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Violent Perception and Desire: some one that I am not at all

"I believe in the recognition of devices as devices-- but I also believe in the reality of those devices. In one century men choose to hide their conquests under religion, in another under race. So you and I may recognize the fraudulence of the device in both cases, but the fact remains that a man who has a sword run through him because he will not become a moslem or a Christian --or who is lynched in Mississippi or Zatembe because he is black--is suffering the utter reality of that device of conquest. And it is pointless to pretend that it doesn't exist--merely because it is a lie"- Lorrian Hansberry , Las Blancs

Dutchman is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as being, "some one that I am not at all: as the alternative clause to an assertion or questioned hypothesis". Amiri Baraka's play *Dutchman* powers the notion behind the definition from which the title receives its namesake. The assertion that whiteness is continually linked to seemingly unshakable truths whiteness in terms of race is challenged in the play. Functioning as an ideology or rather *the* ideology which dictates the thoughts, feelings, perceptions and emotions which are attached to the falsity. Whiteness is the ultimate symbol of abject nothingness. It is literally free from possessing anything; it has no characteristics beyond that and as a result is valorized for being pure. However, the false necessity for purity is what drives whiteness to constantly strive to encounter blackness. Blackness is the collection of every color that represents the life force which defines humanity. Blackness has the ability to engulf everything but its collective power is a semblance of the forces that create life. Whiteness functions only based on its premise of purity. This state then encourages the continual seeking of the life forces that possess the inherent ability to color whiteness and create life where there is absence. The lie that whiteness ideology functions though highlights the inability for it to truly exist or be real, because it is nothing.

Baraka highlights the desire for white Americans or the system of whiteness as a whole, to consume black people and or blackness, as a way of dealing with its own

failure to actually be superior— in a way that transcends physical systems of oppression that function successfully because of phenotypical difference. Believing that whiteness is in fact more valid than blackness finds power within the assertions that the definition of the word Dutchman reveals. Not having to realize black people and blackness can be more than what whiteness denotes (being something that it is not at all), allows whiteness to dominate based on limited perceptions of blackness. The play's main characters Clay, a black male and Lula, a white female demonstrate the mode of desire and the detrimental ways perception dictates desire as a form of violence. Lula's opinion is controlled by the ideals of whiteness. She is unable to see Clay as anything other than the stereotypes she believes his blackness represents. Clay, for her is blackness. His individuality is neither relevant nor conceivable because her whiteness keeps her in a constant state of absence from the true understanding of Clay in relation to herself. Clay cannot exist outside of her perception because this stalls her ability to consume him and the blackness he is supposed to embody. Lula's quest for consumption is powered by white ideology and must remain in tact in order for her own identity and whiteness to remain relevant. When Clay attempts to challenge this he is killed. Clay and the blackness he represents to Lula are not allowed to be real outside of the realm of the white gaze; which exists only to consume blackness in order to defeat the continual reminder of the life force whiteness has no access to. The violent consumption is the only way to seemingly benefit from the encounter without having to acknowledge its equality, validity or power.

The concept of desire is centered on consumption. The function of desire is most commonly understood within the academy as being best defined by Hegel. Robert Stern describes Hegel's explanation of why beings have desire due to the fact that "the subject

attempts to preserve its individuality by negating the world around it, the difficulty with desire however, is that it involves the destruction of the object”(71). While Lula’s desire for Clay may be interpreted through a Hegelian lens doing so exclusively is problematic. Hegel’s assertion of thingness on the object to whom the person has desire for, automatically limits Clay’s ability to be something more than an object rather than a life force for Lula to consume solely because desire in this sense is equated to destruction. This definition however does not embrace Lula’s desire to be included in Clay’s blackness. According to Sterns interpretation of Hegel, desire functions based on destruction alone. According to this logic Lula’s wanting Clay means that her initial desire or quest is to kill him; when in fact, her initial want is to be near him, experience him and consume him in a way that excites her pleasure in addition to reaffirming her power. Objectification is essential to viewing Clay as Lula’s point of Hegelian desire. While her character can be linked to a Hegelian interpretation, it cannot be accurately applied until after Clay persistently denies her the right to experience him in the way she yearns for. Baraka presents a new complexity to the ideal of a subservient victim who is sought out simply to be victimized, his work suggests that the presence of the desirable or Clay reminds the consumer that the object in question has something that they do not. Yearning for something that insights ideas of pleasure often results in the cognitive understanding of wanting to possess or consume the object to which one identifies with being enjoyable. The term desire means to “have a strong wish for; to long for, to covet, to crave”. The connection to coveting and craving reveal the inherent violence in the practice of desire. Desiring something or someone develops out of a want to move

beyond the identification of the possibility of pleasure to eventual consumption. Lula's desire is actualized in violent consumption.

