

Out of the Blue (*Ex Nihilo*)

In the pandemonium of image
 I present you with the universal Blue
 Blue an open door to soul
 An infinite possibility
 Becoming tangible
 —Derek Jarman, *Blue* (1993)

First is blue, firstness, and then at the end, still blue. At the end, always still the firstness of blue. Derek Jarman's last film, *Blue*, begins and ends in blue, running blue from beginning to end. From this blue, out of the blue, *ex blue* comes a voice: not one, but several voices—those of John Quentin, Nigel Terry, Derek Jarman, and Tilda Swinton. He and she blue, they blue, the film remains blue, the voices blue, everything beginning and ending in blue, in and from Jarman's blue movie. An entire film rendered in blue, every element turned blue, until nothing remains but a blue image, including its sound. All blues, an image of blue, where everything ends.

But can an image be blue? Not the image of blue, the blue of an image, or an image in blue, but a form of being, of being blue. Can an image yield to being blue? Not in the form of a passage—a movement toward a referent rendered blue, in blue—but as an end that arrives at its own limit in blueness. A blue with no beyond but blue. Not a blue picture, but a picture of blue, the blue image that ends in itself, in a blueness without end. And could this blueness constitute an image rather than taking its place? Can it tranquilize the “pandemonium of image”? Is blue an image or the absence of an image, its negation? “Color itself is a degree of darkness,” says Goethe;¹ blue emerges from the darkness as a “stimulating negation.”² Can one imagine a blue without negation, or does blue exist always in negation—from the negation of an image, as its *negative*, as the reference to an absence that serves as its referent? Is blue the absence of an image, the image of the absence of an image? Blue of noon; big blue; blue sky; blue moon; “earth is blue” (first Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin and then David Bowie); *tekhelet* (a blue dye, pronounced t-CHELL-et); going blue; code blue; black-and-blue; red, white, and blue; perfect blue; blue elephant (E. E. Cummings); Krishna (Hinduism's blue god); blue chips; blue ribbon; blue stocking; blue jeans; blue collar; Der Blaue Reiter; *blaue Blume* (Novalis's “blue flower”); blue laws; all blues; blue note; blue book; blueprints; Bolak; blue language; blue blood; blue beard; blue balls; blew kisses; blue funk; bluegrass; blue steel; blue cheese; blueberries; blue (now green) screens; Egyptian blue; *Blue Angel*; *Blue Velvet*; *Blue Hawaii*;

Blue Valentine; blue film; Blue Meanie: “Are you bluish, you don’t look bluish”?³ Is blue always blue? Is it one, universal blue? Are all other colors blue; are violets blue? “Blue gives other colors their vibration,” says Cézanne.⁴ Is blue unique among colors? Aren’t all colors unique, each unlike any other, each with its own history of meanings? Is blue a meta-color that makes all other colors possible, as Cézanne suggests, a vibration rather than an image? Or the absence of an image rather than an image, suffused with absence as such, with the specter of a referent no longer there, no longer visible? An image of death, or the image of the death of an image? Like a painting over painting, painted over until nothing is left of its color but color? What takes its place there, in the over-rendered image, in the first instance of an image that no longer leads to the second or thirdness of the image as a sign? Suspended in blue by a “universal blue,” Derek Jarman says, in the “pandemonium of image.” What emerges in this blue expanse that erases the image—this and all images?

Color poses a unique problem for the image, for painted images as well as for photographic and digital images. What distinguishes a color from its image: blue from the image of blue? Are they one and the same, as Roland Barthes says of the photograph and its referent, like “laminated objects whose leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both: the windowpane and the landscape”?⁵ Are signs and referents distinguishable in a color? Or do colors cling to objects and images, as André Bazin says of photographic ontologies in which “the photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it”?⁶ Does a color possess any objecthood in and of itself, or is it inseparable from other things? “Color is not an object out there in space waiting to be named,” says Bruce R. Smith, “it is a phenomenon, an event that happens between an object and a subject.”⁷ “Between an object and a subject,” color is the event between the two, the phenomenon of betweenness made visible in color. “With color there is no ‘thing-in-itself,’ ” Smith says. “Color asks to be thought about, not as an object to be observed or as a text to be read, but as a transaction to be experienced.”⁸ But what happens to the object in this transaction, in the event of color?

Are colors in this sense—in the sense that Bazin describes it—ontologically photographic, “objects themselves” determined, as it were, photographically? No longer dissociable from any object, yet never objects themselves except when perceived through the *objectif* of a camera? Can one photograph a color; take a picture of a color, of color itself? No, according to Josef Albers: “Color photography deviates still more from eye vision than black-and-white photography. Blue and red are overemphasized to such an extent that their brightness is exaggerated.”⁹ Albers is speaking specifically about the photographic reproduction of painted blue, but his assertion raises intriguing questions about the duplication of color. Is an exaggerated blue any less blue? (Or any more blue?) Is a photographed blue any less authentic in its exaggeration of brightness? Is the photograph of blue an image of blue? Aren’t photographs inseparable from the objects themselves, as Bazin says? Doesn’t photography, following Bazin’s logic of ontological realism, thus render blue an object? Is photographic blue a shade of blue, a bright blue? And are different shades of blue any more or less blue? Azure, cerulean, cobalt, cyan, indigo, Prussian (Berlin, Parisian), sapphire, teal, turquoise,

ultramarine—are these shades or variants of blue, different blues, or are they synonyms of a single blue? When is blue no longer blue? Blue may be photographic, but cannot be photographed except in exaggeration. Would the exaggerated brightness of a photographic blue no longer be blue, but a betrayal of blue? Is there a true blue, true to itself, true to the idea and ideal of blue, of blueness? Is there a transcendental blue that signifies but also constitutes blueness? Is there a line or frame that separates colors from images and objects, or are they inseparable one from the other, one already intrinsic to the other? Blue is blue without analogy, already a digital blue, code blue.

