

# A LOVESOME THING

## The Film Art of Isaac Julien

### DAVID DEITCHER

**There is a moment**, near the beginning of Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1989), that I regard as a key to his project as a whole. It is a transitory image, lasting little more than a second or two, during the camera's unhurried perusal of the tableau that Julien has created to evoke the funeral of the great poet of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes. As the camera tracks slowly over banks of calla lilies, peers through decorative choir screens and clouds of incense, and lingers on handsome mourners and (literally) angelic attendants who brandish portrait photographs of the deceased, it takes in the open casket. Lying in state in the casket with his eyes closed is Julien himself.

Julien's decision to represent himself as the poet in death is no auteurist gimmick of the kind one associates with Alfred Hitchcock's casual appearances in his own films. It is, rather, a disturbing, densely symbolic device that encapsulates the deep sense of longing that dominates this film and that extends in various forms throughout Julien's project as a whole. Longing is a complex and powerful emotion, a measure of loss and deprivation and of the unappeasable desire they leave behind. *Looking for Langston* explores many aspects of longing that black gay men experience as a result of lives disfigured by the double affliction of racism and homophobia: the desire for love and the experience of subjective wholeness that it can bring; the desire to feel included in black culture, history, and society;

the need, that is, to find one's own experience reflected in an admired part of the past—in this case in the esteemed poet and the vaunted cultural tradition to which he belonged. Cultural critic bell hooks has noted the importance of *Looking for Langston* as a film that gives poetic shape and emotional expression to the need to "uncover and restore and even invent black gay history," understanding that such a self-validating project can help to combat the self-hatred, isolation, and despair that are the combined effects of institutionalized racism and of homophobia.<sup>1</sup>

It was precisely this archaeological aspect of *Looking for Langston*—Julien's audacity in regarding Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance from a queer perspective—that led George Bass, professor of Afro-American studies at Brown University and executive trustee of the Hughes estate, to threaten Julien with a lawsuit for copyright infringement unless he remove Hughes's poetry and prose from the film. Julien complied with most of Bass's demands, removing from the film all evidence of "Stars," "I Loved My Friend," and a fragment from "Montage of a Dream Deferred," while retaining archival footage of Hughes reciting "Ballad of the Fortune Teller," with jazz accompaniment from the 1950s television show *The Subject Is Jazz*.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this ordeal, and of last-minute threats from the Hughes estate immediately prior to the film's scheduled American debut at the



Still from *Looking for Langston*, 1989

New York Film Festival in October 1989, Julien and the festival organizers resolved to inform the audience at the screening that in order to avoid litigation the film's soundtrack would fall silent on the three occasions when Hughes's "voice" would otherwise have been heard. The resulting gaps of enforced silence must have made for a riveting theatrical experience. That experience, and the almost complete absence of Hughes's voice from the final American cut of the film, inadvertently produced a poignant symbol for the poet's own silence during his lifetime regarding the much-disputed matter of his sexuality. Moreover, as hooks observes, the suppression of the poet's voice also yields a dramatic contrast between Hughes's silence and the outspokenness of the most prominent poetic voice in the film—that of Essex Hemphill. "Hemphill's words break the silence," hooks observes, "claim a gayness that is not afraid of being *over-heard*, that assumes a presence in history. There is a tension throughout the film between this

outspoken black gay erotic voice and the silence of uncertainty, unknowing, that contains and closets Hughes's sexuality."<sup>3</sup>

Julien's troubles with the legal guardians of the Hughes estate demonstrate the obstacles that all too often have confronted black gay men who look for, or claim to have found, their historical reflection in the political and cultural legacies of the African diaspora—or who presume to have a home within the communities of their birth. *Looking for Langston* opens with a text by James Baldwin that expresses both the black gay longing for history and community and the pain that results from their denial. Over archival footage of Harlem in the 1920s, the voice of Toni Morrison reads Baldwin's words. "A person does not lightly elect to oppose his society," she reads. "One would much rather be at home among one's compatriots than be mocked and detested by them." Morrison's voice was recorded live at Baldwin's memorial service in New York in 1987, which Julien also attended and at which he first conceived of this film. Soon after his troubles with the Hughes estate, Julien described Baldwin's predicament in terms of his having been "exiled from within the community, chastised by a number of people including Amiri Baraka and Eldridge Cleaver."<sup>4</sup>

*Looking for Langston* was not the only major experimental film of its time to break the longstanding silence about the queer presence within black diaspora culture and society and to propose the creation of art as a means of overcoming isolation and despair. Completed the same year as *Looking for Langston*, Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* is also a radically hybrid film that combines dance, music, poetry, dramatic sequences, documentary, and archival footage, as it testifies to the psychic cost of growing up both black and gay. It is important, however, to note the significant differences between these two works—differences that shed light on Julien's capacity to create works for display inside contemporary art galleries and museums. Pinpointing these differences also helps explain why it is that (to this observer) Julien's film retains all of its expressive force, while the passage of time has diminished the experience of watching Riggs's powerful work.

Those differences were already implicit in the rather different circumstances in which the two films were first seen in the United States. After having its debut at the New York Film Festival, *Looking for Langston* was shown at 'art' houses like the now defunct Bleecker Street Cinema. By contrast, Riggs's film was broadcast nationally by PBS in 1990 on *POV* (*Point of*

View)—a title that itself conveys public television's anxiety about the partisan nature of the documentary features it airs. (Evidently this rhetorical quarantine has not always been effective enough. Fearing attack by virulently antigay, Christian Right watch-dog groups such as Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, thirty-two of fifty PBS affiliates declined to air *Tongues Untied*, while others consigned it to late-night broadcast.) Notwithstanding its lyricism, expressiveness, and formal inventiveness, Riggs's film is strongly propagandistic in a manner that befits the circumstances and the efforts of queer artist/activists toward the end of the 1980s who resolved to use art and film to galvanize the mass movement for AIDS activism—a movement that figures in Riggs's film.

