

McKenzie Wark
**Reality Cabaret:
On Juliana
Huxtable**

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It was such a great moment that I barely remember it. Juliana Huxtable played us through to dawn at the itinerant queer techno rave party known as *unter*. Images of Jessie's blond hair floating through the fog, of Yaya's painted nails gripping her fan. I texted them to ask that they remember it for me. Yaya: "We worked hard, like Chinese hand fans. It was queer euphoria, Planet Huxtable and we had landed." Jessie: "It was a really astonishing fusion that never felt like genre mashing or jumping, just raw intensity of speech and propulsion."

Juliana and I only hung out once. I don't know her. I want to write about her on a first-name basis, but I don't want that read as either familiar or diminishing. Quite the opposite. There's power in routing around the patronymic, even that of an adoptive screen dad. Rawness, intensity, and propulsion on a planet where day and night change places, where none of us know our names.

After *unter*, I started coming to her shows, and listening to her dj mixes on Soundcloud.¹ The vocal samples that hook me (versus those that don't) clock me relative to Juliana at different velocities in history and geography: "Playgirl" by Ladytron, "Boys Wanna Be Her" by Peaches, "Pigeon Man" by Jamilla Woods, "Sleeper in Metropolis" by Anne Clark, and "Spleen" by Charles Baudelaire. Moments in a social graph where our playlists intersect. #okboomer: that her hip-hop samples don't resonate situates me as middle-aged, middle-class, white, antipodean, and – ever since I cracked my egg – trans.

I'm picturing Juliana as I saw her at another *unter*: standing in the night, in the chillout yard, looking out over the heads of the crowd that parts and flows around. She is in the flow, always, but cutting it off, shaping it, seeing it while being seen. A singular point in the torrent of signed and signed-off bodies, an instance of how to be a 21c artist. I said hello but she doesn't register. I don't stand out in this crowd; she has no option not to.

One time I was hanging with my friend Jackie and I read aloud the title piece to Juliana's book *Mucus in My Pineal Gland* while Jackie improvised on piano.² And there it was again, astonishment, fusion, propulsion. *Mucus in My Pineal Gland* is, among other things, a kind of aberrant black, queer, trans autobiography, but one where the larval Juliana is legible only as refracted, or not, through mediating surfaces. COLORING IN COLORING BOOKS, DISNEY PRINCESSES WITH CRAYON BROWN FACES AND CRAYON BLACK COIFS, AS IF THEY HAD RELAXERS IN WHATEVER PARALLEL TIME THEY WERE "IN."³ Agency in a world of presets. It's writing that's also a theory of its own aesthetic

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methods. I want to write with this writing, rather than about it. Think of this as a remix. Everything in ALL-CAPS is from Juliana.

I ALWAYS PICKED THE GIRLS WHEN I PLAYED VIDEO GAMES. IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAT OUT OF SHEER SPITE AT THE EASE OF IDENTIFICATION THE BOYS AROUND ME HAD WITH THEIR UNINTERESTINGLY PHALLIC/KAMEHAMEHA SUPER-HEROES ... I WENT TO EVERY LAN PARTY IN HOPES I COULD WITNESS THEM LOSE BATTLE AFTER BATTLE TO HYPERBOLIC DEPICTIONS OF THE SAME FIGURES THEY WOULD LATER JERK OFF TO ... THE SAME IMAGINARY CUNTS AND PHANTASTICAL PUSSIES THAT WOULD (AND STILL DO) TEMPT THEM TO TOUCH AND CONQUER THE VITAMIN ENRICHED TUNA OF MY BODY.⁴

The boys want to be her; the girls want to be her. I imagine a work like *Untitled (Lil' Marvel)* from 2017 as embodying that fantastical pussy, slicked onto the skin and into an image. Braids fly, the hands summon some magical power, while the figure stands, probably on her own planet, against a night sky of the chaos of stars. To be in the place that is the attractor of attention, a lot of which you don't want, and turn it back into the world, but not quite from the

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place expected.

Let's rewind. The possibilities for Juliana to become Juliana emerge, among other things, out of a particular moment in the evolution of media technics. One in which the internet vectored through the space of the domestic and turned it inside out. It's the witching hours. Bodies as lonesome as the blackened ocean of night reach out through the wires for other information. I DISCOVERED NIGHT AS A PLACE OF REMOVE ... HOUSEHOLD SOUNDS HOPEFULLY DISTRACTING ANY ROLLING SLEEPER WHO MIGHT HEAR THE GUST OF A DELL PC EXHAUST FAN UPON STARTUP.⁵ Night as remove from the familiar and familial, where bodies are what they are, but their desires are opaque. Night as glowing with glints and murmurs of what bodies aren't but are motivated to want: a *Nuwaubian Princess*, for instance, as in a 2013 piece. A fuck-off stare from two Julianas, bodies rippling as sand ripples, some serene alien night.

The codes of race, of gender, of sex, so seemingly immutable in daylight, in the IRL world, flip over into something else, at night, through the wires. PORN NEVER REALLY APPEALED TO ME (I WAS RAISED A FEMINIST AND ANTI-RACIST) BUT WHAT I SAW WAS AN INVITATION TO AN INTIMACY I QUESTIONED BUT



Instagram flyer for *Unter x Discwoman* 18th May 2018, designed by Ryan Davis, based on a classic British rave poster by Tim 'The Thrill of Zilch' Ryan.