If color can be an image, then an image of what? And what type of image? Is color abstract, an abstraction of something else (an affect or idea, a semiotic), or is it figurative? Is blue a picture of blue, an index of blue, a blueprint? And what about a blue film? Of Jarman's film, Vivian Sobchack says, "*Blue* is not *image*-less. Rather, it is *figure*-less."¹⁰ *Blue* is a figureless image of blue. Do figureless images unfold in time; are they filmic or photographic, moving or still? Can time be blue, is there a blue time? Could one imagine a blue temporality, marking and measuring time in blue? In Paul Sharits's *T, O, U, C, H, I, N, G* (1969), a film composed in large part of single, monochromatic frames, each frame serves as a cinematographic counter, each color one-twenty-fourth of a second.¹¹ *T, O, U, C, H, I, N, G* measures time in frames, each differentiated from the other in a flash, often a flash of color.¹² Jarman's *Blue* runs blue for seventy-six minutes, but is it the same blue that continues from frame to frame or are the 114,000 blue frames different blues, one from the other, each one a distinct blue, a separate instance of blue? If the flicker film defined for the structuralist filmmakers the zero degree of cinema, the reduction of all cinema to its absolute form—the alternation of differentiated frames—then is Jarman's film, which eliminates the atomic unit of the film from its visual register, still a film? Is Jarman's *Blue* cinema at all or rather a series of blues, an assemblage of media TV and radio, since its premiere took place through other media, a simulcast on Channel 4 and BBC Radio 3? As a cinema in pieces, an *ex-cinema* disaggregated, each element performed separately, a deconstructed blue, is *Blue* a performance, a live blue and living specter of blue? Only in the end is it a film, once it is no longer live, living. A blue phantom. Is a past blue different from a future blue? What might a history of blue look like? Blue?

Michel Pastoureau has written a Eurocentric history of the color, *Blue: The History of a Color*. It raises a question about the relation between colors and cultures, colors and nations.¹³ Do colors respect national, even nationalist boundaries? Is Prussian blue still Prussian when it becomes alternately Berlin or Parisian blue? What happens to Prussian blue when it is imported to Japan and used extensively in *ukiyo-e*—does it become Japanese? Are there national blues? Pastoureau follows the movement of the color from antiquity to the present, from a reviled color of barbarism to the favorite color of more than half the population of Europe and North America today. Among the many changes of blue throughout the history that Pastoureau recounts, one of the more remarkable dimensions of blue is its relatively late entry into history. "Although blue is present in natural elements that go back almost to the earth's formation," he says, "it has taken humanity many long years to learn how to reproduce and use

it”:

Contrary to what one might imagine, the social, artistic, and religious uses of the color blue do not reach back into the mists of time. Blue was not present even in the later Paleolithic period, when nomadic tribes with long-established social systems made the first cave paintings. In these images we find reds, blacks, browns, and ochers of all shades, but no blue or green and hardly any white. The situation was almost exactly the same a few millennia later, in the Neolithic period, when human societies had become sedentary and the first dyeing techniques appeared. Dyeing was done in red and yellow long before blue was used.¹⁴

In Pastoureau’s history, blue was there from the beginning but late to arrive, prehistoric without being historical, elemental before cultural. It enters history late, even though it was there at the “earth’s formation”—an originary blue, only later reproduced and used. Is the history of blue, of its reproduction and use, an image of blue, of an elemental blue?

The slow appearance of blue in the history of colors led many, according to Pastoureau, to question whether ancient peoples were able to see blue at all. “The modest role played by blue in ancient societies,” he says, “and the difficulties many ancient languages have in even naming it caused many nineteenth-century researchers to wonder if the men and women of antiquity could see the color blue, or at least see it as we do today.”¹⁵ Nietzsche repeats this belief in *Daybreak* (1881), attributing color blindness to the ancient Greek propensity for thought. He says, “How different nature must have appeared to the Greeks if, as we have to admit, their eyes were blind to blue and green, and instead of the former saw deep brown, instead of the latter yellow.”¹⁶ Nietzsche argues that to the color-blind Greeks, nature must have looked more like mankind, “since in their eyes the coloration of mankind also preponderated in nature and the latter as it were floated in the atmosphere of human coloration!”¹⁷ Color blindness, specifically the inability to recognize blue and green (seeing in their places deep brown and yellow, respectively), created an artificial continuity between mankind and nature, according to Nietzsche, which is reflected in Greek thought. To this, Nietzsche adds, parenthetically, “Blue and green dehumanize nature more than anything else does.”¹⁸ The evolution of human eyesight and the further differentiation of color that followed—for Nietzsche, the appearance of blue and green—separated mankind from nature, dehumanizing nature by rendering it in colors distinct from those of mankind. Blue and green, the inhuman colors.