The prominence of Essex Hemphill's poetry in both films attests to the establishment of a proud black gay cultural presence across artistic lines. Within the literary context, this gay male cultural presence first made itself felt with the publication of Joseph Beam's pioneering anthology *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* (1986).<sup>5</sup> In 1991, following Beam's example, Essex Hemphill edited another anthology that he titled, after a poem by Beam, *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*. Also in 1991, because of the enormity of the cultural losses created by AIDS and because homophobia had shown no signs of going away, the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS was formed in New York. Its publication *Future Safe* has assisted thousands of artists in planning for the preservation of their work. *Future Safe* is a resource for visual artists, musicians, and dancers and contains no advice for writers with HIV/AIDS for whom the preservation of a life's work depends on the appointment of a like-minded or sympathetic literary executor. In this context, the case of Essex Hemphill becomes tragically instructive. When Hemphill died in 1995, he had not appointed a literary executor. Upon his death, Hemphill's family was therefore legally in charge of everything he left behind. His devoutly Christian parents had virulently opposed his homosexuality and been equally unkind regarding his HIV infection. Given such a prejudiced point of view, perhaps it should come as no surprise that they refused to recognize their son's cultural accomplishments, much less honor his prominence as a major black gay literary figure. They seized his papers, which subsequently disappeared without a trace.<sup>6</sup>

Julien has gone on to address the theme of internal exile and chastisement by one's own race. In the hybrid documentary *The Darker Side of*

*Black* (1994) Julien explores his ambivalent relationship to Jamaican reggae and dance-hall music—an ambivalence that emerged after hearing violently homophobic hits like "Boom Bye Bye," in which the Jamaican singer/song writer Buju Banton recommends murder as an appropriate response to seeing "two men necking." Similarly, *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (1996), Julien's feature-length exploration of the life, work, and ideas of Frantz Fanon, the preeminent theoretician of decolonization, contains a more subtle but no less sweeping repudiation of homosexuality. It is while considering Fanon's critique of the Oedipal complex as a valid tool for dealing with clinical patients in colonial circumstances that the film takes note of the Martinique-born psychiatrist's claim that "there is no homosexuality here." Though Julien's film contextualizes Fanon's homophobic remark historically and theoretically with statements by the cultural critic Stuart Hall and the writer/historian Françoise Vergès, the remark nonetheless retains its stinging resonance as an implicit denial of the existence of Julien himself.

There is a historical dimension to the emergence of a radical 'cultural politics of difference' in which artists, writers, and filmmakers challenge the monolithic view of communities of color by exploring their divisive internal differences. Before a queer presence could be articulated, independent black filmmakers had in other ways ventured to demonstrate the complexity of diasporic black life. Thus, in Britain, Horace Ove's *Pressure* (1974) addresses intergenerational conflict among the members of black families beset by the broader problem of racial oppression. Also within the context of racial tensions between blacks and whites in Britain, Menelik Shabazz's *Burning an Illusion* (1981) introduces the topic of strained interpersonal relationships between men and women in a black community. Writing about the historic emergence of black independent cinema in Great Britain since the 1960s and '70s, Jim Pines notes the incremental shift away from the 'old-style' theme of race relations, which tends to consolidate the monolithic view of black community, to focus increasingly on the articulation of intraracial difference as well as on aspects of historical memory. Pioneering black British filmmakers of the 1960s and '70s were confronted by other problems too. They tended to work as individuals in a context that was virtually devoid of economic and critical support—even during the mid-1970's "height of film theory and cultural expansion in Britain . . .

which centered largely on *Screen* magazine and the British Film Institute's regional policy."<sup>7</sup>

In black independent filmmaking, the more complex representation of community and culture corresponds with a quiet, formal revolution in film practice as well. By the mid 1980s, a new generation of filmmakers moved away from the formal conventions of realism, whether in documentary or in fiction films—indeed, more often than not, in new hybrid forms that effectively deconstruct the boundary that separates such categories. The critical assault on the 'realist' aesthetic in documentary and fiction films was based on an understanding of its pivotal role in the mainstream construction of 'race,' a construction whose authority depends in large part on the realist claim to transparency, immediacy, and authenticity—to say nothing of objectivity. Critic Kobena Mercer notes that the deployment of realism in the early black independent films of the 1960s and '70s was useful in introducing a counternarrative in relation to "those versions of reality produced by dominant voices and discourses in British film and media." But even as new representations of race from a black perspective constituted a much-needed reply to "the criminalising stereotypes generated and amplified by media-led moral panics in the '70s," there was ultimately no way of avoiding the contradiction inherent in attempting to redefine race by resorting to formal codes that define "the prevailing film language whose discourse of racism [one] aims to contest."<sup>8</sup>

Working in economic and critical isolation, black British filmmakers in the 1960s and '70s were not, as Julien points out, in a position to make demands on institutions that had systematically neglected them. Of his own generation, Julien says that "it was precisely because we went to university, and because of the 1981 [Brixton] riots, that we could then pull together and make an intervention into the media."<sup>9</sup> Those two days of incendiary civil unrest in the heart of London made the consequences of institutionalized racism in Britain highly conspicuous elements within the social turmoil that marked the early years of the Thatcher era.<sup>10</sup> During the early 1980s, Julien did join together with other young black filmmakers, theorists, and activists in the 'workshop movement,' the most prominent manifestations of which were the Black Audio Collective and the Sankofa Film and Video Collective, which Julien cofounded in 1983 with Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Crusz, and Nadine Marsh-Edwards. These collectives provided a space for continued study and critical reflection about the need

to gain access to the means of representation and intervene effectively in the flow of images of race and difference. The workshops made it possible for their members to develop and distribute films that contested the mainstream media's construction of racial politics and minority cultures, while exploring other concerns such as the constitutive role of historical memory in African diaspora identity and experience. Supported in part by funds from Britain's newly formed Channel Four, workshops like Sankofa and Black Audio were able to produce and distribute experimental films that reflected their members' political commitments, personal, social, and artistic concerns, and theoretical sophistication. In providing such a space in which all these activities could occur, the workshops became sites for the development of what Julien calls an "integrated practice."<sup>11</sup>

It was early in this period, as a graduating student at Central St. Martin's School of Art and Design, that Julien found his voice and articulated his vision in *Territories* (1984). This densely layered, twenty-five-minute film was occasioned, in part, by the Brixton riots. But *Territories* also addressed carnival, with its more peaceable challenge to law and middle-class decorum. Mercer has argued that *Territories* is not 'about' the Notting Hill Gate Carnival nor, for that matter, 'about' the 1976 Notting Hill Gate riots that together provide the film with a significant portion of its imagery. The purpose of *Territories* (if one can reduce the film to a singular purpose at all) is to find appropriate means of representing "the complex multifaceted aesthetic and political meanings of this phenomenon of diaspora culture."<sup>12</sup> "We are struggling to tell a story," two voices—one male, one female—repeat like a refrain at various intervals throughout the film, "a herstory, a history, of cultural forms specific to black people." In *Territories*, 'carnival' therefore has multiple meanings. One meaning pertains to the emergence of carnival as a flash-point of racial unrest, as its representational status in British culture shifted from being an exotic pageant in postwar newsreels to becoming an object of police surveillance and aggressive state control, erupting in race riots such as those that tore through the Notting Hill Gate section of Kensington in August 1976.<sup>13</sup> But in Julien's film, 'carnival' also refers more obliquely and poetically to the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian critic and linguist who proposed that meaning in language is neither fixed nor stable but is the radically contingent product of a social process of negotiation and appropriation that he characterized as "dialogical."

