

## ON THE EMPATHY OF CODE-SWITCHING: JAFI AND ABDURRAQIB

25 marks

DUE IN 1 WEEK

### INSTRUCTIONS:

#### SECTION 1: DUE FRIDAY

Empathy is unarguably an important part of creativity and the artistic process. But, as art appreciators, is empathy enough? In the New York Times article “Arthur Jafa in Bloom,” Jafa describes his discomfort with white people coming to him and telling him that they were “super moved” by his work, and that they “cried.” He explains, “O.K., is that what art is supposed to do? Does that make you any less whatever the hell it is you are? Is that transformative crying or is it just crying? I don’t know.”

The writer of the article, Megan O’Grady, continues to reflect on Jafa’s description of the problem of empathy. She writes, “As [Jafa and I] talk, I think of what’s behind those earnestly felt but unthought-through white tears: empathy, no doubt, but perhaps also – one hopes – a fresh recognition of unearned privilege and its ethical responsibilities, a sense of just how profoundly we’ve failed to rectify structures and vote out ways of thinking that deny or perpetuate racism.”

Use Hanif Abdurraqib’s discussion of code-switching to complement Arthur Jafa’s reflection on empathy, which he construes as sometimes reductive, sometimes transformative, sometimes both. Quote Abdurraqib’s text and use it as supporting evidence to work out the difference between “transformative crying... [and] just crying”. Consider that when Abdurraqib writes about the “misguided love” in certain “acts of care” (the insistence on code-switching to pass), and the performance of passing “until an ecosystem fully embraces you”, he is writing about a type of empathy that is both reductive and transformative.

By Friday, answer the question: does art consumed online promote reductive empathy, transformative empathy, or a mix of both? Your entry should include one quote from Abdurraqib’s text that supports your comparison and reflection between Abdurraqib and Jafa (you cannot use a section of the text that has already been used by another student). Explain the significance of the quote from Abdurraqib, how the quote relates to Jafa’s discussion of empathy, and based on the comparison between the two artists, whether you think art consumed online often promotes reductive empathy, transformative empathy, or both. **(15 marks, graded for content)**

#### SECTION 2: DUE TUESDAY

On Saturday, check back to read over the comments made by your classmates. **Each student must comment on at least 2 different entries.** Here are some ideas on how you might want to leave a comment: you can agree or disagree (say why you agree or disagree); you can ask a question about the entry; or you can add a further comment to the entry. **(10 marks; graded for completion)**

**ON THE VOYEURISTIC SPECTACLE OF #METOO JOURNALISM:  
TOLENTINO AND ROSE**

**25 marks**

**DUE IN 1 WEEK**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**SECTION 1: DUE FRIDAY**

In the opening paragraph of “I am a knife,” Jacqueline Rose writes:

At the very least we need to ask why it took the fall of Harvey Weinstein to turn the sexual harassment of women into front page news, and whether the endless photo spreads of his female targets weren’t so much designed to provoke outrage or a cry for justice as to grant the voyeur his pleasure. That of course is a pleasure on which the cinema industry thrives and which made these women vulnerable in the first place. Pictures from the archive on Weinstein with one smiling actress after another, his arm proprietorially around various parts of their bodies, deepened the offence – and undermined scattered accounts of resistance to his behaviour, since everyone looked as if they were having such a good time. More institutions and public figures were to follow – from news anchors and comedians to MPs, publishers, schoolteachers and Benedictine monks, but they had less screen potential. I couldn’t help feeling that the actresses were once again being asked to audition for their part. Or being paraded across the red carpet on Oscar night.

Use Jia Tolentino’s *New Yorker* article, “A Strange, Uneven Oscar Night In The Year Of #metoo,” to illustrate Rose’s point that Hollywood benefits from the “screen potential” of the actresses who were part of the “front page news” of the #metoo movement. There are a few ways to unpack what Rose and Tolentino describe as a spectacle that “grants the voyeur his pleasure”.

By Friday, find one quote from Tolentino that supports your reading of Rose’s point (you cannot use a section of the text that has already been used by another student). Explain the significance of the quote from Tolentino, your reading of the paragraph by Rose, and how the quote from Tolentino supports or illustrates your interpretation of Rose. You are trying to unpack and understand the complexity of what it means to be caught in an industry that benefits from the exploitation of women while that same industry decries the exploitation of women. **(15 marks, graded for content)**

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