Nietzsche concludes his account of chromatic evolution with the idea that as the human capacity to perceive the color spectrum expanded with evolution, “mankind learned to take *pleasure* in the sight of existence: existence, that is to say, was in the first instance presented to them in one or two colors, and thus presented harmoniously: mankind then as it were practiced on these few shades before being able to go over to several. And even today many an individual works himself out of a partial colorblindness into a richer seeing and distinguishing: in which process, however, he not only discovers new enjoyments but is also *obliged to give up and relinquish* some of his earlier ones.”¹⁹ Color adds pleasure to the “sight of existence.” More color, in particular blue and green, adds further pleasure by dehumanizing nature, separating it from mankind, and in the process, forcing mankind to experience new pleasures by relinquishing older ones, in particular those afforded by a “partial colorblindness.” The

advent of blue (and green) brings new pleasures, making new enjoyments possible, but it also forces one to relinquish some older pleasures in the sight and thought of existence.

The relative invisibility of blue in antiquity—in contrast to its high visibility later on—led some to conjecture whether the physiological as well as semiological structures of human beings had evolved from an ocular system that blocks blue and thus prevents it from entering the linguistic and symbolic registers to one that recognizes blue. (At work in Nietzsche's speculative evolution is the emergence of visual perception in contrast to thought, Greek thought specifically. And, from the enhanced perception, new pleasures.) In the historical ascent of blue emerges a theory of the transformation of human perception, thought, and pleasure, and the newly acquired capacity to recognize what is always there. But in this account, what is the difference between color blindness and blindness: are they one and the same?

Goethe identifies a phenomenon he calls “acyanoblepsia,” the inability to see blue. This “morbid impression,” according to Goethe, creates a confusion of colors, in particular blue and red.²⁰ He gives the example of “two individuals not more than twenty years of age, who were thus affected.”²¹ “Both,” says Goethe, “had bluish-grey eyes,” as if the morbid impressions followed from a physiological disposition, although Goethe classifies acyanoblepsia as a deviation and pathology. These individuals, according to Goethe, regularly confused blue with a rose color, seeing the sky as rose, and calling roses blue. Questioning whether they saw either color or any color at all, Goethe determines that without the ability to see blue, violet and green disappear as well. “Pure red occupies the place of blue and violet,” Goethe says, “and in again mixing with yellow and red produces orange where green should be.”²² The entire pathology originates from the disappearance of blue from the color spectrum.

Light is rendered visible to human beings in the wavelength range of 400 to 700 nm (nanometers). This range constitutes the visible spectrum for human beings, with violet (400 nm), indigo (445 nm), and blue (475 nm) at the shorter end of the wavelength spectrum, and orange (590 nm) and red (650 nm) at the longest end. Energy with wavelengths too long for human beings to see is considered “redder than red” and called “infrared.” Wavelengths too short for human perception are “bluer than blue,” or “ultraviolet.” Bluer than blue light is invisible. Is blue bluer than blue only when it becomes invisible? When the wavelengths slip below 400 nm, is the invisible ultraviolet radiation still blue, bluer than blue? Can blueness be measured, that is, the quantity of blueness in blue? Perhaps with a “cyanometer,” an instrument invented by Horace-Bénédict de Saussure in the 1760s to measure “blueness,” specifically the blueness of the sky.²³

In his 1911 treatise *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Wassily Kandinsky elaborates a semiotics of color that posits two antitheses, yellow and blue, to which he ascribes a metaphysics of warmth and cold, light and dark, respectively. Kandinsky explains his dynamic of yellow and blue forces:

Two great divisions of color occur to the mind at the outset: into warm and cold, and into light and dark. To each color there are therefore four shades of appeal—warm and light or warm and dark, or cold and light or cold and dark.

Generally speaking, warmth or cold in a color means an approach respectively to yellow or to blue. . . . The movement

is a horizontal one, the warm colors approaching the spectator, the cold ones retreating from him.²⁴

In this scheme, blue moves away from the spectator toward dark and cold. Blue defines for Kandinsky a movement of retreat, a movement into itself, a withdrawal. Blue “moves in upon itself, like a snail retreating into its shell, and draws away from the spectator.”²⁵ While yellow approaches the spectator and “bursts forth aimlessly in every direction,” blue retreats from the spectator into blue until it becomes completely blue.²⁶ (“These statements have no scientific basis,” adds Kandinsky in a footnote, “but are founded purely on spiritual experience.”)²⁷ Before him, Goethe also imagines a “polarity” of color located between the antipodes of plus (yellow) and minus (blue).²⁸ Snail blue, slow blue, blue within blue, blue from the outside in.

On February 28, 2011, the *New York Times* reported a new discovery regarding the biblical blue “tekhelet” in Israel. The article’s author, Dina Kraft, writes: “One of the mysteries that scholars have puzzled over for centuries is the exact shade of blue represented by ‘tekhelet,’ which the Bible mentions as the color of ceremonial robes donned by high priests and ritual prayer tassels worn by the common Israelite.”²⁹ “What was known about tekhelet (pronounced t-CHELL-et),” she continues, “was that the Talmud said it was produced from the secretion of the sea snail, which is still found on Israeli beaches.”³⁰ The blue secretions are from the *Murex trunculus* snail; Kandinsky’s heavenly blue snail, it seems. The exact quality of this blue has remained a mystery, says Kraft, who explains: “Traditional interpretations have characterized tekhelet as a pure blue, symbolic of the heavens so that Jews would remember God.”³¹ An Israeli scholar, Zvi C. Koren, “a professor specializing in the analytical chemistry of ancient colorants,” claims to have discovered the first known physical sample of this metaphysical snail blue. Tekhelet, which means “light blue” in modern Hebrew, is one of the most important colors for religious Jews, but also a color that no living person has in fact seen. Koren claims to be the first. “Tekhelet is the color of the sky,” he says, “It’s not the color of the sky as we know it; it’s the color of the sky at midnight.” . . . It’s when you are all alone at night that you reach out to God, and that is what tekhelet reminds you of.”³² Tekhelet is a sky blue, a retreating twilight sky that compels one, alone, to reach out to God, to reach out from and into the snail’s **shell that secretes this secret**, sacred blue. Universal blue and blue of the universe.