Scene one of *Dutchman* begins with Lula, seeing Clay. His being cannot come into reality for her until she sees him, the possibility of him existing as something or some one other than a conquest is not conceivable. For her, his being relies heavily upon her ability to see him, desire him and eventually consume him when the desire is not reciprocated. The stage directions note, "she stops beside Clay's seat and hangs languidly from the strap...she is only waiting for him to notice her before she sits"(Jones,5). Here it becomes clear that Lula's identity rests largely upon the fact that she is someone to be desired, sought after, and admired. Her whiteness has positioned her as a being who is associated with representing superiority, therefore she is supposed to insight the reciprocation of the male gaze, especially the black male gaze. Sexual desire then, would solidify her existence and reaffirm the notion that those who do not fit into the category of whiteness wish to do so by having lustful encounters with women like Lula. Lula's need to be seen by Clay develops from the fascination that bell hooks argues white ideology believes "encounters with Otherness are clearly marked as more exciting, more intense, and more threatening" (hooks,186). The possibility of the excitement draws Lula to Clay while also revealing her inability to define herself outside of the realm of not being some one who is equally enticing and exciting. Her assumed superiority is something that dictates the order in which American society operates and is forcibly sought even beyond organized systems of education and socialization, here the body becomes a physical representation of whiteness' believed ability to practice the ideological domination physically upon Clay's person through a sexual encounter. Lula

affirms her need to encounter Clay's blackness by saying "I even got into this train, going some other way than mine. Walked down the aisle...searching you out" (Jones,7). Lula searches for Clay so that he may affirm her whiteness, or the desire that she believes her whiteness ought to insight, when in fact her want to interact with him further highlights the inadequacy of whiteness ideology. Baraka develops Lula as an example of the failures of whiteness to truly represent superiority, when it actively seeks interaction with otherness. While Lula is "the symbol of all the arrogance inherent in whiteness"(Martin, 62) she is also a symbol of the insecurities that accompany the idea of whiteness because it always needs to be reaffirmed and compared to blackness in order to valorize the importance of the ideology.

Lula's desire not only finds its validity in the action of wanting to consume the blackness metaphorically, but Lula's craving for Clay seeks to be realized through a sexual experience. The proposal of their sexual encounter is seeped in mocking disdain from Lula, "Come on, Clay. Let's rub bellies on the train. The nasty. The nasty."(Jones, 31). Lula's sexual aggression towards Clay suggests that she believes her whiteness affords her the right to consume Clay if she chooses. Her position as one who intrinsically insights desire also correlates with her assumed ability to enact desire upon herself through a sexual encounter with Clay. Violating Clay asserts her power over him, while at the same time positioning Lula as some one who is desperate to encounter the blackness that she believes transcends Clay's individual personhood. Having to take sexual pleasure from Clay reveals the inconsistency in the myth of whiteness. Clay does not desire the whiteness that Lula believes he should, and as a result does not want a sexual encounter with her. Clay refuses to be consumed by Lula, which disrupts the

power structure from which Lula establishes her own identity. The act of violating Clay for Lula functions on the premise that “White racism, imperialism, and sexist domination prevail by courageous consumption. It is by eating the Other that one asserts power and privilege” (hooks,197). In an attempt to assert her power and privilege over Clay Lula also reveals the insecurities that enable the powerful to develop a fear and fascination with blackness. This fear originates from the subconscious realization that longing for a direct encounter with blackness reveals that whiteness is lacking. The disruption comes as a result of knowing that the ideology functions based on the idea that it wants for nothing, since it has the ability to over power everything else. Being powerful however, does not reconcile the understanding that whiteness is deficient and often searches outside of itself in order to reaffirm its own validity.

