curiously, an obsession with “racial purity” or “racial authenticity” has characterized not only right-wing fascist rhetoric in the twentieth century but also left-wing civil rights politics. Although such biologically and nationally based concepts of racial difference have been dubbed essentialist by contemporary theorists, recent descriptions of the social construction of race sometimes seem too facile, or so a growing number of sophisticated interlocutors in the conversation about racial politics have begun to realize. As Diana Fuss has argued, race—“a variable and flexible term”—may work “as a political concept” even when it is known to be “a biological fiction” (Essentially Speaking, 91). Neither an illusion nor a fact, race operates in a manner similar to gender—as a complex of meanings transformed by political frameworks. Though race may be a fiction, in other words, it remains what Wallace Stevens called a Supreme Fiction that has exploited the corporeal body to put in place, sustain, and justify powerful systems of inequality. In both political and aesthetic realms, an iconography of ethnic absolutism has been abrogated and sustained by cross-racial intermixing, creolization, and impersonation. Drawing on a growing corpus of work on the racial significance of whiteness, I use the terms “black” and “white” throughout this book to accentuate the persistent power these categories have continued to exert, a power that speaks to the recalcitrance of the Western imagination, its recondite refusal to heed demythologists of racial definitions. One major way the African was “made” black, in other words, was achieved through a series of racechanges undertaken by performers and artists who established whiteness as an escape from “the prisonhouse of epidermal inferiority” (Wiegman, 11).

But if the language of this study proves dated, what could be more anachronistic or retrograde than one of its primary subjects: whites masquerading as blacks? The second inhibition related to this study, then, pertains to the historical origins of whites’ impersonations of blacks. The first channel white masquerades of black-
of race and gender in racechange scripts. Especially in the period after World War II, I argue in Chapter 5, white men and women of letters pathologized and eroticized the black man—on whom was projected a criminalized yet alluring form of masculinism. Because white men and women of letters oscillated between wanting to become and wishing to have such a figure, their work tends to link the blurring of racial borderlines with the transgressive collapsing of homosexual and heterosexual categories. At the same time, as the last chapter demonstrates, birth stories about new breeds composed of mixed races enabled a host of writers to focus on mothers of one race giving birth to babies that look like they belong to another so as to see what the racechanged baby’s reception might tell us about the possibilities of a post-racist society. That my meditations on the libertarian potentiality of racechange consistently encountered discouragingly recalcitrant scripts made it necessary to append the final chapter, a postscript in which I speculate that—despite its contributions to racist totalizing—racechange continues to hold out an aesthetic possibility of bridging the gap between blacks and whites.

What does it mean that racechange informs the most retrograde and the most revolutionary—the most conventional and the most experimental—works of art in the twentieth century? Whether as a manifestation of guilt, a form of pleasure, or a kind of guilty pleasure, white privilege plays itself out through almost obsessive racial masquerading. That the minstrel tradition established the parameters of racechange in America, a tradition shockingly incompatible with the benign impartiality of the Tarquinian urn and its equivocal faces, suggests the impossibility of collapsing the aesthetically pleasurable into the ethically acceptable or of associating racial impersonation with any monolithic ideological design—or, for that matter, of defining racism itself as a monochromatic phenomenon. Given what Homi Bhabha calls “the ambivalence of mimicry” (86), we need to understand white masquerades as a mockery of and menace to the Other, as an assertion of difference, but also a form of competition, as an admission of resemblance, a gesture of identification or solidarity, even a mode of self-mockery. Or so the centrality of Jews in the history of racechange—as performers and writers—will illustrate. For, just as Simone de Beauvoir began The Second Sex not only by comparing “the situation of woman and that of the Negro”—“the eternal feminine” with the “black soul”—but also by likening both with the situation of “the Jew” and “the Jewish character” (xxiii), racechanging conventions enabled artists from manifold traditions to relate nuanced comparable stories about various modes and gradations of Othering.