HONESTLY COULDN'T DECLINE – A CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE VERTIGO I FELT WHEN I FIRST SAW PHOTOS OF LYNCHINGS.⁶ Daylight is a phantasm of the real; by nightlight here comes the real of the phantasm. In the light of day, a reminder of the night, like in *History (Period Piece)* from 2013: Juliana confronts the gaze, the flags of two empires reduced to decorating a hairstyle, a colonial scene in the background. The colonial and pornographic gazes seem like night and day but are maybe related, just in different degrees of privacy and privation.

The internet mediates the images which might mediate a turn to a fugitive life, at night.⁷ I WAS ALWAYS TURNED ON BY PRIVACY. LIKE MANY, I EXPLORED MY ADOLESCENT SEXUAL CURIOSITY IN AIM CHAT ROOMS, CAT-FISHING FOR THE REPRESSED BABY-BOOMERS WHO NEVER ENJOYED SUCH A LUXURY IN THEIR OWN YOUTH.⁸ The dynamism of the forces of production burst through the backyard stasis pooling in postwar suburbia. THERE ARE SO MANY SKELETAL REMAINS IN LOCKED XANGAS, LIVEJOURNAL, AND MYSPACE ACCOUNTS. THE FINAL FRONTIER OF THE OLD TRIBES AND THEOLOGIES.⁹

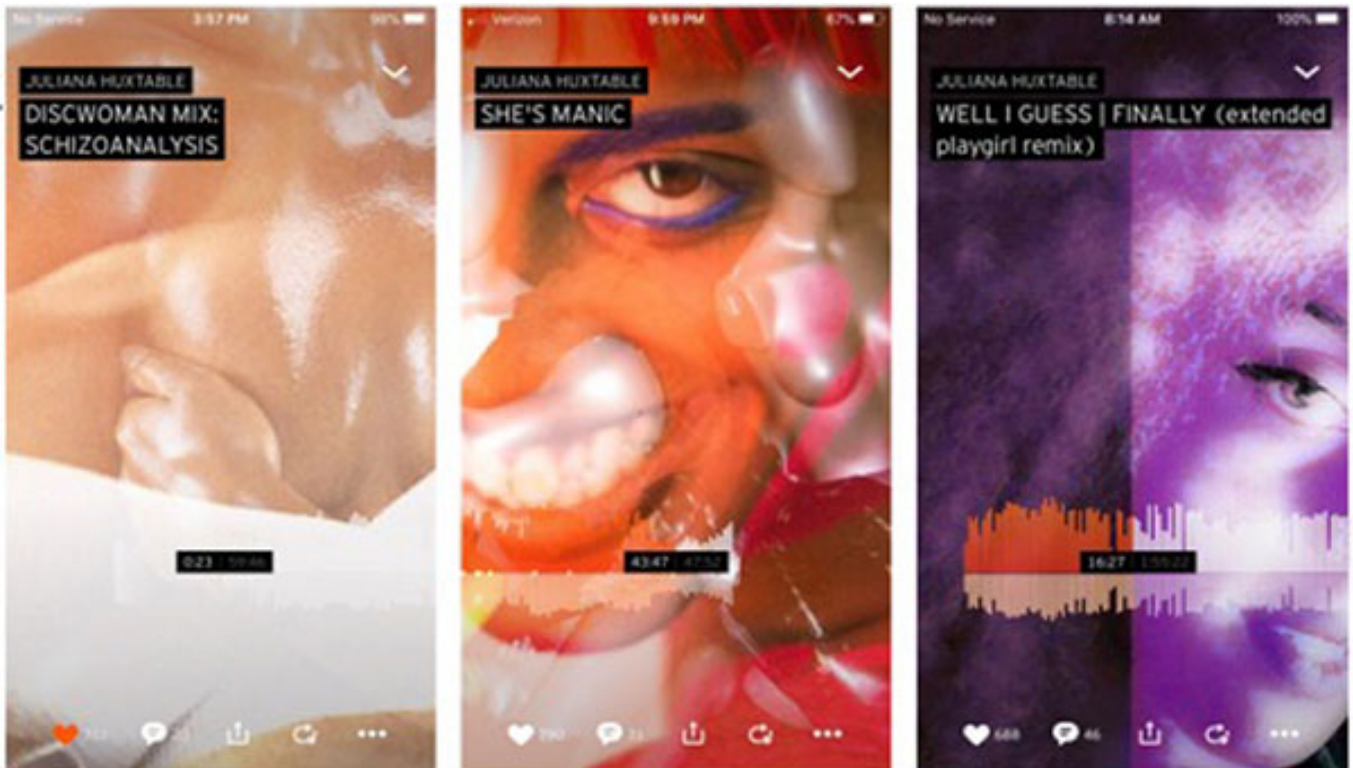
What seems bound by property and privacy in daylight harbors covert vectors of the night. LIVE FEEDS OF MYSELF TO 600 MATURBATING MEN IN BUSH'S AMERICA. CONNECTING WITH

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THE 35-YEAR OLD "PEDOPHILE" ... IT WAS 4AM AND I'D SNUCK OUT OF THE HOUSE TO MEET HIM. IN SO MANY WAYS, IT WAS THE MOST "NATURAL" WAY FOR SOMEONE LIKE ME TO DISCOVER THEIR SEXUALITY.¹⁰ Sleep your way out of your hometown.

The discovery of any sexuality is always mediated. Maybe the discovery of one's sex is too. Maybe technics is a third gender that distributes bodies into the other two (or not). The transsexual body isn't unique in relation to the third gender of technics, but it highlights the role of that technics for all bodies, of any sex or gender. The transsexual body is nowhere more legible than in porn, where at least our bodies exist, are wanted, fuckable, even have agency. Okay so maybe it's not great "representation," but it's better than what we get in most movie matinées.