In his own snail blue metaphysics, Kandinsky’s blue mollusk becomes a figure for the spiritual state of withdrawal, for a cold and dark interiority slowly spiraling inward. In the retreat of blue into blue, the unification of a blue exterior and interior, of a blue surface with its blue depth, blue becomes one with itself, to use another spiritual idiom. “The power of profound meaning is found in blue,” says Kandinsky, “and first in its physical movements (1) of retreat from the spectator, (2) of turning in upon its own center. The inclination of blue to depth is so strong that its inner appeal is stronger when its shade is deeper.”³³ Blue is deep already on its surface. Deep and deeper blue, strongest in its depths.

Kandinsky’s recoiling blue snail is also a blue worm, a blue wormhole that reopens outward into the heavens, a cosmos uncoiled in its interior shell. “Blue,” says Kandinsky, “is the typically heavenly color.”³⁴ Krishna is a blue god in Hinduism, whose name means “dark, dark blue.” Isn’t this circularity of blue, a blue god whose name is blue, for example, return blue

repeatedly to a state of firstness, a metaphysical firstness, blue without end? Isn't this Kandinsky's point about blue, that even when the profundity of blue reaches its limit at the edges of the human, it crosses over and continues into the blue beyond? As it winds and unwinds, ascends and descends, Kandinsky's blue transcends the senses, generating a rich, psychical, spiritual, and affective semiotics at the limits of the human world: "When [blue] sinks almost to black, it echoes a grief that is hardly human. When it rises toward white, a movement little suited to it, its appeal to men grows weaker and more distant. In music a light blue is like a flute, a darker blue a cello; a still darker thunderous double bass; and the darkest blue of all—an organ."³⁵ If blue is an image, it's not only visual but sensual and celestial, aural and auratic. Blue orchestras in Kandinsky's picture play blue music, all blues.

Can sound be blue, is there blue music; are the blues blue? Amiri Baraka traces the blue of the blues to blackness, to race, to color, to the color of a people shaded like a god. "Even the Blue," he says, "the color from our own proto-Krishna faces, so black they blue. Diop says people in Southern India are the blackest people on the planet—like Krishna they blue. But also Equiano tells us that 'Blue'—that beautiful Guinea Blue—'was our favorite color.' "³⁶ Black and blue, black is blue, blues is blue. Is there blue sound, blue noise? Is the audio of Jarman's *Blue* also blue, just as blue, more or less blue than the screen? Jarman suggests an intimate link between the International Klein Blue image and the film's blue sound, what he calls an "archaeology of sound": "Blue watched as a word or phrase materialized in scintillating sparks, a poetry of fire which casts everything into darkness with the brightness of its reflections." In this film, one hears the blue one sees, the blinding blue one doesn't see, the senses intertwined in blue: a spoken word or phrase materialized, then annihilated in darkness and brightness at once, a paradox of light whose effect is an aural blue, the sound of an image as it disappears. "Color changes," says Michael Taussig following Josef Albers, "when a changing sound is heard at the same time."³⁷ Jacques Khalip describes the effect as "a decidedly aural form of spectacle that suppresses the need for optical evidence, and it would be fair to say that, above all else, *Blue* deterritorializes itself *in perpetuum*."³⁸ Blue deterritorializes itself, perpetually rendering blue not blue, rendering the image phonic, drawing from the phonic substance or materiality an inherent blueness. Jarman's virus is itself blue, suggests Khalip, "an audiovisual thought from outside."³⁹ Is sound blue, and are the last sounds of the universe, like the colors described by Kandinsky, also always blue? Is the sound of the universe retreating, withdrawing, the last days of the world, heard in blue? "This kind of blindness," says Fred Moten in another funereal context, "makes music."⁴⁰

Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner also imagines a universe of color expanding from the dialectic of yellow and blue. Like Kandinsky and Goethe before him, "yellow must shine outwards,"⁴¹ while "blue shines inwards."⁴² From his 1921 lecture "Lustre and Image," Steiner says:

Blue by its inner nature demands the exact opposite of yellow. It must shine in from the circumference. It demands to be at its fullest at the edges and to be at its least intense towards the inside. Blue is in its true element if we make it fuller on the outside and weaker in the middle. This is what makes it different from yellow. Yellow wants to be strongest in the centre, and then to pale off. Blue dams itself up at the edges, flowing together into a wave which dams up around a lighter blue.

“Blue shines inward.” In contrast to Kandinsky’s cool, luminescent blue that retreats from the spectator, mobilized as it were by universal spiritual forces, Steiner’s blue withdraws into an “inner nature” that “demands,” “wants,” and “reveals its essential nature.” It is a psychic blue, deep like Kandinsky’s, but filled with a vast blue interiority that falls deeper and deeper within itself, a deep blue *mise en abyme* until it reaches a limit, the limit of humanity. Blue passes through this inner limit to the other side of metaphysics. And like Kandinsky’s blue snail that reopens into the heavens, Steiner’s deep blue can only be flattened onto the surface of an image by divine intervention:

Imagine a surface with blue spread evenly over it. This is something which leads us away from the purely human. When Fra Angelico painted his even, blue surfaces he summoned, as it were, something divine into the earthly world. He would never have allowed himself to do this for the purely human situation; for blue, because of its very nature and character, will not readily submit to being a flat, even surface. It needs the divine to intervene for blue to be spread evenly.⁴⁴

