Artwork: "Black is Beautiful, But Why Does Raynail Have Blue Eyes?"

Gary Bibbs

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Dusk. I stare at my ghost in the window. Nothing apparent separates me from her; she is merely a creation of the vanishing light outside. She wasn't there a moment ago; when I looked up, I saw out the window, bare trees, dead leaves, my neighbor's fence. Now when I look up, I am somehow doubled. A boundary went up when I wasn't looking, a boundary that would not be visible to anyone else entering the room—he or she would only see me, whole and intact. But I don't exist there, only my reflection in the window. The questionnaire asks, "Among women, do you consider yourself an other?" Check yes or no (MS 45). My sarcastic self responds quickly, sneering, "No. I feel I am homogenized. Interconnected. Dreadfully interchangeable. Tits and cunt—what more do you want?" Why not ask instead, "Do you/can you ever find yourself among people who—for a moment—allow you to forget your otherness?" Ask, "When you see your reflection in the darkness of a window do you attempt to avoid the otherness between yourselves?" Again I look up from my desk to meet her gaze...she is always staring at me.

The questionnaire continues: "If so, how?" Here the choices offered are age, class, weight, sexual preference, disabilities, national origin, and religion (Jewish, Muslim, or other). Pick one. Again my sarcastic self is the first to react, questioning the point at which all these relativities become stabilized. Glancing at the rest of The MS. magazine survey, "Race and Women," it does seem to be concerned with the problematics of assuming some female "norm" by which everyone else may define themselves. Stumbling on these first two questions, however, I find myself wondering about the assumptions MS. has made in constructing its framework for discovery. Does the magazine want to know how many women regularly place themselves in positions of otherness relative to other women? Perhaps. But it would seem from the second question of the survey that some kind of base-line identity has already been assumed from which Others may draw their terms. As if such issues aren't obfuscated enough, my purpose here is to add to the veils of language and sight that shroud this idea of defining otherness. Of course here I must nod to my male reader—the most painfully obvious of all others. MS. and I may operate within a phallic economy that binds us even in our thoughts, but this essay isn't directly con-