In the daylight hours, the fever dreams of transphobes become a panic ideology in which we are the secret agents for some phantasmal empire.¹¹ The 2017 piece *Transsexual Empire* is mounted like a poster on metal, surrounded by fridge magnets, the everyday vernacular of slogans and logos we mistake for our own thoughts. EVERY 18–32 YEAR OLD IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD NOW KNOWS THE TRUTH OF THE TRANSEXUAL EMPIRE ARMING PSEUDO-WOMEN WITH VAGINAS IN SERVICE OF THE



Screenshots of the author's favorite Juliana Huxtable mixes on Soundcloud.



Juliana Huxtable, *Lil' Marvel*, 2015. Color inkjet print, 40 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist and JTT, New York.

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Juliana Huxtable, *Untitled (Anachronism)*, 2013. Color inkjet print. 10.50 x 15.75 inches. Courtesy of the artist and JTT, New York.



Juliana Huxtable, *Transsexual Empire*, 2017. Inkjet print, vinyl, magnets on metal sheet. 96 x 48 in. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine art, NY/LA.



Juliana Huxtable, *Herculine's Prophecy*, 2017. Inkjet print, vinyl, magnets on metal sheet. 96 x 48 in. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine art, NY/LA.



Juliana Huxtable, *The Feminist Scam*, 2017. Inkjet print, vinyl, magnets on metal sheet. 96 x 48 in. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine art, NY/LA.



Juliana Huxtable, *S.H.A.R.P.*, 2018. Oil, acrylic, fabric, handmade buttons, metal grommets and inkjet print on canvas, 35 7/8 x 31 1/2 x 1 1/8 in. Courtesy of the artist and Project Native Informant, London.

CURIOUS MEN BAITED AND PUBLICLY BROUGHT TO JUSTICE ON *TO CATCH A PREDATOR*.¹²

The trans-image mostly exists to comfort the cis by figuring the limit case of what the cis body is not. The cis gaze reads the trans body through a grid marked by a lust-disgust axis and a pity-envy axis. Pity and disgust are the public, daytime cis gaze; envy and lust are their private, nighttime doubles. And so: WE'VE BEEN EXPORTED AS SYMBOLS ENUNCIATED IN THE REFLECTION BETWEEN THE TRENCHES OF PORNHUB AND THE PATHETIC, DESPERATE TREMBLE OF [ANOJNI] AS SHE SANG "YOU ARE MY SISTER."¹³ Where Pornhub is the private, nighttime lust-attractor and "You Are My Sister," for the cis gaze, attracts a more respectable cis attention, whose affect is pity.

The trans-image is a hard thing to free from this infertile matrix. We trans-es shape ourselves by selecting from presets made in different – and conflicting – discourses, to make the real of the phantasm over into a body-image for the phantasm of the real. This real of nocturnal transmissions is a hard one to live out in the fantastic day that imagines it is all that exists, in which we're wandering spirits with no country, and always trailing into daylight the attention the cis gaze would rather lavish while itself out of sight.

Nocturnal transmissions: the secret history of America might be encoded in the dark. AND WHERE ARE THE LOVERS? PRESUMABLY NOWHERE. LEFT IN PRIVATE ARGUMENTS WITH PARTNERS OVER UNEARTHED SHEMALE PORN, DELETED EMAILS FROM ANONYMOUS ACCOUNTS ON HOOKUP SITES THAT A FEW DATABASE ENGINEERS AT THE NSA COULD PLAUSIBLY DISCOVER.¹⁴ The private gaze has an uncanny habit of becoming overexposed.

Herculine's Prophecy (2017) name-checks Herculine Barbin, an intersex memoirist made famous by Foucault.¹⁵ Herculine's sensual diary, particularly its early pages of resonant non-genital pleasures, foreshadows this proliferating and often inadvertent documenting of the twilight of the sex-and-gender regime, one where clinical categories such as "intersex" or the older "hermaphrodite," with their obsession with classifying everyone's bits, don't necessarily have purchase. Neither do categories of "transsexual" and "transgender." Increasingly aggressive practices, institutional as well as memetic, try to shine a bright-enough light to keep the categories clear, but the insomnia of reason breeds monsters.¹⁶ Transsexual and intersex bodies have to be fixed, by medicine or law, to one category or another. If allowed to propagate or differentiate – then these limit cases might no longer function to secure the cis body as unproblematic given.

Which came first, the transsexual or the egg? There are positive feedback loops between the form of images and the form of bodies, where the form of one is the content of the other. MAYBE WHEN I GET MY SURGERY, ASSUMING THAT I DO AT SOME POINT, I WILL FINALLY FEEL LIKE THE WOMAN I AM INSIDE BY POSTING PHOTOS OF THE \$32,000 PUSSY GOD GAVE A TALENTED SURGEON IN THAILAND THE ABILITY TO SCULPT FROM A SCARRED BODY DISTORTED BY YEARS OF DYSPHORIA. IN REALITY, THE PHOTOS WOULD BE NO MORE A TESTAMENT TO THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER THAN TO THE IMPLOSION OF THE LINK BETWEEN TEMPORALITY, USER-NAME-IN-PHOTO, AND TRUTH.¹⁷ The old night/day, private/public, lust/disgust matrices no longer hold the body in a grid of observation. The images flood and eddy and pool. Without the lure of rarity the image lacks the power to charge desire.