America’s first national theater, first talking pictures, first radio shows, and first “new” journalism as well as Europe’s first experimental literature, painting, and photography: All were marked by various forms of cross-racial performance, most frequently whites masquerading as Africans or African Americans. Historically, white posing counters black passing. Often, in other words, the white pose flagrantly exhibits the artifice of the performance, its theatrical falsity, while the black passer seeks to screen or camouflage signs of a discrepancy between hidden identity and outer appearance. Unlike the “passing” tradition, in which African Americans attempted to produce mimetically realistic replicas of Euro-Americans, whites posing as blacks often emphasized the spurious or ersatz caricature they created. Like the complicated motives of minstrelsy described by Eric Lott, nineteenth-century extravaganzas that both mock and celebrate the power of blacks, racial impersonations in the twentieth century stage white ambivalence about African Americans and their culture. The critic Susan Willis has speculated that “blackface is a metaphor for the commodity” (189) and we will see that blackface in the movies, blackface on the black faces of African-American Broadway entertainers, and various aesthetic transmutations of blackface flirt with even as they deflect against the black Other, who becomes a kind of commodity fetish for white people. To the fetishized, the process can only be perplexing, posing problems for real human beings harnessed to or assimilated into weirdly evocative images and stereotypes. However, for those whites shopping not only in low but also in high cultural markets, the shifting, shifty images of the fetish adorn the closet where the self slips on, tries out, purchases, or discards the outrageous costumes of its various incarnations. Unlike black people, who often had to adopt white masks to gain their rights and privileges, white people have chosen various modalities of racial impersonation, which in the course of the century have evolved from mockery to mimicry to an emphasis on inter-racial mutability and mutability—not replacing mockery with mimicry or mimicry with mutuality but eventually playing out all three modes. More specifically, Racechanges traces an evolution from the mean mockery of blackface in the movies through the adulterate mimicry of the ersatz primitivism found in modernist verse and fiction, from the confused erotics of black envy during the post-World War II period to the loving emphasis on inter-racial mutability at work in contemporary narratives of the mixed child.

That white artists continue to be fascinated with the permeable boundaries of racial markers means that their work documents their indebtedness to African-American culture. A consideration of white appropriation of black images therefore uncovers the extent to which mainstream American culture, no longer Anglo-American, has moved in the course of this century to becoming not only indebted to black aesthetic forms and traditions but itself profoundly African American. Such a fusion holds out the promise of future reciprocity and respect, in the place of past theft and scorn. A post-racist society cannot possibly come into being until Americans comprehend how the dualism of “black” versus “white” has operated to hide the cross-racial dynamics of our interwoven cultural pasts. To some extent, as we have seen, COLORS’ computerized photo of a black Queen Elizabeth, Michael Jackson’s morphed multi-ethnic sequence of faces in his instantaneous popular 1993 music video, and Time’s computerized portrait of a cybergeneic Eve dramatize racial merging as well as the reconfiguration of ideas about race. Indeed, a wish to celebrate a multi-ethnic diversity that would facilitate the “Rebirth of a Nation” informs all these “Morphies,” whose eyes and lips, skin and hair represent 50–50 combinations of the physical characteristics of their African or Asian, Hispanic or Anglo-Saxon progenitors. Despite the recycling of such tried and tired terms as “Queen of the Empire” and “Eve,” morphing postulates a visual elasticity beyond racial dualism, encouraging viewers to consider the ramifica-
tions of appreciating color divested of the category of race. The electronic melding of images produces perceptively new, transracial beings that resist old racial categories.

It would be wrong to conclude this first chapter on such an optimistic note, however. For even at its most utopian, racechange often fails to dislodge psychological and aesthetic structures generated by what Winthrop Jordan’s title calls the prevailing arrangement of *White Over Black*. Although Michael Jackson overtly advertised his music video “Black or White” as an attack on prejudice, network officials objected to the violence of its conclusion and therefore cut footage of the superstar taking a crowbar and smashing car and store windows (bearing fascist and racist graffiti). And as sagacious a thinker as Donna Haraway found herself plummeted into “a dyspeptic attack of political correctness” upon gazing on the *Time* cover bearing the new Eve’s face (364). Judging “the sense of utter homogeneity that emanates from *Time*’s matrix of diversity” nothing but “numbing,” Haraway protests against its “evacuation of histories of domination and resistance,” equates it with “the replicants for sale” in the futuristic movie *Blade Runner* (1989), and argues that this Eve “ensures the difference of no difference in the human family” (366). By emphasizing especially in its African and Hispanic faces blended or moderated skin tones as well as mostly Caucasian features, the genealogy of *Time*’s cybernetic cover girl hints that her creators eschew extremes as unattractive. Similarly, Patricia J. Williams looked at the depictions of Queen Elizabeth as a black woman (and other Benetton ads in which “the Pope becomes Chinese, Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes ‘a negro’”) to wonder at “this sifting through the jumbled jewelry box of cultural assets, selected body parts, and just the right accessories”: Do such assemblages signify “the whole self” or the disembodiment of “No one”? (Rooster’s Egg, 242–43).