Because Lula strives to consume Clay’s blackness she also refutes it as well. Accepting his blackness in terms of her desire, allows her to enhance her own whiteness. Beyond this enhancement, Lula has no interest in Clay outside of her designation and understanding of him. The essay “Dutchman Reconsidered” claims that Lula “murders Clay, and that act is a merciless pushing away...It is white America telling Black America, no”(Martin, 62). Not only is Lula’s murder of Clay white America telling black America no, it is a way to eliminate the possibility of transcending the stereotypes which bring comfort to white America and encourage the continual discrimination of black America. This symbolic “no” holds a significance that reaches far beyond the rejection of black Americans as equals; it embodies the intrinsic struggle to refute the possibility that whiteness and its ideologies are a fabrication. This enables the systematic oppression of anyone that do not fit the mold whiteness functions within. “No”, is the refusal to come

to terms with the limitations of whiteness and its ideals as anything other than exaggerated insecurities. These uncertainties develop as a result of the subconscious realization that whiteness and blackness are an insufficient means to solely base ones definition of self. In this instance we encounter whiteness's decided inability to acknowledge that race is a construct. Lula's forceful rejection in response to accepting Clay as a person who symbolizes blackness but cannot be blackness, highlights the failure of whiteness to move beyond classifications that equate personhood with colorlessness (because both blackness and whiteness are the extreme representations of the absence of color); while at the same time relying on the fact that these things must be perceived as true.

Aside from the moral implications the play highlights in terms of its views on the idea of whiteness and the evils it seems to impose upon black people, critics also suggest that the dramatic structure of the play lends itself to interpreting Clay as a Christ figure; "there are levels of meaning in the play at which Lula, the white liberal, appeals to Clay, a Christ figure" (Ceynowa,15). Viewing Clay as a Christ figure connects his murder to Lula as the ever-present symbolic rejection of his ability to be something more than her limited idea of blackness, rather than a black person. Christ represents the ultimate form of purity, often thought of as the perfect human being, who is almost exclusively linked to whiteness. The idea of goodness, the ability to save and the representation of all things holy are embodied in the ideology of "whiteness". Relating Clay to this type of perfection, would not only force Lula to be reverent to him, but would also force her to recognize that her own personal status as a white woman within the play is centered around the worship and intrinsic belief in the good that Judeo-Christian values in

America suggest are linked exclusively to whiteness; but are represented by Clay. If Clay can be substituted to represent Christ then Lula's person by contrast, can represent the devil. Whiteness and blackness are then assigned new meanings. From this standpoint, the dichotomy suggests that blackness is good and embodies all things holy and whiteness is bad and signifies the ultimate evil. Lula's recognition of this possibility requires an intense reaction. Being rejected by the black Christ figure illuminates her position as evil, rather than pure, desirable and superior. Just as Christians are encouraged to draw near to Christ, Lula also wants to be near Clay. She yearns to physically encounter him, but understanding this causes her to reject the possibility that Clay can transcend her idea of blackness and the limitations blackness should represent. Clay must be killed in order to prohibit the possibility that him or some one like him could transcend the notion that whiteness is superior and incapable of being fully right and entirely associated with good. Clay's transcendence would prove that whiteness now represents that which is absent of all things right and is instead void of substantial power.

While desire insights violence in the play it does not reduce Clay to victimization, but rather presents him as a person who Lula desires to abuse because of his refusal to be compliant. The subconscious want to take or receive something from another in the form of pleasure cannot be fully realized until some consumption ensues. Whereas Lula wants Clay to be a recipient of her sexual aggression it is important to note that, "Clay allows Lula to bait him, taunt him, and put him down because it is 'all in the game', though deadly serious. Thus the view of Clay as a victim—and Lula as a victimizer does not adequately account for their roles in the structure of the play"(Ceynowa,16). Clay must not be reduced to a victim of Lula's persecution of him because in her attempt to do so,

she becomes entranced by the blackness he represents and in way becomes a casualty to the limitations of her own whiteness. The idea of his blackness consumes her because she wishes to be apart of it. When she realizes that no form of consumption can place her in the space of blackness, she responds negatively. There are suggestions that Lula is “not a metaphor for white America”(Ceynowa,18). While it is clear that Lula does represent the ideology of whiteness and may personify the collective representation of some of the ills that white America causes black people like Clay, she is also a metaphor for the desire of whiteness to consume and attempt to embody otherness. If Lula does not represent white America, she does represent the desire whiteness has to encounter blackness and consume it.