Digital image culture, that anime monster, fed by nocturnal vectors, blindsided by its own fetishistic love/hate matrices of gender, sex, and race, balloons out to swallow us. IT'S A DISGUSTING HYPERTROPHY THAT'S KILLED MY CURIOSITY, SEXUAL DRIVE AND DESIRE FOR SEX REASSIGNMENT IN ONE BLOW.¹⁸ It short-circuits lack and desire, but maybe also bursting like an overripe fruity pustule out of the symbolic order. In *The Feminist Scam* (2017), we see panic-signs from, in this case, a black masculinist vertigo about the power of women and queers. The codes mutate and replicate into any and every combination, some more viral than others, but all of them out there in the night for the dedicated wanderer through obscure websites, reddit, podcasts, streams.

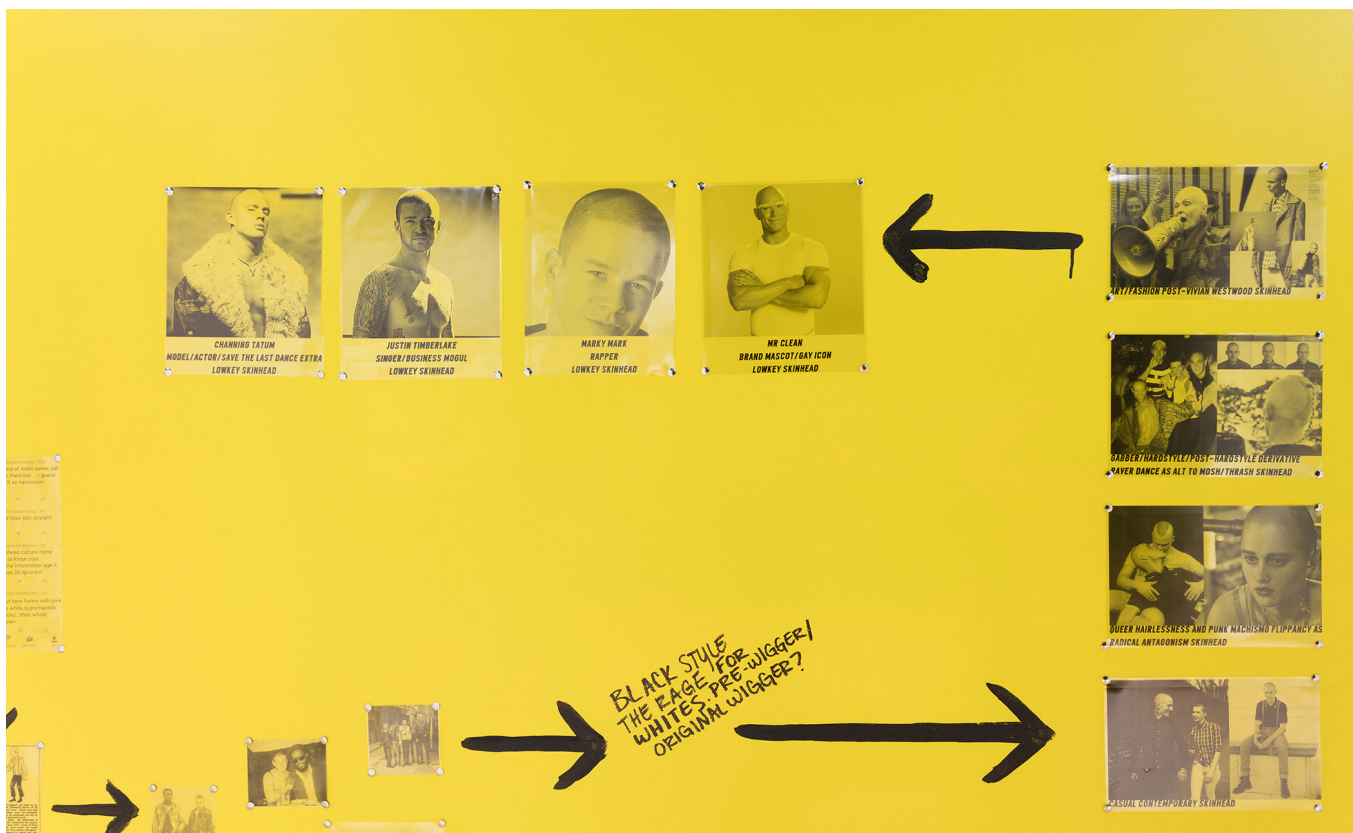
Positive feedback loopdy-loop between body and sign, mediated by the internet vector, drives bodies to seek IRL worlds that might replicate their teeming phantasmagoria. Perhaps the night of the net could be doubled by the night of the street. And so, Juliana takes the Yellow Brick Road to New York City. THE SPACES I GREW UP WANTING TO INHABIT WERE DIGITAL – SIMS CLUBS, LABYRINTH AND UNDERWATER WORLDS IN 3D FISHTANK SCREEN SAVERS, PLAY-PLACE STRUCTURES IN FLASH ANIMATED SITES WHOSE CONTENTS TOOK UP TO TWENTY MINUTES TO LOAD ... THE VISUAL, SONIC AND SCULPTURAL POTENTIALS OF A SPACE WERE ALL IN SPITE OF THE CORPORATE EARMARKINGS OF THE REAL (IRL) SPACES AROUND ME AND NOW THE SAME IS TRUE OF BOTH.¹⁹

For a hot minute, the night of the real could be lived on net and street, but the commodity form caught up with information and mutated to consume it, and all our bodies with it. The fuck-off stare in the 2015 image *Untitled (Psychosocial Stuntin')* may be returning the viewer's gaze-

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Juliana Huxtable, *Untitled (Wall)*, 2017. Detail view. Paint and images printed on vellum. Dimensions vary. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine art, NY/LA.

filters at dawn or at dusk, either way the psychosocial power comes from access to codes you don't have, and even if you could access them, by then, they wouldn't work.