Probably the most brilliant painter to exploit racechange, Robert Colescott, would endorse Haraway’s and Williams’s skepticism, for he proves just how far off the promised end of a post-racist society remains in his two most satiric works: *Eat Dem Taters* (1975) and *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook* (1975). The first of these, a racechanged version of Van Gogh’s *The Potato Eaters* (1885), hints at theft by reminding us of what one critic calls “the already Negroid features of the down-trodden peasants” in the original (Simms, 4, see color insert). Not simply a picture of the parallel oppressions of black sharecroppers and European peasants, Colescott’s painting proves that the exploitation of the European peasant received its due in the dignified portrait produced by Van Gogh; however, American blacks suffer the added indignity of a representation that scornfully presents them happily embracing their impoverishment. The characters seated around the table in *Eat Dem Taters* look less like African Americans, more like white minstrels’ depictions of African Americans. Similarly, in *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook* (see color insert), the cook and the banjo player, the fisherman and the drunkard, and the wench displaying her bare bottom recall the characters of minstrelsy.

While Emanuel Leutze’s original, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851), testifies to the historic liberation of America by its first national leader, Colescott’s parody takes one of the few black men to enter the history books—George Washington Carver—and places him in a ship of fools; that is, among the African Americans more often taught to whites: “the menial workers—Stepin Fetchit, Aunt Jemimas, boot blacks,” in Colescott’s words (Simms, 4). With its river so allusive of freedom and its cottony ice flows, the contemporary parody of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* contrasts the myth of freedom established by the founding fathers with the reality of slavery, even as it slyly hints that minstrelsy’s version of African Americans provided the founding origins of American culture. Taken together, both of Colescott’s racechanged paintings address African-American impoverishment as poverty and as the deprivation inflicted by degrading representations. At the same time, Colescott points a finger at the aesthetic past, reminding us that black figures have been marginalized and exploited as symbols or caricatures in the great masterpieces of Western civilization. Through the use of comic book images and parodic narration, post-modernist or in-your-face arrogation becomes a way of subverting earlier, clandestine appropriations of the African-American body, but it also provides a vehicle for placing African-American figures at the very center of the history of Western art and of American culture.

Yet what would happen if we approached Colescott’s canvases without knowledge of his racial identity? Wouldn’t they appear to be deeply unethical in their stereotyping of African Americans? This is precisely the question racechanging productions often pose as well as the query Henry Louis Gates, Jr., encourages us to ask in his provocative essay on “Authenticity,” or the Lesson of *Little Tree,* which starts off with the irony that the best-selling *Education of Little Tree* was touted and taught in Native American literature courses as a true story composed by the grandson of Cherokees until it was discovered that the pseudonym Forrest Carter hid one Asa Earl Carter, a Ku Klux Klan terrorist and author of Governor George Wallace’s famous speech “Segregation now . . . Segregation tomorrow . . . Segregation forever.” From white abolitionists who composed ersatz slave narratives to the many male novelists who wrote not only about but through the consciousness of their heroines, authory interlopers have refused to heed any border patrols in the realm of the imagination. “Ethnic transvestism” is the clever phrase coined by Werner Sollors to describe the “many fake ethnic writers, from the times of Henry Harland, who published ‘Jewish’ novels under the pen name Sydney Luska, to the recent case of Daniel James, who wrote ‘Chicano’ stories under the assumed name Danny Santiago and fooled critics for a while” (Beyond Ethnicity, 252).

Is it true that the genuine, authentic, sincere experience of, say, an ethnic group can be expressed only by one of its own or are we too often entrapped by what Nancy K. Miller calls “as-a” criticism (20); and if we expect artists and scholars to confine themselves “as a black” to black writing or “as a lesbian” to lesbian writing, aren’t we just putting into place another form of segregation now, tomorrow, and forever? Besides, what would such a protestation mean and to what extent could it deliver? The folklorist Roger Abrahams has shown, after all, that so-called
"authenticating stories"—in which writers like Joel Chandler Harris, Lafcadio Hearn, Mark Twain, and George Washington Cable "make righteous claims to have learned major portions of their repertoires from specific black performers"—constituted just one more formulaic "way of establishing one's credentials as a vernacular artist, whether on the minstrel stage, the lecturer's platform, or the written page" (142–43). Like these, most authenticating maneuvers remain qualified strategies that can never completely certify legitimacy, for creative artists—even those telling stories from their own social repertoires—never fully possess or contain their creations;41 even with the best intentions, they must invent characters and locales more or less than themselves and their places of origin. What the artists engaged in the conventions of racechange do is spotlight the discrepancy between creator and creation, performer and repertoire, usually by making obvious the white person behind the black persona, for example, or, more paradoxically, the black face behind the black mask. We do read Colescott's painting differently once we interpret it in terms of the racial identity he espouses, and that very difference is a mark of how vertiginously disabling racist iconography remains: The African-American artist who mocks grotesque caricatures of blacks finds himself replicating the most pernicious white representations.