The idea of perception is also crucial in terms of understanding the driving force behind much of Lula’s desire to consume and control Clay so that his blackness can serve to empower her whiteness. When examining Clay, the stage directions note the Lula looks quickly at Clay and says “What a face. You know, you could be a handsome man.”(Jones12). Using the word “could” while making her observation is important for two reasons. Since Clay represents blackness to Lula he can be substituted for any and every black man, therefore the possibility of him being handsome is likely but also unlikely. Second, he could be handsome if Lula was able to admit to herself that some one who embodies and or represents blackness can actually be handsome. Not being white would prevent Clay from ever actually being recognized as attractive through the lens of white standards of beauty. Lula’s strange response to Clay’s appearance “indicates her inability to face the fact that Clay could be beautiful”(Rice,47). Lula must live in denial of Clay’s beauty because her awareness of that possibility is dictated by

whiteness, which asserts that Clay is not allowed to be beautiful or desirable because he is not white. Consciously acknowledging Clay's beauty would also highlight the inappropriateness of her desire to consume him. Beautiful things are not to be destroyed, rather they are to be valued, sought after, and revered. Doing this to Clay would transfer his status as something to be appropriated or consumed as an affirmation of her own beauty, rather than a negation that must accompany the fact that she recognizes something about herself in him. Aristotle's *Poetics* suggest that, "the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is me.'" (3.1). Seeing beauty in something or someone functions on the ability to relate the self back to that object or person, which in turn also requires recognizing and acknowledging commonality. Not doing so, allows Lula to remain someone distinctly special from Clay, she can sustain her whiteness by not acknowledging Clay's beauty. Understanding his likeness to her own would suggest equality rather than the strict hierarchy to which whiteness adheres because it is based on difference rather than similarities.

Because Lula is unable to perceive Clay beyond his function of representing blackness for her, she also interprets his refusal to be angry or disturbed by her attempt to consume him as a sign of weakness and a lingering reminder of the enslavement of black people. Failing to insight a dramatic response, in spite of knowing that his cooperation with her reinforces her feigned superiority, reveals the irrational desire to both consume and control, " You are afraid of white people. And your father was. Uncle Tom Big Lip!(Jones, 33)." While Clay has managed to remain calm and entertain Lula's game he finally retaliates, but not with words, stage directions indicate his response "Slaps her as

hard as he can, across the mouth. Lula's head bangs against the back of the seat. When she raises it again, Clay slaps her again."(Jones 33). Clay's passivity is interpreted by Lula as a sign of weakness and his active recognition of one who is positioned as an inferior being because of his blackness. Lula believes that as a white person she has the power to determine and define Clay's blackness in spite of knowing nothing about Clay or blackness. Her whiteness gives her the authority to comment on his ability to remain calm in the face of the racial atrocities that Lula's whiteness represents. Lula "expresses the love-hate schizophrenia of a white society aggravated by a black man who refuses to assert his own identity"(Rice, 49). Heavy criticism is placed on Clay's lack of rage. He is often perceived as having a "slave mentality"(Rice,54), however, this interpretation finds its basis in the ideology of whiteness. Having to force the idea of being enslaved back onto Clay's person only enforces the misconceptions that Lula comprehends Clay's being through. Lula wants Clay to mirror the mindset of an enslaved person who has been dictated by her whiteness so that she may continue to consume his being without consequence or conviction. Even if Clay asserted his own identity, she is unable to see this because she desires him through a lens of consumption to validate her whiteness. Lula's ideology allows her to remain blind to the possibility that even his calm sensibilities can actually be symptoms of his rage. Automatically reducing Clay's character to that of an Uncle Tom or an enslaved person highlights the ways in which Clay is in fact a Dutchman. Lula does not know Clay and she cannot even see Clay. Her inability to understand his being beautiful also prevents her from understanding that this supposed self hatred "should be viewed as rage turned inward rather than as shame in being black and a desire to be white"(Poussaint,129). Reducing Clay to an Uncle Tom

character only facilitates Lula's ability to overshadow and ignore Clay's personhood as anything more than what white ideology deems an acceptable positioning or reading of Clay. To view Clay as more than an Uncle Tom means to truly understand the Dutchman that accompanies all blackness. If Clay represents blackness to Lula, he has the capability of being more than one thing. He can be an Uncle Tom for her, since that reading caters to those who believe in the "truth" of whiteness ideology, but he is much more. Recognizing the possibility of Clay being more than an imitation of whiteness is much too problematic for whiteness ideology because it forces the recognition of the incoherence of the argument that whiteness is superior in the first place.