It's an open question whether the city is still a space of promise in an information economy in which to live as a bohemian in the city is to live in a terrarium and have one's cultural organs harvested for branded real estate.²⁰ In this mode of production, the rave is less a utopia to come, more a legacy refuge. WHEN I FIRST MOVED TO NEW YORK IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYONE HAD GIVEN UP ON THE ENDEAVOR ALTOGETHER, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE NIGHT. YET EVEN HERE, THE FLYER WAS THE AESTHETIC PRE-LOADED WITH REFERENCES, COORDINATES FOR GOOGLE SEARCHES AND HASHTAGS. BUT THE EDIFICES WERE BARREN, EPHEMERAL, A LASER AND FOG MACHINE.²¹

Works like *Corporeal Anarchy* (2017) and *S.H.A.R.P.* (2019) extract from the detritus of night some swatches of ornament, peeled from bodies or bathroom walls. Archaeological evidence of this civilization, such as it is, that will never be on display in a millennium from now that may not even be there to archive us. The work of the work of art is not now for posterity.

Roaming about New York City, a *dérive*

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constrained by race- and gender-coded surveillance and policing, is an MFA in itself.²² OVER-DISTRIBUTED OBJECTS OF CONSUMPTION, SATURATING THE LIQUIDATED MARKETS OF FACTORY PRODUCED HOUSEHOLD ORNAMENTS. SIMULTANEOUSLY SUPPORTING THE FOUNDATION'S ENTERPRISE AND TEACHING ME FUNDAMENTALS OF A VISUAL LANGUAGE, CASTRATED OF ITS GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE IN THIS FORM.²³ No more syntax as daddy – even if he comes back, again and again, now in unambiguously monstrous form, precisely because he's no stand-in for the big other anymore. Meanwhile, even in daylight, information as commodity now affixes itself like a hormone patch to any warm impulse.

The bursting out of order of signs as flows rather than forms is a liberation from residual dumb hierarchies but in favor of other, dumber ones. *Untitled (Wall)* from 2017 tracks just one potential thread of memetic stupidity spooling out of the conflicted matrix of the white gaze. It's cold comfort that the signs of racial authenticity are always taken from someone else. REPRODUCTIONS FLATTENED THE TEXTURES LEFT IN THE TRIALS OF BRUSH STROKES AND MERGED THE MOST BENEVOLENT SYMBOLS IN THIS LEXICON TO THE MOST IMMEDIATE “ON



Juliana Huxtable, *Invisible Chattel*, 2017. Inkjet print, vinyl, magnets on metal sheet. 243.84 x 121.92 cm/96 x 48 in. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine art, NY/LA.



Juliana Huxtable, *Blue Jeans*, 2017. C-type print, 24 3/8 x 16 1/8 in. Courtesy of the artist and Project Native Informant, London.



Juliana Huxtable, *Untitled (HM2)*, 2016. Oil, acrylic, inkjet print on canvas and mylar, 40 x 30 in. Courtesy of the artist and Project Native Informant, London.



Juliana Huxtable, *Untitled*, 2019. 12 color archival ink print on linen, collage and homemade badges in artist frame, 54 x 42 1/8 x 2 3/8 in. Courtesy of the artist and Project Native Informant, London.

SALE” MONSTERS OF THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER.²⁴ Gone the hand of the author, the authority, the authentic, which separates the real object of desire from its panting fans. That part is clear as day.

Desire no longer negates the object it lacks. Want gorges on the images that flood it. The trick is to picture how this works without reanimating negativity by positing the loss of negativity in general as the condition of thinking the present.²⁵ If there’s only an aesthetics of affirming the plurality of proliferating wants, how to make the right fusion within the glut? The *War on Proof* – as a 2017 work names it – is a tricky business when you want neither to affirm several sediments of sentimental hogwash about various empires nor propagate the mental herpes that were its idiot cultural givens.

Maybe it’s about standing in the flow, not where it’s a stagnant pool or a cascading blast, but where it eddies and still trickles. Maybe that stillness is actually propulsion if we think again about what moves relative to what. Maybe there are still times and places that, while not free, at least enable certain bodies and signs a little breathing room. Maybe certain bodies need that more than others, and hence find their way. EVERYTIME MY HAIR IS TOO UNKEMPT, I MIS-SPEAK, MISPRONOUNCE A WORD IN WHITE SPACES, SO MANY MIRRORS ARE HELD UP TO, THROWN AT MY FACE. RACIAL DIVIDES AND PROHIBITIONS PERSIST IN AN EROTIC DEMILITARIZED ZONE.²⁶

One might as well live in a phantasmal elsewhere, as in *Untitled in the Rage (Nibiru Cataclysm)* from 2015, which gives us a human figure in otherworldly greens and yellows. “Nibiru cataclysm” supposedly refers to ancient Sumerian astronomy about a mysterious Planet X that will collide or near-miss the Earth. The figure in this work seems to contemplate that possibility with equanimity.