Blue will not submit to flatness, its “very nature and character,” its essential quality, compel it to seek depths, to collapse inward. Only divine intervention, a blue god (Krishna?) can maintain a blue flatness, a blue image, no longer human, no longer earthly. Flat blue is unnatural. The blue earth is round. Blue is the color, says Steiner, without origin in the natural world: “It is impossible to find anything of which we can say blue is characteristic in the way that green is characteristic of the plant. . . . Among animals there is no single colour that is characteristic of their nature as the colour of his complexion is of man, or green is of the plant. With blue we cannot start . . . from natural phenomena.”⁴⁵ Unnatural blue, the nonhuman image, the machine image. Is this how best to understand Jarman’s film? Is the flat blue of *Blue* the nonhuman figure (figure of the nonhuman) par excellence? Is it maintained only through a blue *deus ex machina*, cinema? Is *Blue* the image of the nonhuman being, of a being at the end of humanity, at the end of life, an image of the no longer human? “But what is the image of the living, inwardly?” asks Steiner before concluding, “You must destroy life to have the image.”⁴⁶ Is *Blue* such destruction? An image that emerges blue from the destruction of life? Epidemic blue? Janet Hoskins describes “violent death, accident, murder or drowning” among the Eastern Indonesian Kodi, famous for their indigo dyeing, as “blue death (*mate moro*).”⁴⁷

For Charles Sanders Peirce, the semiology of color falls into the affective space of feeling he calls “firstness.” Colors, like feelings, are complete in themselves. “First,” he says, “is the conception of being or existing independent of anything else.”⁴⁸ Colors are a form of firstness, and determine an image of feeling, a feeling image. “A feeling,” says Peirce, “is a state of mind having its own living quality, independent of any other state of mind.”⁴⁹ This “living quality” of feeling that refers to nothing other than itself defines for Peirce firstness: the primacy of living affect. Firstness “comprises all that is immediately present, he says, “such as pain, blue, cheerfulness.”⁵⁰ Color and affect, chromaffect. First and foremost here, here and now, completed in itself, blue. Piercing blue. Gilles Deleuze defines firstness in Peirce’s semiotic as “qualities or powers considered for themselves, without reference to anything else,

independently of any question of their actualization. It is that which is as it is for itself and in itself.”⁵¹ Thus, blue is blue, first and forever blue, without referent. Jarman says this as well, “BLUE IS BLUE.”⁵² But what does he mean? Or, what does *it* mean, this sentence, this syntax, this grammar? A solipsism, teleology, palindrome. The vitality of feeling, of firstness, or of both, Peirce unleashes in his semiotic a viral energy that threatens to overwhelm consciousness: “A feeling is an element of consciousness which might conceivably override every other state until it monopolized the mind.”⁵³ Feeling threatens to overtake the mind, every dimension of consciousness, spreading throughout it like a virus. Peirce’s language reflects the viral force of feelings, of firstness. “Feeling tends to spread; connections between feelings awaken feelings; neighboring feelings become assimilated; ideas are apt to reproduce themselves.”⁵⁴ The feeling activates a nervous system that absorbs neighboring feelings, reproducing and spreading ideas throughout the network. For Peirce, the firstness of feeling opposes true or proper consciousness and poses the risk of usurping “the whole mind.” He says, “It is conceivable, or supposable, that the quality of blue should usurp the whole mind, to the exclusion of ideas of shape, extension, contrast, commencement and cessation, and all other ideas, whatsoever.”⁵⁵ The blue virus, firstness.

In Peirce’s evolution of signs, his economy of images, the rapacious drive of feeling, its totalizing force threatens to override or monopolize consciousness, leaving no space or time for anything but firstness. It is a virus, a blue virus. From Jarman’s *Blue*: “The virus rages fierce. I have no friends now who are not dead or dying. Like a blue frost it caught them. At work, at the cinema, on marches and beaches. In churches on their knees, running, flying, silent or shouting protest.” Blue is AIDS (AIDS is *Blue*), the virus that overtakes everyone, in an instant, anywhere and renders all visibility blue. The “blue frost” freezes life and death, the interstice between the two, the transition from one to the other “enshrouded as it were in an instant,” as Bazin says of photography.⁵⁶ Blue photography. An image that has no referent other than itself, firstness. Blue visibility is visibility and invisibility, a type of avisuality that occupies the visible spectrum from one end to the other. From Jarman’s film: “Blue transcends the solemn geography of human limits.” Jarman’s blue is the image of darkness (made visible), the image or scene of blindness, blindness seen and obscene. Viral blue, viral visibility, firstness rages fierce.

Jarman’s blue death, the blue frost that overtakes everyone and embalms them, like mummies in blue, is also an erotic blue, the blue of eros, a sexual politics that permeates Jarman’s blue screen. It generates if not an image, if not a semiotic, then a language, blue with no referent other than itself. The representation of blue death as blue renders also the death of representation as such. It forms a circular representation, blue signified by blue, around and around. A blue language that remains in a state of suspended firstness, and thus no language at all. Still, a language, a still language, frozen in time, in the time of a blue frost, a universal language. In 1899, Léon Bollack constructed a new language, Bolak, which means—in Bolak —“blue language” and “ingenious creation.” Bolak, which included among its adherents H. G. Wells, followed Esperanto in the attempt to unify and universalize language into one blue language. Wouldn’t a universal language whose name means “blue language” qualify as a

language of firstness? For Bollack, the “Blue Language” would be a universal second language, “the ONLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE, and which going with *the native language of each one*, would become the SECOND LANGUAGE of the civilized world.”⁵⁷ A universal second language, the sole foreign language that supplements the multiplicity of native tongues; a universal language of secondness then, the universal foreign and supplementary blue language. “Forward to the Fraternity, through the *international* idiom, through the language *colour of heavens*, through the Blue Language!”⁵⁸