If, as Richard Dyer has argued, "the invisibility of whiteness colonises other norms—class, gender, heterosexuality, nationality"—and if it "also masks whiteness as itself a category" (46), racechanges like those performed by Colescott make whiteness visible. (In Colescott's framework, it makes us see the canvases of Van Gogh and Leutze in a new way.) Finally, then, I have decided to close this introductory chapter with several images that help us envision the respect so flagrantly, pointedly violated in Colescott's paintings (as well as to instate a contrast to the Janiform faces looking in opposite directions at the start of this book and to illustrate an ongoing fascination with racechanging iconography). Consider, then, the images of racial interdependence developed by a striking series of portraits in which white and black faces are presented in parallel—rather than oppositional—poses.

One version of Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* makes the mirroring between model and mask quite explicit. The upright Kiki looks toward (leans into) the mask as if seeking her own alter self, the uncanny and unknown originary psyche she always glimpses at the corner of her eye but can never fully comprehend (Fig. 1.21). Because Kiki's hand and cheek now embrace and encircle the mask, the two figures appear in the position of doubles, a twinning that eludes hierarchized racial and sexual categories. Two portraits that bring the homoerotic more explicitly into play through inter-racial doubling are Charles Cullen's "Tableau" (1927) and Robert Mapplethorpe's "Ken Moody and Robert Sherman" (1984), for the male profiles seem not really like two versions of one self so much as like two lovers in an intimate coupling (Figs. 1.22 and 23).

The visual emphasis on sameness—in positioning, in gender—infuses the racial contrasts here with a tantalizing tension so that blackness and whiteness perform the function of (hetero)sexualizing the couple. Its campy stars and rising sun, its swooning white man fondled and framed by his black partner, make Cullen's draw-
characterized by the presence . . . [of] the Negro who slumbers in every white man” (187), the models’ bald skulls make them seem universal, representative of a splitting in the psyche, for the open-eyed white man appears like a protector of his more vulnerable, sleeping black companion.

Less erotic but just as resistant to hierarchical valences are the curious postmodern totem poles next to the major highway that connects Bloomington, Indi-
ana, to the state capital: two limestone columns or pillars, riffs on Janiform emblems of racechange. Here racially marked faces—neither antithetical (positioned in opposite directions) nor parallel (looking in the same direction)—peer at each other. Jean-Paul Darriau’s sculpture Red, Blond, Black, and Olive (1980) displays Native American, Caucasian, African, and Asian profiles, each head (of course) sharing the same beige-gray colors of the stone quarried in this region of the country, each here absorbed in an act of attention toward the other (Fig. 1.24). “The proximity of the Other is the face’s meaning,” the ethical philosopher Levinas has rather mysteriously mused. Attempting to capture the defenseless vulnerability and exposure of the face, Darriau’s sculpture seems to illuminate Levinas’s point: “The face before me summons me, calls for me, begs for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced by the Other, pure otherness, separated, in some way, from any whole, were my business” (82, 83).

The racechanges to be examined in this book do make commercially profitable business out of the Other, but they can also make the Other the ethical business of whites. At their most clarifying, racial masquerades illuminate manifold factors within the psyche and the society that converge to construct Otherness, powerful forces which, as Ursula Le Guin has observed, fatally conspire to impoverish our moral being:

If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself—as men have done to women, and class has done to class, and nation has done to nation—you may hate it, or defy it; but in either case you have denied its spiritual equality, and its human reality. You have made it into a thing, to which the only possible relationship is a power relationship. And thus you have fatally impoverished your own reality. You have, in fact, alienated yourself. (99)

Yet the odd paradox of this study consists of the puzzling (even disquieting) inconsistency that exactly what has depleted and challenged our ethical integrity has enriched our cultural inheritance. Just as paradoxically, we shall see that claims of sameness can be quite as destructive as those of difference. To revise Le Guin, “if you [affirm an] affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly [the same as] yourself,” you may also have “denied its spiritual equality, and its human reality.” The pages that follow testify to the dialectical collisions and collisions between morality and Western megalomania played out in the arena of racial metamorphosis.42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>SPIRIT-MURDER AT THE MOVIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackface Lynching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved.