In *Territories*, Julien deploys a number of inventive formal techniques to arrive at a complex and ambivalent representation of the different forms of civil unrest that constitute the work's ostensible motif, and in the process creates a model of filmmaking that he has been able to build upon to suit different themes and different contexts ever since. *Territories* juxtaposes and often superimposes original and archival material—footage of festive street life during carnival, of police surveillance, of white and black British men and women crossing alienated glances while vying for control of social space; of rioting, and the desolate urban evidence of abandonment and neglect; of the interpenetration of private and public concerns as embodied in footage of two men locked in a forbidden embrace. It incorporates different voices and fragments of texts and music, as well as repetition and Brechtian alienation devices. Together, these elements coalesce to form a highly structured and densely textured film text in which meaning remains resolutely open-ended. This is filmmaking that bears only the most antagonistic relationship to its realist counterpart, as well as to the latter's authoritative claims to stable, objective truth. Mercer proposes that, instead, *Territories* realizes something akin to Bakhtin's dialogical principal and to his conception of the "carnavalesque." What makes carnival unique is its temporary suspension of the law—of legal and linguistic codes. Conventions of sobriety and good taste are casually contravened, and appearances become more than usually deceiving. In *Territories*, a similar suspension of the cinematic law—of the viewer's narrative expectations—takes place as Julien's multiaccented montage of fragmentary material replaces conventional methods of fixing meaning in film. It is as a result of this refusal to 'fix' meanings for passive consumption by the film audience that Julien flouts the viewer's expectations, creating an absence where a presence is expected that then dispatches the viewer into a more active process of constructing meanings that are no less truthful for remaining open to continued dialogical debate. Mercer characterizes the state of mind that this kind of film induces in the viewer as "critical reverie"—a term that accurately accounts for both the transgressive and hallucinatory qualities that have persisted throughout Julien's project to this day.

There is no reason to doubt Julien's claim that he was ignorant of Bakhtin's work when he created *Territories*.<sup>14</sup> The development of his radically hybrid, intuitively dialogical approach to film structure could just as well have resulted from his study of other aspects of Western critical theory,



Still from *Territories*, 1984

as well as of avant-garde art and cinema, all within the collective context of the workshop movement. (In this sense, as well as in its critical multicultural objectives, the workshop movement had points in common with corresponding developments in the United States. Indeed, the emergence during the early-to-mid 1980s of the new paradigm of multicultural postmodernism arguably established the preconditions for the rediscovery of once-obscure bodies of theoretical work like Bakhtin's; and for the redoubled interest in more prominent bodies of work like Fanon's.) The fact that *Territories*, and other important works produced under the umbrella of Sankofa and Black Audio (*Passion of Remembrance*, 1986, and *Handsworth Songs*, 1986, respectively) share similar formal approaches and thematic concerns attests to the development of a specifically black independent film aesthetic through a collective process of artistic and political debate, experiment, and self-realization.<sup>15</sup> Focusing attention on the social power

inherent in Western systems of knowledge and representational regimes required an intensive dialogue with modernist art, film, and critical theory. The vigor and self-assurance with which that dialogue was conducted could only come about through an awareness of the extent to which the key monuments of Western modernism have always borne the scars of displaced Africans, whose enslavement made those monuments possible while ensuring their ambivalent status as testaments to brutality.

In *Looking for Langston* and *Tongues Untied*, the commanding presence of Essex Hemphill's voice and impassioned poetry also attests to the prominent contextualizing presence of AIDS. Indeed, the AIDS crisis has been a crucial factor in shaping Julien's work. How could it not have been, given the fact that AIDS took the lives of Joseph Beam (1988), Marlon Riggs (1994), and Essex Hemphill (1995)—to name only those who immediately come to mind. In this context, Julien's appearance as the dead Langston Hughes assumes chilling significance as an enactment of his own demise, or as a symbol of the risks that some gay men have taken and continue to take as a result of unconscious longings for lost friends and lovers. It becomes, moreover, a symbol for the emotional death that all too often becomes the fate of the gay survivor of AIDS who, unable to bear any more loss, renounces the comforts and hazards of society, sex, and love.

Whatever else it may be, *Looking for Langston* remains one of the central texts of the AIDS crisis. Julien's self-validating search for his reflection in the history, culture, and society of the Harlem Renaissance may be the ostensible cause for the film's elegiac tone, but that tone also expresses the black gay man's unfathomable grief: for lost lovers and friends, for the loss of the biological family that has rejected him, for the community that AIDS has decimated. To be sure, not all of the works Julien created during the epidemic were dominated by this elegiac quality. In 1987, two years before completing *Looking for Langston*, Julien produced the experimental film *This Is Not An AIDS Advertisement*. Dating from the dawn of the AIDS activist mobilization (*Looking for Langston* would date from its tumultuous peak), this film realizes an unlikely fusion of poetry and propaganda. The first part of this short (fourteen-minute) two-part film maintains a subdued, romantic quality as it weaves together footage of rippling reflections of the sky in water, of the sky seen through silhouetted trees, of a classical male figure from a Greco-Roman bas relief, and of an interracial gay male couple

locked in an embrace, nonchalantly smiling at the camera, then playfully extending a bouquet of flowers toward the lens. Like the low-budget queer music video that it soon becomes, *This Is Not An AIDS Advertisement* is not above deploying a flashy split-screen device that transforms specific images into a kaleidoscopic four-part grid. The first part of the film only implies its purpose, which is to introduce a counternarrative to interfere in the mainstream media's construction, or 'advertising,' of AIDS as ample reason for gay men to renounce sexual pleasure and disavow their desire. The second part of the film makes this message explicit, with a slow rap performed in voiceover by a pair of differently accented English male voices (belonging to Julien and his mate Mark Nash): "This is not an AIDS advertisement," they repeatedly intone to the beat. "Feel no guilt in your desire." All of this transpires against the glow of a recognizably Venetian twilight, which adds the kind of intertextual allusions that enrich so much of Julien's work: in this case, to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, as well as to Luchino Visconti's overwrought 1971 film that the novel inspired.