In his reflection on “blue language,” *On Being Blue* (1976), William Gass asks whether the erotic nature of “blue” material lies in the form or content of the work: “Blue postures, attitudes, blue thoughts, blue gestures . . . is it the form or content that turns blue when these are?”⁵⁹ Neither, according to Gass, but somewhere between. Specific words or signifiers do not render a work blue, however explicit; at the same time, the blue of language is intrinsically blue. “If signs are not the same as the things they designate,” he says, “they are at least an essential segment.”⁶⁰ Blue language can be severed neither from blueness nor from language, according to Gass: “Words are properties of thoughts, and thoughts cannot be thought without them. We are truly *in the blue*, and if we try to think blue without thinking *blue*, we are forced into euphemism.”⁶¹ Blue is contagious; once it enters language, it contaminates everything, stains everything blue. And not only language but the thought to which it adheres; language and thought dyed blue. The blue of language is truly blue and not a euphemism. Like Jarman’s viral blue, blue language “rages fierce.”

The parasitic virility of feeling is tempered in Peirce’s semiotic by the intervention of secondness, or sensation and reaction, “when,” says Peirce, “any feeling gives way to a new feeling.”⁶² For Peirce, the transition from one feeling to another, the dialectic of feeling, the conflict of one with another breaks the totalizing force of firstness, the totality of a singular feeling: “Suppose I had nothing in my mind but a feeling of blue, which were suddenly to give place to a feeling of red; then, at that instant of transition there would be a shock, a sense of reaction, my blue life being transmuted into red life.” Here, the solipsism of firstness, of a blue quality that sustains itself, encounters an outside object, a thing that it now renders and modifies. Blue is now no longer only blue, but a blue relation. In Peirce’s example, it is life that carries blue, “my blue life.” Blue is not only blue, it is also life. And it is mine. My blue life then gives way to red, to red life. Blue life transmuted through shock to red life. Peirce’s Suprematist figure invokes the dialectical paintings of Kazimir Malevich (black and red squares and circles), but also the structural films of Kubelka, Conrad, and Sharits, and the poststructural recycled cinemas of Martin Arnold and Peter Tscherkassky. Moving from frame to frame, image to image, color to color, each transition produces a shock, a new feeling, and the transmutation of one life into another. Peirce’s idiom of life, from the “living quality” of feeling to “my blue life” maintains in his semiotic of the image, the force of vitality that renders blue *biographical*. Biographical and autobiographical, “my blue life,” “your blue life,” the life I consign in affect to you. “Blue flashes before my eyes,” says Jarman. My blue life flashes before my eyes, one is tempted to add. My blue life gives way to my blue death. Flickering blue.

Peirce's filmlike semiotic of feeling produces not only the totality of blue, the transition of blue life to red, but also **an archive of feeling, the memory of affect**, of blue and of red, and of the passage between the two. As feelings, as feeling images, blue and red and the clash between the two exist only in the present. "If I were further endowed with a memory," Peirce continues, "that sense would continue for some time, and there would be a peculiar feeling or sentiment connected with it. This last feeling might endure . . . after the memory of the occurrence and the feelings of blue and red had passed away. But the *sensation* of reaction cannot exist except in the actual presence of the two feelings blue and red to which it relates."⁶³ One might remember blue and red after they "had passed away," but the sensation of reaction only exists in the presence of the two, in the present, in the perpetual present of affect. Following Peirce's logic, I can remember blue, I can record and preserve it, but blue itself can only exist in the present, now. If the divide between blue and its image seems blurred, then the line that separates blue from a past blue appears more clearly: blue is only ever now, only ever present. But this clarity also brings obscurity: is the painted blue—Yves Klein's blue, for example—a present blue, here and now, or the memory of a past blue, the record of a blue no longer here, even though I see it here before me? "It is hard," says Albers, "if not impossible, to remember distinct colors."⁶⁴ Does blue always erase the past, erase memory, retrieve and recast it into a **perpetual present** that renders the past invisible, "if not impossible"? "What if this present," asks Jarman, "were the world's last night?"⁶⁵ Is blue the melancholic image of the past, or rather of forgetting, the image of everything forgotten in the form and uniform of blue? Isn't this the very logic of cinema? Peirce's logic of firstness, of feeling, and of color in his eccentric discourse invokes the cinema machine, the chronic present the apparatus projects, and the way in which the present never *passes away*. **Blue erases repetition, representation**, rendering the image present, always blue, even when it is an image of absence, an image of death, of the death of the image. Death in blue; consider the last line of Jarman's film: "I place a delphinium, blue, upon your grave." Which is the noun in this sentence, delphinium or blue, **a blue flower or flowery blue** "upon your grave"?