The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lie in the fact that somewhere he has killed man.

—Frantz Fanon

The return of the dead is a sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite, in the process of symbolization; the dead return as collectors of some unpaid symbolic debt.

—Slavoj Žižek

A still from Irving Berlin’s Holiday Inn (1942) encapsulates the point of this chapter, even as it provides a reminder of the longevity of blackface as America’s favorite form of racechange (Fig. 2.1). Wearing burnt cork, Crosby here dances the part of (a now “African-American”) President Lincoln with his companion appearing as a parodic piccaninny complete with cornrows, pinafore, and pantaloons. As is often the case late in its history, the use of blackface has presumably only been justified by the need for a disguise: In an earlier scene, a jealous possessive Crosby broke out the “bootblack” so as to hide his attractive dancing partner from his rival, Fred Astaire. But as also often happens, an excess of meaning attends the assumption of burnt cork, in this instance after the blond-haired dancer bemoans the make-up as a “punishment” visited upon her for dreaming about “how pretty” she would look at the Inn on the occasion of Lincoln’s birthday. Not at all a mimaically realistic disguise, her racechange contrasts black skin with white wig to make her look like a singular anomaly.

Shades of the prisonhouse of American history close upon the subsequent production number (which is supposed to parallel Fred Astaire’s firecracker hoofing on the Fourth of July in the same movie). For Crosby’s part-plantation minstrel, part-Lincoln struts a dance of emancipation to celebrate the liberation presumably effected by the Civil War. But the very assertion of black freedom supposedly in-
NOTES

Epigraph Page: Du Bois, Souls of Black Folk, vii; Genet, Blacks, 3; Baldwin, Notes of a Native Son, 150; Morrison, Playing in the Dark, 38; Fuss, Identification Papers, 164.

Chapter 1. Adventures in the Skin Trade

Epigraphs: Washington, 100; Fanon, 110.

1. I am not making an argument about racial equality in ancient Tarquinia, although Frank M. Snowden, Jr., views the image of blacks in the ancient world as “highly favorable,” claiming that “white-black relationships differ[ed] markedly from those that have developed in more color-conscious societies” (vii).

2. On the history of race defined as a binary, see Jordan, White over Black, and JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory.”

3. See Donna Haraway’s meditation on “category confusion” and the way in which it has affected racial taxonomies in American history.

4. A recent article on “Mixed Blood” in the popular magazine Psychology Today, for example, explains that “our categories for the racial classification of people arbitrarily include certain dimensions (light versus dark skin) and exclude others (rounded versus elongated bodies). There is no biological basis for classifying race according to skin color instead of body form— or according to any other variable, for that matter. ... race is a myth” (Jefferson M. Fish, Nov./Dec. 1995: 57).

5. Two portraits of André Breton that Man Ray shot in the thirties testify to his continued interest in racechange and sexchange: Breton as his own negative image and Breton as a cross between a nun and an aviator. Man Ray also produced a number of pictures of white faces peering through black netting or abstract white forms striated with black shadows. See Man Ray, Man Ray: Photographs, 65, 114, 161.

6. To be sure, minstrelsy and its offshoot, blackface in the movies, have received quite a bit of attention, mostly from American historians; however, literary critics have tended to confine their investigations into cross-racial masquerade to African-American passing characters.

7. According to James Weldon Johnson in The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man, “it cannot be so embarrassing for a coloured man to be taken for white as for a white man to be taken for coloured; and I have heard of several cases of the latter kind” (172–73).
8. Victor Burgin explains that when the color white as "the sum totality of light" is contrasted with black as "the total absence of light," "elementary optical physics is recruited to the psychic metaphysics of racism in which white is 'all' to black's 'nothing'" (70).

9. F. James Davis argues that, though the Plessy case is no longer law, "the nation's legal definition of who is black remains unchanged" since that time: Who Is Black?, 9.

10. I have profited from Walter Benn Michaels's analysis of the transformation of race into an identity and a culture at the beginning of the twentieth century in Our America, 122.