The cheeky intertextual aestheticism that Julien deploys to such leavening effect in *This Is Not An AIDS Advertisement* extends to *Looking for Langston*, sometimes with more somber results. Within the context of AIDS, coming out as an aesthete can assume political meaning. In *Langston*, as in more recent works such as *The Attendant* (1993) and *Trussed* (1996), aestheticism functions strategically. Julien proudly lays claim to the stereotype of the gay man's putative affinity for decoration, thereby not only neutralizing the stereotype's power to hurt, but honoring shared codes of subcultural style and identity. ("There is no gay sensibility," the critic Jeff Weinstein was reported to have said, "and it has a tremendous amount of influence."<sup>16</sup>) The ubiquity of calla lilies throughout *Looking for Langston* attests to far more than the merely pragmatic need to signify a funerary context. Invoking Oscar Wilde's favorite floral accessory, the film is able to refer at once to queer history's most famous martyr; to the "first published essay on homosexuality by an Afro-American,"<sup>17</sup> Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lillies and Jade" (published in the sole issue of the little magazine of the Harlem Renaissance, *Fire!*, in 1926); and even to Jack Smith's transgressive classic, *Flaming Creatures* (1962). In Julien's film, the exotic flower is only one element in an extravagant menu of artificial beauty that imbues camp with new life. It extends from the flower-filled, smoke-infused ecclesiastical appointments of the funeral chapel upward to Julien's neonoir fantasy of a

gay nightclub that he envisions as just a little below heaven—which is itself a place from which the mirrored disco ball hangs and in which an interracial bevy of (literally) angelic youths in leather and lamé costumes and filigree wings leans over an ornate balustrade to take in the louche spectacle of black-tie cruising and champagne guzzling below. As the hyperbolic expression of a stereotypically faggy sense of style, Julien's camp aestheticism exemplifies what has been called strategic essentialism. Within the context of AIDS and the multifaceted epidemic of homophobic violence from which it is inseparable, Julien's taste for artificial beauty participates in a resistant cultural project in which such compromised or otherwise endangered forms of queer culture as disco and camp were rehabilitated in part through massive infusions of emotional capital.

While the longing for love and sexual intimacy that suffuses Julien's work as a whole has been profoundly affected by the determining context of AIDS, with its anxiety-provoking equation of sex and death, it has also been shaped by the intractable problematics of race. In *Looking for Langston*, a dreamlike sequence offers insights into one aspect of this problematic racial frame. A handsome black man in black tie approaches another black man in a field—the character aptly named (after Nugent's essay) Beauty. The camera looks to the man in formal wear from behind the naked Beauty so we can see the first figure's desiring look. But ultimately the film denies the fulfillment of his dream of sexual union with Beauty. bell hooks argues that this failure of the 'look' to result in the mutual self-validation of intimate contact that this scene proffers so tantalizingly is emblematic of what too often happens in a racist and homophobic society that so completely strips black gay men of self-regard that their objects of desire must be white.

In such a social context, can the black gay man's desire for the white Other not be proof of self-loathing? Were one to judge from *Looking for Langston* alone, the answer to this provocative question might be "no." In the scenes that take place in the gay nightclub, pleasurable cruising becomes tense when a white barfly directs an interested, appraising look at a black man seated at a table with a friend. As if the silent drama of looks exchanged among these three men were not enough to establish this moment's anxious meaning, Julien's camera also takes in a number of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men, which crystallize through fetishization the combined fascination and fear that mark the white

man's confrontation with the black male body. On the other hand, to judge from Julien's multifaceted project as an artist, writer, and theoretician, he is not inclined to support the equation of black gay desire for the white Other with black gay self-loathing. Julien is not one of those realists who creates art only just to tell it like it is. He is a romantic and a visionary who uses film to imagine the way things can be. Thus his films tend to envision less fraught, more supportive relations between black and white gay men. Indeed in *This Is Not An AIDS Advertisement* it is Julien himself who appears in the sweet embrace with a white youth to embody the queer desire whose guilt-free advocacy is the film's openly propagandistic purpose. Moreover, it has always been a courageous guiding principle in Julien's practice to steadfastly refuse to be held prisoner by orthodoxies that would constrain his desire or his freedom to explore its significance on the screen.

Perhaps it was the all-encompassing gloom of the AIDS crisis that led Julien to want to produce a feature-length fiction film that looked to a significant moment in the past in order to envision the way things might be in the future. Perhaps it was impatience with Sankofa's limited resources and with the rather limited audience for films produced through its collective experimental context that led him to want to create a very different kind of film, one that was directed at a larger and more diversified audience. In 1992, in an effort to create what Julien has referred to as "queer features," he cofounded a new production entity, Normal Films, with Mark Nash and Jimmy Somerville. Coproduced with Sankofa, with the assistance of individual Sankofa members, and through a complex pan-European funding process that also included the British Film Institute, he completed *Young Soul Rebels*, a ninety-four-minute genre film (a thriller) set in the turmoil of a working-class, multiracial London neighborhood during the pivotal summer of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee (1977) and of punk's apotheosis as exemplified by the meteoric rise of the Sex Pistols. That is to say, Julien's film focuses on a tumultuous time when racism and reactionary politics found social expression in the growth of the neo-Nazi National Front, as well as in skinhead subculture, and when grassroots organizing against fascism and racism resulted in Rock Against Racism. A short-lived conjunction of popular culture and activism, Rock Against Racism was legendary for fanzines such as *Temporary Hoarding* and for its Mayday celebrations—antiracist rock concerts that *Young Soul Rebels* recalls in its climactic,

penultimate scene: an antiracist rock concert billed as "Fuck the Jubilee," which the film's neo-Nazi skinheads turn into a riot. Notwithstanding its commercially compatible structure, *Young Soul Rebels* maintains Julien's commitment to subversive representation. But then, from a different perspective, one might just as well argue that the film's commercial formal structure is itself highly subversive, inasmuch as it promises to secure a popular audience for its transgressive contents.