The refusal to accept Clay as anything other than a failed example of a positive, strong black identity reverts back to the understanding that for Lula or whiteness, there is no reconciliation of the possibility to desire him as a symbol of black personhood. Desire is a personal experience, one that takes place in the secrecy of the mind, which can exist and flourish without needing to ever be actualized in order to remain real in one's psyche. Lula's desire for Clay takes place in a subway car. The subway is underground, removed in a sense from the public sphere it is the " 'underbelly of the city, heaped in modern myth', it is a place of darkness and potential danger, lonely, beyond recourse, crowded with humanity but massively impersonal."(Rice,54). This understanding of the subway functions to represent the repressed desire Lula has for Clay, but also the interpretation of Clay's character himself. Desire is something that can be harmful to Lula's very existence because having that want suggests an inadequacy within whiteness to satisfy its own yearnings. Lula's longings can only be recognized in the space of the subway, or in the underbelly of the city, which is representative of the underbelly of the white

conscious. There her wishes can be quickly disposed and consumed all in the space of a seemingly predictable safe ride dictated by the modern myth of whiteness. Her journey is bound by traditional comings and goings, in a space of certainty that always travels in the same direction. That direction is whiteness. Clay, like the subway represents for Lula a place of darkness for many reasons. His physical self is a dark place, which she wishes to belong and consume. Her desire for this dark place is hidden in the metaphoric black space in her mind, not to be explored for fear of recognizing its existence as a reminder of the inadequacy of whiteness. Desiring Clay is dangerous and can only be reconciled by eliminating the reality of both.

Understanding that one of the consequences of Lula's desire is a violent rejection of that want in the form of murder explains why the killing occurs, but it does not explain what the murder means. The murder of Clay renders no actual satisfaction for Lula. Satisfaction is one of the motivating forces behind fulfilling desire and by attempting to reconcile this; Lula's murder of Clay and the blackness he represents to her ought to have rendered some feeling of satisfaction. The stage directions indicate the opposite, "as he is bending over her, the girl brings up a small knife and plunges it into Clay's chest. Twice. He slumps across her knees, his mouth working stupidly." (Jones, 33). Her response to the murder, rather than relief from having removed herself from the reality of having to confront the haunting desire that Clay's blackness insights leaves her rather apathetic, "Sorry is right,. Sorry is the rightest thing you have ever said. Get this man off me! Hurry now! Open the door and throw his body out. And all of you get off at the next stop."(Jones 37). The cool rejection of his murder is also a dismissal of his life as well. Not being remorseful or even moved enough to feel satisfaction in having killed Clay, relies

partially on the fact that Lula understands subconsciously that killing Clay does not free her from desiring blackness. Because Clay is only one representation of blackness for her, his is one of the many forms of blackness that will always insight desire in Lula. Killing Clay does not free her from that desire; it only frees her from wanting Clay. Understanding that Clay's murder could be "symbolizing genocide"(Rice, 42) highlights the fact that in spite of the forcible removal of Clay, his murder must also symbolize something greater. Killing Clay must represent the continual practice of eliminating blackness so that she will never have to confront the truth of wanting to become a part of it or participate in the experience. Lula's negative reaction towards Clay's perceived Uncle Tom status is intertwined with the fact that her real desire is "not to make the Other over in one's image but to become the Other"(hooks,185). Not being able to be black, or represent blackness first relies upon the understanding that Lula wants to do these things. Her inability to accomplish this is so disturbing that not even cold -hearted murder can change the yearning she wishes to erase the reality of. Because in some way, she always wants to encounter blackness, the blackness she knows exists beyond her limited understanding. The unknown is enticing and frightening and having to come to terms with this understanding forces Lula to realize that whiteness does not embody whatever it is that blackness does.

The meaning of Clay's murder extends beyond Lula's inability to reconcile her personal desire for him. It is difficult to understand this desire because in order to fully comprehend this want, she must first be able to digest the fact that Clay actually exists beyond her subjective realm of "thingness". Lula relegates Clay to a place of "thingness" because "to white, the idea that a Negro could be a man remains ludicrous"(Rice, 47).