Juliana wanders uptown: THERE IS STILL A PLACE WHERE BLACK UNICORNS RUN FREELY ... WHERE THE ONTOLOGICAL CHAINS OF THE ATLANTIC TRIANGLE REVERBERATE TO SHATTERING POINT IN PATTERNS, BEATS, RHYMES AND TECHNICOLOR INSISTENCES ON A NEW WORLD.²⁷ Decolonizing the third nature of the vector, like decolonizing the second nature of the empire, starts with acknowledging the leadership, political or aesthetic, of the colonized. The paranoid intuition of being an *Invisible Chattel* (2017) bears further investigation. The transubstantiation of the commodity form from the ownership of things to the ownership of information seems still to have plenty of ways of classifying and enslaving bodies, and much the same bodies.²⁸

Juliana still finds discrete niches folded into

the night. I’VE MET NEARLY EVERYONE I KNOW AT NIGHT. A TIME/PLACE AMONG THOSE WHO SIMULTANEOUSLY LIVED WITH AND IDOLIZED EACH OTHER WITHOUT MOURNING DECADES PAST. A PLAYGROUND OF CAREER AESTHETES, QUEENS (OF ALL VARIETY), CRITICALLY-INCLINED CURMUDGEONS-WHO-WRITE, INTERNET PERSONALITIES, AND ARTISTS WHOSE WORKS I ONLY SAW AS PROPS IF AT ALL – YOUNG AT HEART IF NOT IN SPITE OF YEARS ACCRUED.²⁹

Just speaking for myself and my friends: sometimes it’s only space tattooed by pounding beats pummeling my dysphoric body that make me feel incorporated in my own flesh. Even if you have to use your elbows to make elbow room. SUBWOOFERS SHOVED ME INTO A FLOATING AND BOUNDLESS MASS OF SHADE FROM SHITTY FAGGOTS, ANGRY BIDDIES, AND DISENFRANCHISED BROS.³⁰ Which is pretty much what Jessie, Katie, and I had to contend with dancing to Juliana at Basement – and we’re white girls.

Riffing on Hito Steyerl on Frantz Fanon: THE DEMOCRATIC NATURE OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC PRODUCTION AND ACCESSIBILITY ATTACKED THE WHITE-WASHED LEGACY OF MISSHAPES, PITCHFORK, AND RUFF CLUB WITH A BASS-DRIVEN SIEGE FROM THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH, BOTH ABROAD AND WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS.³¹ As came up in her dialog with Che Gossett, in nightlife was the possibility of existing, both as a black and a trans woman.³² There were precedents, there were openings. The economy of who and what has value differs from day to night. What is denied in the light is sought in the dark. Well, that’s problematic – but it’s a living, a life.

If you want to know how culture codes work, look not to the text, the piece, the file – but to the bodies to which they attach. The fridge magnet pieces could also be buttons, badges pinned through flesh. THE SUPERSTRUCTURES MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN, PRESENT IN microRNA – DISTILLED AND ELEMENTAL – IN ACTS OF FLESH – DANCING, FIGHTING, FUCKING – WE REWORK.³³ Bodies process ripples of signs, heat, light, noise – into meaty pulsations and propulsions. Sometimes it’s the best you can do to render yourself as useless animation, the body whipped along by its own propulsion but to no productive purpose.

What percentage of Uber rides are for hookups? The vector, rendered mobile by the cellphone, extends nighttime wanting all over the map. SHOUT OUT TO MY URBAN ANGELS SEARCHING FOR POST OR PRE-GENITAL DESIRE VIA GPS. LIKE SNOT, MUCUS, CUM, SHIT, SWEAT – THE UNITING ELEMENTS THAT FORM THE BASIS OF REALITY.³⁴ The leaky goo that smears

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Juliana Huxtable, *COW 1*, 2019. Inkjet mounted on Dibond, 39 3/4 x 26 1/2 in. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine art, NY/LA.



Juliana Huxtable, *BAT 3*, 2019. Inkjet mounted on Dibond. 29 3/4 x 44 3/4 in.

bodies out of themselves. MUCUS IN MY PINEAL GLAND: the pineal is the seat of the soul for Descartes, but in Bataille, is a monstrous eye-opening out of the top of the skull onto the blackness that negates the pure expenditure of the sun.³⁵ It's maybe something else again here. Its over-coded symbolic function congested after a good, hard fuck. There's a far more contemporary, less Catholic, more unselfconsciously ecstatic play at the edges of the visible here, at a far remove too from #edgelord wannabes.

The collapse of desire and lack into want and excess doesn't succeed in eroding the old codes, just in making them presets. THEY HAD DEVELOPED THE MOST ADVANCED SYSTEMS FOR MAPPING DESIRE KNOWN TO MAN (LITERALLY). THEY ALL SEEMED SATISFIED TO LIVE IN A WORLD OF TOPS/BOTTOMS, MASCS/FEMS DIVIDED INTO VARIOUS SIZE, SHAPE, HAIR LEVEL, AFFILIATIONS. IT WAS LESS A RESULT OF SEXUAL EXPLORATION THAN A MARKETPLACE THAT MIMICKED THE ARTIFICIAL VOLUTION OFFERED BY A SHOPPING MALL.³⁶ We're just beginning to think what we know we feel: that the commodification of want in the fast, hard, techno loop of information is a colonizing vector that ramifies through the sedimentary layers of past colonizations. In *Blue Jeans* (2017) it appears as if they are tattooed on a black person's back. Product of forced and sweated labor, returned as in Kafka's "The Penal Colony" as the punishment for being black while being.³⁷

The information vector troubles the old empire of day and night presets: cis straight girls wanna cruise; cis gay boys wanna marry. There are apps for both. But perhaps there's still some other way of honoring each other's mutable, sign-riddled bodies. STEADY SINGULAR LOVE OF MUTABILITY AND CONTINUAL SHAPE-SHIFTING à la THE CYBORG AS LOVER. A CONSTANT DECAY AND BIRTH, SOME PIECES ARE PERMANENT, OTHERS EPHEMERAL, DIMINISHING AGAINST THE HORIZON OF OPENNESS AS A PRE-EMPTIVE TO DIVORCE.³⁸

It's a #nodads world, where it might if anything at least not be a disadvantage not to have one, at least emotionally. Even if there's a downside to not inheriting his property when his #dadbod gives out. Instead, family by choice, although maybe it's not much of a choice, and not so much about choice as about labor, thought in terms of who does the work.³⁹ INFORMED AND FORMED BY COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF DENIED LABOR. THE LABOR OF SELF-CARE, THE LABOR OF LOVE, THE LABOR OF FAMILIAL CONTRIBUTION AND PARTICIPATION ... THE LABOR OF MEDIATION ... SISTERHOOD AND BROTHERHOOD AS MODELS OF LATERAL SOCIAL

AND FAMILIAL RELATIONS, SUPPLEMENT THE HIERARCHICAL NATURE OF PARENT/CHILD.⁴⁰ Maybe that's all we have: covens of care, and the work we do for each other outside of reproducing either commodity value or "family values." Even if these gestures too are recuperable as information and commodified.