The film's subversive messages are embedded in the nature of its characterizations perhaps more than in the way the murder plot (about the nighttime killing of a black gay man in a local park by a closeted white man) unfolds. At the center of the film is a pair of young black friends, Chris and Caz, who run the pirate radio station The Soul Patrol out of a black-owned-and-operated garage in a working-class section of London. Chris and Caz also freelance as DJs at a local dance club, the Crypt. Chris, who is lighter skinned, more skittish, and elaborately coifed, is coded as gay but turns out to be straight; Caz, his altogether sturdier, darker-skinned mate, is coded as straight but turns out to be gay. Chris ends up in a relationship with a beautiful black woman who works at a high-powered radio station. Caz ends up with Billibudd, a charming, utterly guileless white punk. While the setting for much of the film is a postwar housing project, its social heart—and its first glimpse of utopia—is the Crypt. Like New York's Paradise Garage, an actual club of the same period, the Crypt is an informal, radically mixed space of pleasure, where the customers are black and white, gay and straight, female and male—and where everyone is decked out in the creative panoply of late-'70s British subcultural style. At the Crypt, the music alternates with the DJs, from punk (i.e., X-Ray Spex's "Oh Bondage Up Yours") to soul and funk (The Players Association's "I Like It"), the stark differences between them not disguised but acknowledged in a musical embodiment of the clash of differences that radical democracy requires.

Julien's practice as a filmmaker continuously shifts in terms of thematic and technical approaches, the scale and scope of a project, and the audience he is trying to reach. Perhaps it was inevitable that, after the monumental labor of creating a feature-length fiction film, Julien would return to working on a more intimate scale for a smaller audience. The result was *The Attendant* (1993)—a courageous seven-minute film that inaugurated a

trilogy that would also include Julien's first video installation, *Trussed* (1996), and the film-and-video installation *Three* (1999). The setting for *The Attendant* is a museum, envisioned by Julien as a neoclassical bastion of Western high culture and a repository of colonial artifacts. One of these artifacts—*Slaves on the West Coast of Africa* (circa 1833) by the French romantic painter François-Auguste Biard—plays a pivotal role in the film as a catalyst to the highly active fantasy life of its protagonist, a black, closeted, middle-aged museum guard. As in all such ambitious nineteenth-century history paintings, Biard's had an ideological mission: to help bring about the abolition of slavery. However, the antislavery message of Biard's work cannot conceal a more deeply rooted ambivalence, which is evident at the precise point where Biard's manifest abhorrence of slavery intersects with the ample representational evidence in the painting of his latent fascination with the black body and the spectacle of its brutalization.

At the opening of the film, the attendant goes about his job of protecting the museum's treasures. Early on, he makes significant eye contact with a young, white leather queen who has entered the building carrying a bag that the attendant inspects. Although one cannot actually see inside the bag, to judge from the knowing looks exchanged between attendant and visitor, it may well contain sex toys. After closing time, as the attendant walks by Biard's painting, the camera adopts his point of view. The viewer then sees a series of tableaux vivants representing the attendant's sexual fantasies, in which the painting's imperialist slave iconography is transformed into the sado-masochistic sex play of a group of young men. In one such tableau, the young visitor, now clad in leather gear, brandishes a whip over the attendant, who is lying face down on the floor of the gallery that is now adorned with a pair of seriously framed, paradigmatically homoerotic drawings by Tom of Finland. In a subsequent tableau, the roles are reversed; now it is the white visitor who lies face down while the attendant, clad in fetishwear, cracks the whip.

While the attendant's desire for the young white visitor would itself be sufficient to upset those who would pathologize interracial queer desire, in this film the transgressive power of interracial longing becomes infinitely greater for having been stimulated by (of all things) a European high-cultural icon of enslavement. But *The Attendant* suggests that to condemn as a matter of principle such a sexualized response to a romantic representation of the colonial Other and his or her brutalization is to cling to the

mistaken impression that life is lived in the absence of fantasies that adhere to no moral code. With its representations of the attendant and the visitor assuming the positions of 'slave' and 'master,' Julien's film seems to propose s/m sexual activity as a form of subversive semiotic play. In it, the accoutrements of bondage and discipline, to which black men and women understandably respond with historical dread and fury, can assume other meanings. In an essay written after the completion of *The Attendant*, Julien repudiates as "straight" and Afrocentrically "black" the insistence on the neocolonial, racist meaning of "stylized fetish clothing for the queer body" as an attempt to "'fix' these images in time." From Julien's perspective, this misreads the "'theatre of s/m' based on politically correct notions of sexual practices from a world devoid of fantasy." Moreover, such an insistence on fixing the meaning of s/m iconography in the horrors of the colonial past denies the right and the capacity of the diasporic black subject to loosen through pleasurable means the bonds of that signifying chain, thus perpetuating, in Julien's view, "white power and domination."<sup>18</sup>

As I reread these lines, I find myself somewhat exasperated at discussing these films as if they are political manifestos or illustrations of critical theory, knowing as I do that my own interest in them has been determined by the way they communicate their messages at least as much if not more than by whatever those messages might be. In *The Attendant*, for example, Julien portrays the protagonist's interracial s/m fantasies as hot apparitions, never as solemn or didactic occasions. Moreover, the museum guard's fantasies alternate between such scenes of young leathermen posing after the compositional model of details in Biard's painting and ornate tableaux vivants that suggest Busby Berkeley's Hollywood (as revised, perhaps, by Derek Jarman), more than Biard's coast of Africa. In such ways, Julien's work manages the painful legacy of the colonial past and the splintered sense of self that derives from being black and British and gay by undermining the authority of canonical Western culture (here in the guise of Biard's painting) in an identification of its features with camp. Humor is one inevitable effect of the camp splendor of tableaux in which the youthful ensemble—clad in gold lamé loincloths and sparkling glass-beaded macramé vests—gather to form a symmetrical entourage. Like a gaggle of Ziegfeld girls, this powdered and glittering posse frames one particularly statuesque black youth who poses, standing like a god,

festooned in gold lamé loincloth and jewels of vaguely Nubian design. This diva acknowledges the adoring camera with appropriate nonchalance, and then, like Diana Ross at the climax of her performance, raises his willowy arms to complete the tableau's perfect symmetry. Near the beginning of the film, Julien primes the viewer to be charmed by such outrageous scenes. When the attendant inspects the bag of the visiting leatherman, and the film captures their knowing looks, it accents this exchange through the intervention of diminutive, winged cupids—bows extended—one of whom circles each man's head like a neo-baroque wind ornament. (In keeping with the film's occasional celebrity cameos—including the cultural critic Stuart Hall and the writer Haneif Kureishi as dignified visitors to the museum—Cupid is here played by the gay pop-music star and Normal Films partner Jimmy Somerville.)