Does rendering an image, rendering it blue, also involve on some ontological level, on those same ontological levels imagined by Bazin, **over-rendering the image until it is no longer visible? Surrendering an image, surrendering visibility until this very limit comes to constitute the image**, and over-rendering becomes the mode of all rendering or surrendering? The blue photographs that appear in a segment of Walid Ra'ad's video *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs* (1999), "Secrets in the Open Sea," are erasures, skies and oceans that swallow the image and everything it contains—politics, history, evidence, life: "Witnesses to a disappearance," says Laura U. Marks.⁶⁶ They are surrenders, one might say, images of surrender, over-rendered until nothing appears except the firstness of blue, no history visible in the blue images that hide the dead, in the dead seas of the Mediterranean. ("*Blue* does not drain the image of detail and detritus," says Rosalind Gault, "but fills it with the force of that which is invisible yet material."⁶⁷) Blue and blown, overblown, over-exposed until the referent returns from beyond, returns from outside to an uncanny firstness that remains, like Jarman's *Blue*; like Yves Klein's "Proposition Monochrome: Blue Epoch" (1957); like Picasso's "Blue

Period” (“Periodo Azur,” 1901–1904) and Miles Davis’s *Blue Period* (1951), *Blue Haze* (1954), *Blue Moods* (1955), “All Blues” and “Blue in Green” (*Kind of Blue*, 1959); or Joni Mitchell’s *Blue* (1971)—endless iterations of blue, audiovisual blue, all different blues, all blue. Images of the drowned and drowned images washed out in a “liquid perception,” as Deleuze says, “a more than human perception.”⁶⁸ Taussig considers Colesworthy Grant’s description of indigo emerging in a Bengali vat, a blue that Grant likens to “the intense deep blue of the ocean in stormy weather.”⁶⁹ For Taussig, Grant’s indigo sea is not merely a figure for blue, a metaphor or simile, but a blue that overtakes the ocean. From the indigo vat emerges an essential blue that exceeds the ocean: “The blueness of the blue hauls in the entire ocean, the color here being bigger than the biggest ocean . . . the signifier (blue) has swallowed up the signified (the ocean).”⁷⁰ The ocean drowns in blue. Ra’ad’s blue images are images of drowning that swallow everything and leave everything blue, behind, beyond, without boundary, with neither solution nor resolution. As Jarman says, “For Blue there are no boundaries or solutions.” An image of everything that leaves nothing.

Nothing but blue, everywhere. Wilhelm Reich, who sought among other pursuits to exteriorize sexual energy, libido, as a type of ether or “orgone energy,” imagines this quasi-visible energy that fills space as blue. The “Cosmic Primordial Energy, called COSMIC ORGONE ENERGY (COE), was discovered between 1936 and 1939 in Norway” by Wilhelm Reich.⁷¹ This “universal life energy” envelopes the earth, says Reich, permeating the sky and the ocean and everything else; and it’s blue:

Blue is the specific color of orgone energy within and without the organism. Classical physics tries to explain the blueness of the sky by the scattering of the blue and of the spectral color series in the gaseous atmosphere. However, it is a fact that blue is the color seen in all functions which are related to the cosmic or atmospheric or organismic orgone energy:

Protoplasm of any kind, in every cell or bacterium is blue. It is generally mistaken as “refraction” of light which is wrong, since the same cell under the same conditions of light loses its blueness when it dies.

Thunder clouds are deeply blue, due to the high orgone charges contained in the suspended masses of water.

A completely darkened room, if lined with iron sheet metal (the so-called “Orgone Room”), is not black, i.e., free of any light, but bluish or bluish-gray. Orgone energy luminesces spontaneously; it is “luminescent.”

Water in deep lakes and in the ocean is blue.

The color of luminating, decaying wood is blue; so are the luminating tail ends of glowworms, St. Elmo’s fire, and the aurora borealis.

The lumination in *evacuated tubes charged with orgone energy* is blue.⁷²

In Reich’s alternate, quasi-physics, orgone luminesces blue. It colors the blue of the sky and the blue of deep water with a vital erotic charge. “Protoplasm of any kind” is blue, and “loses its blueness when it dies.” Orgone is blue and makes everything else blue, including life itself. Life is blue.

Can an image be blue? Can an image be anything but blue; is there any image that isn’t blue? Aren’t all images blue, even when they aren’t? Isn’t the destiny of every image blue, isn’t every image destined for blue, ending in blue, as Jarman’s film suggests, like the default screen of a television monitor when the image fails? Blue at the end of eyesight, at the end of cinema, at the end of life, and at the end of light? The blue image of nothing, an imageless blue? “A color in art is not a color,” says Ad Reinhardt. Blue is, however. “Blue in art is blue,” he

continues, as are red and yellow, but “dark gray in art is not dark gray.” Neither is matte black.⁷³ Some colors (in art) are themselves, while others are not, according to Reinhardt. Blue is itself. But what is this self that falls away in blue, into the deep blue, feeling or being blue? What does it take to be blue?

Jarman’s *Blue* begins and ends in blue. “O Blue come forth, O Blue arise, O Blue ascend, O Blue come in”; it ends with a blue delphinium, a delphinium Blue placed “upon your grave.” It is blue that greets life, that calls it forth, the first color of the universe. It is also the color that ends life, which fades life and turns everything into twilight, everything into cinema. *Blue* begins and ends with life, begins and ends with death, pursuing the narrator’s vanishing body and receding eyesight into an acousmatic sea of blue. Into a blue cinema, a blue movie. It renders a certain end to cinema, an end that arrives at the beginning (of cinema) of the void that ends but begins life, a blue that fuses life with image, with an image of life, an imaginary life, the imagined lives of cinema. Blue *survives* these lives as it does these deaths, these codes blue. It is among many others things blue, many shades of blue, a cinema for the blind or nearly blind, the last light or image before complete darkness. For Jarman, blue is what one sees at the end of eyesight, an image of sightlessness. “Blue is darkness made visible,” he says, or someone that speaks for him, on his behalf, in his place, in the place where he no longer is, from the blue.⁷⁴ This darkness at the beginning and end, at the moment one opens and closes one’s eyes, the blue of the universe, a “universal blue” funk that permeates the world and the cosmos, the skies and the heavens. “Blue is the typically heavenly color,” says Kandinsky. Is blue also the color of the afterlife? Shades of blue, blue shades, shadows, spectral blue.