11. I am indebted to Christine Froula's speculations on this image.

12. In "Has Science Conquered the Color Line," White quotes this passage (written three years earlier) but now explains that "science is near making such a dream a reality" through monobenzyl ether of hydroquinone, which dermatologists have used to clear up discolorations of the skin.

13. Joyce Carol Oates exploits this same sort of technique throughout her play "Negative" (1991) in which "racial stereotypes are reversed, as in a photograph negative" (60).


15. Curiously, Hughes's satire turns into a series of sexual jokes when Mammy's male companion asks Audette for "some of that fine white bread" and then settles for pancakes with "jelly" on his.

16. Mary Ann Doane discusses this paradoxical scene in which Sarah Jane "assumes the expectations about blackness which are imposed upon her. She becomes the representation of blackness which is implicitly contrasted with her passing" (237). More specifically, a white actress playing a mulatto passer speaks the black talk she identifies with precisely the African-American culture this character seeks to disavow.

17. Hemenway points out that "The idea was not to fool black folks—who must have been amused by the strange sight—but to present a uniform color to white passersby" (211).

18. Recent evidence of ongoing concern about the iconography of Christianity appears in James McBride's The Color of Water (1996) where a Jewish mother tells her black son that God's spirit "doesn't have a color ... God is the color of water" and where later another son protests against pictures of a white Jesus: "If they put Jesus in this picture here, and He ain't white, and He ain't black, they should make him gray. Jesus should be gray" (39, 41).

19. According to the late Senegalese writer Cheikh Anta Diop, European culture derives from Egypt and Egypt is African. Euclid and Cleopatra were black; the pyramid, hieroglyphics, the cult of the sun king were all the achievements of black Africa. Such theorists clearly were reacting against the view of, say, Arnold Toynbee in A Study of History who claimed that the only one of the races which did not make a creative contribution to civilization was the black race.

20. Perhaps because the black singers are so passionately reminiscent of their operatic prototypes in the film version of Carmen Jones, their dictum—when it falls into stereotypical "dis and dat"—seems not simply ludicrous but demeaning.

21. See Walter Benn Michaels's discussion of Piper's essay in which he asks about her definition of being black as being identified by a white racist society as black: "On what grounds, then, can someone who is not identified by that society as black be said to be black?" (Our America, 133).

22. Omi and Winant argue that the concept of race cannot be reduced to an essence but that it also cannot be imagined as a mere illusion. In other words, even if there is nothing fixed or objective or biological about race, it still plays a crucial role in structuring the social world.

23. According to Russell E. Coon, Chicago's Field Museum reopened its permanent Egyptian exhibits in 1988, including an interactive display labeled "See Yourself as an Ancient Egyptian." "Peering into a semi-reflective glass case, viewers confronted their own countenances, Egyptianized by the superimposition of a curly black wig and 'Egyptian' make-up" (11).

24. While Rebirth of a Nation, Computer-Style appears to revel in the "morphies" created out of a "straight 50-50 combination of the physical characteristics of their progenitors," it is interesting that the editors explain, "One of our tentative unions produced a distinctly feminine face—sitting atop a muscular neck and hairy chest." Clearly disturbed by the hermaphroditism of this image, they conclude, "Back to the mouse on that one."

25. Gail Ching-Liang Low describes the phenomenon of cultural cross-dressing from Sir Richard Burton to the Lawrence of Arabia legend in these terms which are borrowed from Robert Stoller's treatment of transvestism (where the cross-dresser relishes his awareness of his hidden maleness and thus plays at being a woman with the phallic) (96-97).

26. It is interesting that Orlando (1928), Woolf's novel about sex change, depicts its hero becoming a heroine when she has joined with the gypsies, thus undergoing a race change as well.

27. The artist Adrian Piper presented herself in whiteface with a penciled mustache as "white man" in Some Reflective Surfaces, first performed in 1975. See Adrian Piper on "Passing for White, Passing for Black" (241) as well as Amelia Jones.

28. According to Rolling Stone magazine (March 10, 1994), John Mellencamp's video "When Jesus Left Birmingham" is the first from which MTV has censored faces. Mellencamp was asked to put computer-scrambled squares over parts of the video where guitarist David Grissom appears in blackface and backing vocalist Roberta Freeman appears in whiteface (18).