To be sure, Julien's tableaux do not always induce laughter, nor is the film that contains them especially comedic. Consider, for example, the young leathermen posed around the prone body of a figure who, in Biard's composition, represents an expired slave at the dead center of his composition. There is nothing particularly funny about the emotional effect of Julien's ornately sexualized re-presentation of this archetypal colonial vignette. After recovering from the shock of one's initial confrontation with Julien's scandalously sexualized revision, what one notices in this tableau is the care for the pleasure and safety of the 'slave,' a care that is convincingly expressed in the faces and body language of those (white and black) actors who, for the moment, have 'mastered' him.

In fact, *The Attendant* is bracketed with scenes of profound sadness, as the museum guard, now in formal wear, sings his heart out to a concert hall that is empty except for the handful of accompanying musicians and a middle-aged black coworker—the museum's conservator, who may or may not be his wife (and 'beard'), and who throughout the film is otherwise pictured either dusting off or caressing the museum's artifacts or engaging in aural voyeurism as she presses her ear to the museum's walls to listen with thinly veiled satisfaction to the sound of cracking whips and moans of pleasure that emanate from the interior space of the attendant's fantasies. What the attendant sings and how he sings it set the emotional tenor for the film as a whole. With some effort, he manages a rendition of Dido's lament from the conclusion of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. That is to say, he sings the lament of the mythical (African) Queen of Carthage who, having been

abandoned by her (white) Trojan lover, has mounted a funeral pyre and is about to plunge a knife into her breast. No doubt, this choice is charged with meanings that beg to be decoded in terms of the 'issues' of race, gender, and sexuality; but ultimately what cuts to my quick in this sequence is the performance, the music, the imagery, and the words. "Remember me," the attendant plaintively sings to the all-but-empty darkened theater. "Remember me, but ha! Forget my fate." With its appeal to sight and sound and sense, this scene brackets *The Attendant* with so profound a sense of longing that it takes on allegorical significance, opening onto life's many forms of loss and abandonment all of which leave desolation in their wake.

Loss, separation, and the possibility that comfort and salvation can come in unconventional forms are the subjects of *Trussed* (1996)—the second part of Julien's trilogy, and the first work that he conceived specifically for a fine-art context. *Trussed* is a double-projection of an intensely homoerotic and ultimately heartbreaking ten-minute black-and-white film which recasts many of Julien's abiding concerns—longing, interracial love, AIDS, and redemption through transgressive love and art—in a new format. In the installation, the film is doubly and continuously projected onto an enveloping, obliquely angled wall in a gallery. The film begins with the camera in motion, tracking slowly from left to right over the gold border of a picture frame that, as in *The Attendant*, encloses and opens onto the film's more purely imaginary space. Over the electronic drone of the film's techno score, an overhead shot reveals two young men—one black, one white—lying asleep head to foot on the silken sheets of a rotating bed. Slowly, as if awakening, they rise to embrace, the camera angle shifting to take in their kiss and the wall behind them, which is illuminated by a swath of light in the shape of gothic window tracery. With its invocation of ecclesiastical architecture, and more specifically of the setting for the funeral at the beginning of *Looking for Langston*, the opening shot quickly establishes the proximity of love and sex and death in the age of AIDS. *Trussed* uses fragmentary sequences, provocative juxtapositions, and an almost constant, gently oscillating motion to induce not just the state of critical reverie that one expects from Julien's works but a dreamlike space whose hallucinatory quality is intensified as a result of the precise circumstances of the installation's double projection.

Although Julien's work is invariably open to different readings, I understand *Trussed* rather specifically as a rich allegory of grieving. What I see

transpiring in the film is an evocation of the troubled delirium that I associate with the shock of losing someone I love. Incapable, really, of doing anything ordinary, I resort to sleep, to fantasy and dreams, always awakening from them with a jolt to return to the dreadful reality of abandonment and loss. *Trussed* describes such a state of mind: a state of remembrance of past pleasures, of past sufferings; a state in which the persistence of sexual fantasy is alternately a form of consolation and a reminder of life's sometimes cruel persistence. It is deep inside the different levels of the dream spaces of *Trussed* that the two young men are seen participating in a sado-masochistic ritual in which each of them is cast as a 'trusting' slave to two imaginary masters—one black, one white, and both sexy in highly coded ways that suggest the intimate correspondence of fear and desire. (The white master embodies the classic Tom-of-Finland type, in leather motorcycle jacket and cap; his taller black associate is more menacing, but no less alluring, in leather cap, elbow-length black rubber gloves and a full-length black rubber apron suggesting a more than usually satanic corner.) The ritual commences after the white man, seen lying asleep in bed, dreams that his black lover has come to him and tightened the strap on the leather harness he wears. In the ensuing scene the white protagonist is pictured with a simultaneously agreeable and faintly defiant expression on his face while being prepared to be hoisted by black-leather ankle cuffs to a glistening steel pulley that the camera has shown in tight close-up slowly swinging in the air. He is next seen hanging upside down, swaying, with arms hanging free like a human pendulum. The camera then abruptly shifts its point of view so that the viewer sees what he sees: the handsome faces of the masters upside-down as each slowly rolls in and out of his field of vision. Regularly punctuating these scenes, and recalling the trauma that has brought them into being, are sequences in which the young black man is shown sitting in a steel wheelchair that he revolves in a forlorn reprise of the rotating bed he once shared with his lover. And now, instead of wearing his sexy undershirt, he is consigned to a pair of dreary striped pajamas while his lover stands in the shadows holding a bouquet of dried flowers as if awaiting his inevitable death. Light glistens off the steel wheelchair just as it is shown glistening off the steel pulley, again mutually implicating death and pleasure.

The climax of the sado-masochistic scenario occurs when the black master releases the cord by which the slave is suspended. Only now it is

the black youth who hangs inverted and encased (except for his head) in a clear plastic body bag, and he tumbles in slow motion through space. Among the many other images that infuse this work with profound sadness and inflect its title with dual meaning, some signal the caring environment in which, in this idealized vision, sadomasochistic pleasure takes place. Thus, in one of the last tableaux, the white leathermaster holds the limp body of the black youth in his arms like a latter-day *Pietà*—but also like a famous drawing by Tom of Finland of a lifeguard and the contented youth he has only just rescued. Even as this image evokes the sadomasochistic and frequently homoerotic aspect of Christian iconography, it also symbolizes the caring environment that gay communities, galvanized by the AIDS crisis, created independently to provide for the care of those in desperate need who so many in straight society deemed worthy only of blame and abandonment.