Assigning manhood, or more specifically personhood to Clay, would vilify Lula's action in killing him. Not grasping the reality of Clay's personhood, justifies her murder of him because she is attempting to restore herself by eliminating the reality of his life. Clay's murder for Lula means the restoration of self and whiteness. The temporary disruption of her reality in relation to the ideals of whiteness is not allowed to function beyond the space of the subway ride. There must be a defined beginning and ending. Clay's blackness and even his black identity must end when Lula or whiteness says it should. His murder is symbolic of Lula's ability to dictate the timeframe at which his presence may interfere with her interpretation of self. Once the realization of his reality is apparent to Lula, that also means her desire for him is recognizable. The denial of his personhood is exemplified when Lula declares, "You aint no nigger, you're just a dirty white man"(Jones, 31). The only conceivable identity Clay may have is that of a white man. This will justify her desire for him without challenging the ideology that he cannot be desirable or even real outside of her perception of whiteness, which overshadows all of her understanding.

While critics suggest that Clay can be likened to an enslaved character or easily identifiable with Uncle Tom, these suggestions also remove responsibility from the system of whiteness ideology and from Lula. The assumption that "it is the black man's responsibility, the play suggests, to preserve himself and to prevent white society from converting its racism into overt criminality"(Rice, 59) falls short. Although in theory black people as individuals should fight against the oppression that whiteness enables, it must also be the task for white ideology to be acknowledged by characters such as Lula. Her refusal to understand Clay's personhood, negates the possibility of Clay being able to

take responsibility at all. His existence to Lula would have to be tangible in order to combat her oppression in the first place. Lula's refusal to see or perceive Clay as anything other than her own personal failure to value whiteness above blackness makes the task of him taking a stand against her domination unrealistic. The responsibility must first be assigned to the system at fault, or in this case Lula. Assigning accountability to Clay only encourages Lula's reaction. In denying her desire she also denies her ability to see beyond her whiteness. Not comprehending anything beyond her white perception is what keeps Lula alive and in turn must kill Clay. Bearing the burden of responsibility for Lula's actions is a poor solution to the problem of Clay's murder. This train of thought would suggest that Clay's inability to be responsible may be derived from fear. Being fearful then is what allows Lula to remain in her position, but, "if Negroes ever do overcome fear, the white man has only two choices: kill them or let them be free"(Poussaint,138). Since it is beyond Lula's ability to allow Clay be "free" and exist outside of her perception, she must kill him. Freeing Clay from the confines of Lula's perception would make his blackness real, it would also make her desire of that blackness real. The unreality of Clay must remain in tact in order for Lula to understand herself as a white woman.

Clay directly confronts Lula's inability to accept him as something other than a false perception of blackness, which represents every black person. His refusal signifies Jones' attempt to highlight the ways in which perception and desire function in conjunction with the oppressive nature of whiteness ideology. Clay's forceful rejection of Lula's limitations points to the limits of her perception, " you don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pure

pumping black heart. You don't ever know that. And I sit here, in this buttoned-up suit, to keep myself from cutting all your throats.”(Jones, 34). Clay's outburst speaks to the lie that is whiteness and also the lie that sustains Lula's belief that she does not have to acknowledge her desire for Clay. White ideology as a device, fosters the development and subsequent supremacy of Clay by Lula. She is able to kill him because she cannot actually see him. Her lack of awareness for who he truly is, or could be remains protected by the device of whiteness.

Dutchman offers a complicated dialogue regarding the interaction between understanding of self, perception and identification. Distinguishing between the reality of race as a construct and the ways in which this construct dictates the interaction between Lula and Clay highlights Jones' ability to force the audience to question the lies upon which racist ideology operates in the first place. There is no simple justification to interpret either character in the play, but Lula's inability to deem Clay worthy of her desire places the ideals of whiteness at the forefront. Rejecting the possibility that someone who is black or the idea of blackness in general can be equal based on a constructed ideology has the ability to disarm the way in which whiteness identifies itself. In accepting Clay's desirability, Lula would have to reject the lie that her white identity is based upon. The lie must be believed in order to remain functional and in turn the myth of racial superiority can only operate fully if those who challenge this lie, as Clay attempts to are eliminated.