29. Ashley Tsey, in her dissertation-in-progress, puts it this way: "The white, in Fanon's view, does not have to 'be' anything for the black. The white man, is, in fact, unable to see the black man. This observation, however, does not discredit the fact that the white's identity is affected by that which he cannot identify/see. . . . [T]he white does define himself in relation to the black—even though he does not or cannot or refuses to 'see' the black. We must recognize, in other words, what the white does not: that is, that he (the white) not only projects his own anxieties, fears, and doubts onto the black but also that he introjects, figuratively speaking, the racial other" (Chapter 2, 51).

30. As Anne McClintock explains, "different forms of mimicry such as passing and cross-dressing deploy ambiguity in different ways," and she goes on to caution that "critical distinctions are lost if these historically variant cultural practices are collapsed under the ahistorical sign of the same" (65).

31. Until the historical and critical work of such thinkers as Robert Toll, Eric Lott, Michael Rogin, and Toni Morrison, white impersonations of blackness have gone largely ignored by American cultural historians because of morally important taboos that censure such spectacles and that also (though less reasonably) discourage analysis of them.

32. See Guillain, 37-67. She demonstrates "how belief in the physical existence of race is really an archetypal attitude of pseudo-materialism" (37). In addition, Anthony Appiah in "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race" explains that race is a fiction with no empirical or scientific basis.

33. Eve Sedgwick's analysis of the arbitrariness of gender binaries in Legacies makes a similar point.
34. See Paul Gilroy’s somewhat sardonic discussion of theorists who tout “the effluent from a constituted subjectivity that emerges contingently from the endless play of racial signification” (36).

35. For a discussion of the social construction of race that explains how obdurate that construction remains in contemporary America, see Guillaumin, “The Idea of Race,” and Wiegman, Chapter 1. In Essentially Speaking, Diana Fuss includes a chapter that describes what is at stake in the argument over de-essentializing race for such critics as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Houston Baker, and Barbara Christian (73–96). Fuss’s last chapter of Identification Papers furnishes an excellent meditation on the implications of Fanon’s racial analyses for the critic also interested in gender.

36. According to Omi and Winant, too, one should “avoid both the utopian framework which sees race as an illusion we can somehow ‘get beyond,’” and also the essentialist formulation which sees race as something objective and fixed, a “biological datum” (55). They argue that race must be understood as a “complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (55).

37. Although I do not want to fall into the fallacy of “chromatism,” the term Gayatri Spivak uses to describe the problem of reducing race to the question of visible difference in skin color (235), twentieth-century narratives about skin color uncover the evolution of the meaning of the term “race.”

38. See Susan Willis, who defines blackface as “a metaphor for the commodity” (189), and Homi Bhabha, who views the “racial stereotype of colonial discourse in terms of fetishism” (74).

39. In other words, this study accords with Eric Sundquist’s belief that, although the black and white traditions in literature have been and can continue to be seen as separate, ultimately “they form a single tradition” (22). So-called “American culture” has become so embedded within and saturated by conventions generated by its black citizens that one may foresee a future in which it will be indistinguishable from “African-American culture.” To be sure, black culture may always derive ways of differentiating itself from the white mainstream. And, of course, there are ways that mainstream culture continues to define itself in exclusionary terms and along racial lines.

40. What was recently described “as the worst hoax in the history of Australian publishing” illuminates the ongoing centrality of this issue. Susan Dimenkon admitted that “her book The Hand That Signed the Paper, an account of the role of Ukrainians in atrocities against Jews during the Holocaust, was not based on her own family’s history, as she had long insisted in defending the book’s veracity.” Not Ukrainian at all, Helen Darville (the pseudonymous Dimenkon) was the child of well-educated British immigrants to Australia. (New York Times, Sept. 26, 1995).

41. Consider the lesbian critic who is not Jewish writing about Gertrude Stein or the black critic who is not Islamic writing about Malcolm X. To match the “subject position” of the critic with that of the artist would inevitably involve the infinite regress that a Der- ridean would identify with an “abyssal question.” Obviously, too, authors of narrative cannot possibly limit themselves to the creation of characters only reflective of their ethnic, class, or social background, even if they tried to. In other words, as I argue in the last chapter, crossover work remains inevitable.

42. I am revising Andrew Sarris’s famous observation that “the dramatic conflict in a Welles film often arises from the dialectical collision between morality and megalomania,” mindful that Wells demonstrated a fascination with racial imaginings in his efforts to produce a version of Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, in his production of a “Voodoo” Mac-