*Trussed* is a wholly remarkable work—one in which the poetic condensation actually requires logistical circumstances for its realization that only the fine-art context can provide. The hypnotic effect of the work depends on what happens when you project the film twice onto surfaces that are at an angle to each other. This compounds the hallucinatory effect of the swaying and circling motions that dominate the film—not unlike the movement of a hypnotist's pocketwatch—and suggest the inexorable passage of time. In *Three (The Conservator's Dream)* (1999), the final installment of Julien's trilogy, he deployed still more abstract means to convey the equally inexorable lack of resolution that informs romantic entanglements, especially those that involve three people—in this case, one man (the dancer Ralph Lemon) and two women (Cleo Sylvestre, continuing in her role as the conservator from *The Attendant*, and the dancer Bebe Miller). Contributing to the abstract effect of *Three* is the fact that Julien has interwoven choreography—specifically, a modern dance by Lemon and Miller—into an already fragmentary film narrative that concerns the tensely intimate ties between Lemon and Miller, between Miller and Sylvestre, and between Lemon and Sylvestre. Julien's most elaborate installation to date, *Three* comprises a sepia-toned film projection, a grid of nine film stills, and a free-standing trapezoidal DVD projection unit on the broad front plane of which one sees a recut version of the film—actually three films that have been transferred onto DVD and projected simultaneously, side by side, in a triptych format. To accommodate this format, the unit's translucent plastic

screen has a roughly three-to-one ratio of width to height that brings CinemaScope™ to mind. It is in this DVD projection that Julien most effectively develops the work's abstract poetic potential. While the triptych's central image sustains the film's loosely expository thread, that fragment is bracketed, left and right, by footage that reads more flatly and abstractly. Thus, one of the work's more memorable moments occurs as the action in the central panel is flanked by mirrored close-up footage of Lemon rolling down a slope, his rapidly rolling motion effectively implying the perpetual lack of resolution regarding the relationships between the two women and between each of them and the man.

Julien returned to the use of the free-standing DVD unit and the triple-projection triptych format while on a residency at ArtPace in San Antonio, Texas. The result—*The Long Road to Mazatlán* (1999)—is a fantasia on the American Southwest that focuses with characteristic ambivalence on the social construction of masculinity in popular representations of that mythic landscape. In this twenty-minute work, more successfully than in *Three*, Julien has multiplied and laterally extended into space the rhythmic, poetic effects of the approach to filmmaking he developed as early as in *Territories*, by adopting the broad triptych format. In some sequences, a single image occupies the entire expanse of the screen. For example, in the opening sequence a distant cowboy walks in slow motion toward the camera on a hot dusty road. The breadth of the projection enables Julien to convey the expansive flatness of a scrubby, arid landscape that is quintessentially Texan. But Julien soon breaks with that unified wide-screen effect to observe the progress of a beautiful yellow snake as it slithers its way across that barren road, accompanied by the sound of a menacing rattle. At the center of the projection, the snake is seen in a medium-long shot, flanked on either side by tight close-ups of its undulating yellow and white scales. Next, the order is reversed so that now it is the close-up between medium-long shots of the snake on either side. Also visible in that right-hand shot is the cowboy who has only just passed. Meanwhile, approaching from a similar distance in the left-hand shot, and simultaneously maintaining and subtly breaking the symmetry, is the film's other protagonist: a lean, dark-haired cowboy who, the work soon reveals, is the object of the first man's desire. Throughout the work, Julien deploys such abruptly alternating rhythms: between unified vistas and symmetrical triptychs with disjunctions and reversals between near and far, between one point of

view and its opposite, and between imagery shown in real time, slow motion, and greatly speeded up, to suggest the vast distances covered by those desolate highways. One effect of these sudden shifts and reversals is to emphasize abstract beauty. Seductive beauty is central to this work, which, after all, describes the anxious excitement of an intended seduction. Indeed, Julien's involvement with abstract aesthetics extends to such details as his inclusion of sequences shot in and around a swimming pool worthy of David Hockney. Julien has all but eliminated the use of spoken language from this work, replacing it with isolated fragments of choreographed movement. (Julien collaborated on *The Long Road to Mazatlán* with the choreographer Javier de Frutos, who plays the film's somewhat softer-looking, desiring subject. *Three* is more nearly dominated by Miller's and Lemon's choreography, with the effect that it sometimes assumes the quality of being dance on film.)

As in so many of Julien's works, *The Long Road to Mazatlán* leaves in its wake a powerful sense of longing. In this film, that ache is ostensibly the effect of its scenario of unrequited passion, but at a deeper level it is also a product of the film's ambivalent longing for the homosocial hazards of a heavily mythified and dangerously sexy place. Central to the allure of the West is its construction of a rugged masculine ideal, still personified by men who deck themselves out in denim, leather, dust, and sweat, content to conceal their eyes in the deep shadow of a wide-brimmed hat. Julien's work proposes that this all-American hypermasculine ideal is no less fetishized in its way than the bewigged and feather-festooned showgirls who parade up and down the dusty road in the work's final images. In this context, Julien's revision of the famous scene from Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* in which Travis Bickle repeatedly rehearses his paranoid challenge, "You talkin' to me?," is instructive. For in Julien's variation, the raven-haired cowboy who is the knowing object of the softer man's desire defies us all, gun in hand: "Are you looking at me?" Look, to your peril, but don't touch.

Not unlike other works by Julien, *The Long Road to Mazatlán* is so densely layered that it is difficult to unravel its intricately interwoven levels of representation—to distinguish, that is, between levels of fantasy and reality within the imaginary spaces of the film. Is the viewer, for example, to believe that the two men actually do get it on, as depicted in a sweaty sequence immediately following Julien's 'take' on Scorsese's much-quoted scene?<sup>19</sup> A sequence near the end of *The Long Road to Mazatlán* suggests

that this was only a fantasy, albeit one that the viewer can still enjoy. In that penultimate scene, the 'gay' cowboy, nakedly vulnerable in the water at the edge of the swimming pool, is mercilessly teased by the man of his dreams. On the other hand, the view of the latter is armor: only a pair of denim-clad legs and familiar cowboy boots that do a turn, before deftly avoiding the other man's touch and abandoning him to desires that he himself would never acknowledge.