Untitled (HM 2), from 2016: Whenever we gather, we're always already ghosting. Checking out to check phones. Bringing the real of the phantasmagoria into every conversation. I'VE TRIED ROMANTICIZING ACTUAL IRL CONVOS AS CONTRABAND, BUT I KNOW THAT'S A SILLY CONCEPT GIVEN THE CAPABILITIES OF SHAZAM SOFTWARE.⁴¹ Your friends have seen your outfit as an Insta bathroom selfie before you even make it to the club. ATOMIZATION HAS DESTROYED CONCEALMENT. WHAT DO WE GATHER AROUND? FOR WHAT PURPOSES? PICKING UP PIECES OF OUR NEED FOR CONTACT IN THE FACE OF ITS COLLAPSE.⁴² It's hard enough to be a body, let alone a coven of care, when there's a technics that gloms on, not to bodies or selves but to parts, both psychic and corporeal. NOT THAT US IS EVEN US AT THIS POINT AS OUR SEPARATIONS DISSOLVE WITH EVERY CAUSTIC "AGREE TO TERMS OF SERVICE."⁴³

Sometimes I think of the trans people I know as actually having one advantage against the torrent, despite the many and multiple disadvantages. We have to actually attend with intention to how images stick to us, how we process them through flesh. THE iMOBLE, EVER PRESENT SHARE-TUMBLE-TWEET-POST-REBLOG REGIME SEEMS TO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY KILLED THE FLESH OF IT ALL. THE BODY BEHIND THE IMAGE.⁴⁴ It might not be the worst thing to have to actively shape the flesh as well in order to live. An image like *TBT* (2019) hovers in the quadrant, a fluctuating attractor for lust-disgust and pity-envy. It all depends on where the viewer locates their own boundaries in the act of looking. In this case the image edges also towards that deeply troubled fever dream in which some bodies are not even human.

That which cannot be negated need not be affirmed. One might affirm instead that which threads through the raw intensity to another raw intensity, one that connects all those others that the panic mode of digital fascism would (and will) annihilate if it can. TO THE DEGREE THAT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN AS NOSEY AS I WAS CURIOUS, THE CULT OF PERSONALITY THAT BIRTHED AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM HAS TURNED ON A POPULATION IN WHICH WE ARE EACH OTHER'S PERSONALITIES. EACH OF US AN ICON IN OUR OWN RIGHT WITH LEGACIES AND MYTHOLOGIES – AND DIRTY MATERIAL – LINGERING IN BINARY

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CODES. I NOW FIND MYSELF FIGHTING AN INCESSANT NEED TO UNVEIL AND TO REVEAL THE FALLIBILITY OF THE INFALLIBLE POPULATION OF COWARDLY WITCH-HUNTERS.⁴⁵ Maybe better to be discreet about who even knows about our covens of care.

By day, they hate us; by night they desire us. A desire only kept afloat by the pretense of a prohibition, always honored in the breach and sans-breeches. The trans body as the last frontier of desire, suspended in a bubble of negativity fueled by prohibition. One of the few last unutterable desires, none of them pretty. THE AMERICAN DREAM THAT SUSTAINED THE FANTASY OF MOBILITY IS HAVING ITS OLD ACCOUNTS AND DRUNKEN TEXTS BROUGHT TO THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION. THE UNDERBELLY OF PRIVACY IT PROUDLY PROTECTED HAS EMERGED AS CRAIGSLIST, PORN, THE RIGHT TO KILL TRESPASSERS.⁴⁶ That's the problem: they buck up a fascist desire that can only negate its object. Fuck it; kill it. It's why they are ashamed and we're not.

Frank Benson's sculpture *Juliana* (2015) ports something from the Dionysian world of night into the Apollonian day. It's Juliana as classic, an object of contemplation. Beauty of form, harmony of parts (*these parts*). The black

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body in the ultimate place of whiteness. A black that shades into iridescent greens and blues from another planet. I can't but think of how the classical orders, art of Greek slavery, became clip art for American slavery. I'm reminded here too of C. Riley Snorton's devastating critique of the origins of the modern categories of gender in scientific experiments on black bodies.⁴⁷ Two deadened orders of visibility: the aesthetic and the scientific, both based on the body as thing. Any possible future art that cuts against these currents has to improvise hard and fast, look for anything of use as it flees. It might have to discard this fine piece as it flees, though, immobile as it is.

I'm personally aware of those cis dudes who want to be dommed by trans women. I'm not of those white dudes who want to be dommed by black men. Or of how, when the sun sets, race in America becomes the real of the phantasm. America's latent destiny seems to be a play-party of racialized lust that in daylight hours can scarcely be acknowledged. THE MYTHICAL BLACK PHALLUS INSIDE OF WHITE ORIFICES – A GESTURE THAT FASCINATES THE MIND OF THE WORLD OVER, BUT IN ITS TRUEST FORM IN AMERIKKA. AS LIMITING AS THIS PENETRATIVE ROLE MAY BE, IT'S ALSO, AT A MINIMUM, A



Instagram selfie by the author at Juliana Huxtable, *Interfertility Industrial Complex: Snatch the Calf Back*, Reena Spaulings, New York 12th October 2019.