*The Long Road to Mazatlán* departs from Julien's previous work in one other significant respect: both of the film's protagonists are white. This absence from the screen of the desiring (and desirable) black subject is consistent with Julien's career-long refusal to allow political orthodoxies—or other people's expectations of him—to prevent the free play of his desire from guiding the direction of his work and from figuring prominently in it. Julien's refusal is consistent, moreover, with the progressive goal of moving away from circumstances in which the historic absence of black and/or gay self-representations imposed a burden of wholly unreasonable collective responsibility on those who did manage to gain access to the means of self-representation, as if their works were charged with saying everything that needed to be said from the black and/or gay perspective. Julien's decision to create *The Long Road to Mazatlán* the way he did also corresponds with, and shrewdly reflects, the changed significance of visibility and invisibility in contemporary art and culture. Noting such a shift in the art world, the critic Jean Fisher has argued that "cultural marginality [is] no longer a problem of invisibility but one of excess visibility in terms of a reading of cultural difference that is too easily marketable."<sup>20</sup> Kobena Mercer concurs, noting that the present-day regime of corporate globalism in the art world has "de-coupled" political empowerment from cultural visibility and "ushered in a new regime of multicultural normalisation." No less worrisome is the way in which the now-ubiquitous presence of 'hyperblackness' in the media and entertainment industries is serving "not to critique social injustice but to cover over and conceal increasingly sharp inequalities."<sup>21</sup>

In this context, Julien's decision to create a work that only obliquely manifests his identity as black seems as tactically challenging as it is courageous. For it repudiates the bureaucratic (as much as the commercial) demand that the signifiers of racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual difference be worn, as it were, like insufferable Tommy logos on one's sleeve. The transformation of 'difference' from a challenge into a prerequisite for cultural

viability creates a situation in which proliferating signs of a now paradoxically standardized diversity reappear in the guise of fetishes that serve to mask the persistence of social injustice and inequality. Perhaps Julien's most indispensable resource has been his fearless determination to entrust his practice to the extended examination of the specific contours and quirks of his desire, believing, as he evidently does, in their ultimately social determination; that, and the gift that has enabled him to give poetic shape to longings that undoubtedly express themselves differently in different kinds of people, but that all people must ultimately know.

## NOTES

1. bell hooks, "Seductive Sexualities," *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), p. 196.
2. Bass also attempted to enjoin Julien from using Hughes's given name in the title of his film. For an account of Julien's troubles with the Hughes estate, see Catherine Saalfield, "Overstepping the Bounds of Propriety: Film Offends Langston Hughes Estate," *The Independent* (January/February, 1990), pp. 5–8.
3. hooks, p. 198.
4. Quoted in Saalfield, p. 6.
5. Beam's anthology was itself inspired by *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, a groundbreaking anthology edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Both these books introduced voices that had been effectively silenced as a result of a disinterested or openly hostile publishing establishment. Indeed, the editors of *This Bridge Called My Back* had such difficulties with publishing that they joined with a multicultural group of women that included Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith, among others, and founded Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press in 1983.
6. My account of the posthumous disposition of Essex Hemphill's papers is based on a conversation with the literary agent Michelle Karlsberg on May 4, 2000.
7. Jim Pines, "The Cultural Context of Black British Cinema," in Claire Andrade-Watkins, *Blackframes: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 28. About the lack of support for emerging black British independent cinema, Kobena Mercer has observed, "The lack of an ongoing discourse of radical black film criticism is one unhappy legacy of the marginalisation and underdevelopment of black filmmaking in Britain. This must be understood as a consequence of material conditions . . . the 'professionalisation' of critical film theory in journals like *Screen* in the '70s effectively 'screened-out' black and Third World film practices, confining itself to a narrowly Eurocentric canon." (Kobena Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination: The Aesthetics of Black Independent Film in Britain," *ibid.*, p. 51.)
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.
9. Coco Fusco, "Sankofa & Black Audio Film Collective," in Russell Ferguson, et al., eds., *Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 17–18.
10. To judge from the journalistic response to the riots in the United States, one would have thought that the British had never been aware of race as an alarming problem in their midst ever since the mass migration of Caribbeans after the end of World War II. For example, for his article in the *New York Times*' "Week in Review" section, William Borders's headline read: "Britain Discovers a Race Problem, to Its Surprise," *New York Times* (April 19, 1981), Section 4, p. 4. For evidence that this 'problem' had a long history in Britain before Brixton, see: Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
11. Conversation with the author, March 2000.
12. Mercer, p. 54.
13. "The Notting Hill Gate neighborhood in the London borough of Kensington was an area of mass Caribbean settlement in the 1940s and '50s; scene of the white-initiated 'race-riots' of 1958, the first carnival was organized by activist Claudia Jones, and the event has subsequently developed as one of the largest street festivals in Britain, held annually on August Bank Holiday Weekend." See *ibid.*, p. 60, note 9. On the Carnival Riots of the 1970s, see Gilroy, p. 93.
14. "I wasn't familiar with the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin at the time [while working on *Territories*], but in retrospect I can see the way they are related." Fusco, p. 18.
15. As Julien's graduating project, *Territories* was produced at Central St. Martin's School of Art and Design, but the Sankofa Film and Video Collective was also involved in its production.
16. Edmund White paraphrases the overheard remark in Arthur Bell, et al., "Extended Sensibilities: The Impact of Homosexual Sensibilities on Contemporary Culture," in *Discourses*, p. 131.
17. Eric Garber, "A Spectacle in Color: The Lesbian and Gay Subculture of Jazz Age Harlem," Martin Duberman, et al., eds. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 1990), p. 330.
18. Isaac Julien, "Confessions of a Snow Queen: Notes on the Making of *The Attendant*," *Cineaction!*, vol. 2 (fall 1993). Also appeared in *Critical Quarterly*, vol., 36 no. 1 (1994), p. 123. Reprinted with permission in this publication, p.77. Julien closes this essay by taking issue with the "Afrocentric gay ending" of Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied*, in which Riggs proposes that "Black men loving black men is the revolutionary act." While mutual black gay sexual desire is undoubtedly one salutary way of responding to the problem of black gay self-hatred, its prescription implicitly casts shame on the experience of desire across racial lines. "To remain closeted on the subject of inter-racial desire has its dangers," Julien writes. These include "the undermining of its avowed political project, risking exposure to the meta-discourse of gossip, e.g., 'Oh, did you know that she still has a white boyfriend, so how can she talk about black men loving black men as the revolutionary act?'" *Ibid.*, p. 126.
19. I am referring to Douglas Gordon's *Through a Looking Glass* (1999), in which the Scorsese scene is appropriated and projected at opposite ends of a gallery, with one of the two projections reversed to create the mirror image and slowed down to create a disjunction in Bickle's 'reflection.'
20. Fisher, quoted in Kobena Mercer, "Ethnicity and Internationality: New British Art and Diaspora-Based Blackness," *Third Text* 49 (Winter 1999–2000), p. 56.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

Many thanks to Amy Sholder and Clay Guthrie for their editorial guidance and support.