SUGGESTION OF STRENGTH AND VIRILITY IN BLACKNESS. AS IF WHITE AMERICA, BY INCORPORATING THE RECEPTION OF BLACK DICK AS A RITE OF PASSAGE, SOMEHOW MITIGATES THE HISTORY OF EMASCULATION THAT PROMPTED THE STATEMENT "I AM A MAN."⁴⁸ The bodies that have no choice but to be visible versus those allowed to see.

What if one took the particularities of the self, not as an identity at all, but as an eddy in the flow from which to sense and touch what's elided in the bright-lit glitter of what (white) washes over us? EVERY LIKE ON MEDIEVALPOC.TUMBLR.COM AS AN AFFIRMATION THAT THE ESTIMATION OF MY PLACE ISN'T TOTALLY WHITEWASHED NOR TAINTED BY THE TUCK UNDERNEATH MY PETTICOAT HIDING THE BLACK MEMBER THAT BETRAYS ANY CLAIM TO A LEGACY-BASED ENTANGLEMENT WITH HERSTORY THAT I MIGHT HAVE.⁴⁹

Maybe a black, trans body might find ways to connect itself to others that the operative categories of history and phantasm might exclude or render only as monstrous. I want to end with Juliana's 2019 show "Interfertility Industrial Complex: Snatch the Calf Back." As in her work in sound and text, there's a plunge into raw intensity and a crossing of information flows. Here, borrowing from the visual language of furry subcultures, layered together with certain unpleasant facts about industrial livestock farming. The not-human body, both as site of production and site of pleasure.

A becoming-animal of the human juxtaposed with the becoming-object of the animal. The animal being that's taken is one denied the industrialized animal body. The fake headlines imagine a bigoted response to the body of the becoming animal as doubled by an extension of the labor demands of the human to the animal. As Eva Hayward reminds us, the linguistic ripple of "trans" could pulse between species as much as between genders, and already does.⁵⁰

Right now, before the flood, before the seven lean years, as we realize the life we could have but which, in the midnight hour, we feel in our bones are just borrowed time, I click for signals that pulse with the possibility of at least dancing in the ruins. I asked my friend Katie once, in a break between sets, what we'll do when there's no electricity to power the music or to deliver our hormones. Without missing a beat, she says: "We're going down with the ship." THE THRUST OF DRIED RIVERBEDS UNENDING. A CAPITAL V VITALITY. BLOOD! DUSTY MOTHERBOARDS SPIT FLICKERS OF SPILLED SOLAR ENTRAILS. PAST INFRARED FOSSILS SEDIMENT; WE, NEXUS POINTS YET TO NEVER-

HAD-COME.⁵¹

Well that's a #mood. As a chaser, let me loop back to a Juliana *unter* rave moment, as described by my friend Nick: "It consisted of, if I can remember properly, about three simultaneously layered decks of churning, magmatic industrial/hardcore tracks, mixed not for precision but such that they created an immersive mutant sonic texture, throbbing, machinic lurching, almost helicopter-like as they noisily pulsed in and out of phase. Then on a fourth deck over the top of this Juliana mixed in a dementedly pitched up a cappella (or more likely she was layering in the original, but who can say) – "Ring of Fire." It was a really interesting citation or reference for me especially considering Juliana's whole thing about queering representations of American history in all her other aesthetic work." As the empire falls, dancing in raw space to its digital detritus is where you'll find us Nexus Sevens.

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- 1
The Well I Guess | Finally (Extended Playgirl Remix), Discwoman Mix: Schizoanalysis, and She's Manic are my favorites.
- 2
You can hear Juliana herself read that piece on her She's Manic mix on Soundcloud, at about forty-three minutes in.
- 3
Juliana Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland* (Capacious & Wonder, 2017), 172.
- 4
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 23.
- 5
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 33.
- 6
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 71.
- 7
The figure of the fugitive is in honor of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013).
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 45.
- 9
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 16.
- 10
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 34.
- 11
Arthur Kroker, *Panic Encyclopedia* (St Martin's Press, 1989).
- 12
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 45.
- 13
Antony and the Johnsons, "You Are My Sister," from the album *I Am A Bird Now*, 2005. She Antony uses the name Anohni. Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 39.
- 14
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 39.
- 15
Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin* (Vintage, 1980).
- 16
On the trans body and the monstrous, see Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ* 1, no. 3 (1994): 237–54.
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 46.
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 48.
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 92.
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Matteo Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons* (nai010, 2009).
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 92.
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Rebecca Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Schapiro, *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas* (University of California Press, 2016).
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 97.
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 97.
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 78.
- 27
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 109.
- 28
See Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (Semiotext(e), 2019) on algorithmic policing as the control logic of the prison-industrial complex.
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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 91.
- 30
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 51.
- 31
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 53.
- 32
In *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, eds. Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton (MIT Press, 2017).
- 33
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 59.
- 34
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 7.
- 35
George Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939* (University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
- 36
Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 37.
- 37
Franz Kafka, *Complete Stories*

(Shoeken Books, 1995).

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 12.

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On family by choice and its limits, see Sarah Schulman, *Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and Its Consequences* (The New Press, 2012).

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 87.

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 47.

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 18.

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 16.

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 47.

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 47.

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Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland*, 47.

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C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

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