Looking into the sky, “what do you see out there?” asks Rudolf Steiner. “You see the so-called blue sky. It is not really there, but we see it all the same. Actually it stretches into all infinity, yet it looks as though it curves around the earth like a blue vault. Why is that?”⁷⁵ You see what is not really there, what is infinite and endless but appears curved “around the earth like a blue vault.” The sky, suggests Steiner, the blue sky, the so-called blue sky, is an optical illusion. The sky itself, the infinite universe is itself dark. Steiner continues, “Now you just have to remember what it is like out there in space; it is dark, of course. Cosmic space is dark. . . . So when you stand there by day you are looking into the dark, and we ought to see dark really. But you see blue instead of black because the atmosphere is illuminated by the sun.”⁷⁶ The sun’s illumination turns black into blue, “darkness made visible,” as Jarman says. “Clearly,” Steiner concludes, “you are seeing darkness through light. You look through light, through illumination into darkness. So we can say, darkness through light is blue.”⁷⁷ Steiner’s blue sky is darkness illuminated; blue is the image of darkness, the image of darkness carried in light. In Steiner’s logic, darkness as such is invisible. Darkness made visible, transformed into light, into the spectrum of visibility is blue.

Is blue the last image in the universe, the image of its end at the very end? The blue image of a darkened universe? Is it what replaces the image after its withdrawal, after its surrender, after its disappearance into the blue beyond? Is it the color that remains when all color has retreated; what is left when the other colors have left and nothing else is left? Darkness made visible? An image of imageless surrender, of the surrender of images, an image of emptiness?

Isn't blue always the color of the universe, a deeper shade of sky? The first and last image, the color of everything with or without light. A transcendental blue. And after the bright yellow supernovas have burned all the images, after the blue-black holes have swallowed everything else, only the blue will remain where everything else once was. ("Blue obliterates yellow," says Ludwig Wittgenstein.)⁷⁸ A blue melancholy of images, the last image. And like the imageless TV screen that reverts to blue (blue static where it no longer snows), isn't blue the last color of the universe, the last image at the end of images and of everything else? The image of imagelessness at the end of the universe, universal blue? And when the blue archive is destroyed completely, wouldn't its remainder, the remainderless remainder still be blue, a still blue, a blue still born after the end? Deep in the blue archive, wouldn't blue remain the secret name for and memory of images, of the image when there are no more? Aren't all images blue? Isn't every image first and last always blue? "So blues is the past," says Baraka, "the blown all what got blew; the expressive, i.e., the blowing; the loss, the blown, the blowing. The known gone, the unknown coming all the non-time."⁷⁹ Blew, blown, blue, out of the blue, *ex nihilo*, *ex-cinema*.

NOTES

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Locke Eastlake (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006), 17.
2. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, 171. "As a hue, it is powerful, but it is on the negative side, and in its highest purity is, as it were, a stimulating negation. Its appearance, then, is a kind of contradiction between excitement and repose."
3. From George Dunning's animated film featuring the Beatles, *Yellow Submarine* (1968). The question posed by a Blue Meanie to the Beatles echoes in a Saussurean logic, the color-coded visibility of ethnicity and race: "Are you Jewish? You don't look Jewish." The transposition of race into color, the zero degree of racism, returns in the displaced firstness of being blue, or "bluish."
4. Cited in Derek Jarman, "Into the Blue," in *Chroma* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 105.
5. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 6. Because the photographic signifier is indistinguishable from its referent, says Barthes, the photograph itself eludes vision: "Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see."
6. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?* ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 1:14. "No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model" (original emphasis).
7. Bruce R. Smith, *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 15.
8. Smith, *The Key of Green*, 16.
9. Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), 15.
10. Vivian Sobchack, "Fleshing Out the Image: Phenomenology, Pedagogy, and Derek Jarman's *Blue*," in *New Takes in Film-Philosophy*, eds. Havi Carel and Greg Tuck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 197, original emphases.
11. Flicker films in general—from Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* (1960) and Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* (1965) to those made by Sharits and others—measure time in units of frames that burst in rapid succession, marking and inscribing time on the bodies, psyches, and nervous systems of their viewers.
12. In an interview with Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, Sharits describes his attempt to create indefinite colors through his flicker cinema: "A pure flat blue is enjoyable, but it has such a definiteness to it that, to me, it is not as sensually involving. One of the reasons that I worked with color flicker was to create colors that were indefinite." Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, "Interview with Paul Sharits," in *Paul Sharits*, ed. Yann Beauvais (Dijon, France: Les presses du réel, 2008), 91. In a letter to Lebensztejn, Sharits characterizes the flickering colors in his films as "chords": "Very rapidly altering frames of different colors in a film," he says, "can produce an apparent infinity of iridescent color 'chords,' shimmering time-color fields." Paul Sharits, "Dear Mr. Lebensztejn," in *Paul Sharits*, 115.

13. See in this regard, Michael Taussig's extensive reflection on color and ethnicity, *What Color Is the Sacred?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Also, anthropologist Janet Hoskins's remarkable, "Why Do Ladies Sing the Blues? Indigo Dyeing, Cloth Production, and Gender Symbolism in Kodi," in *Cloth and Human Experience*, ed. Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 141–73. Hoskins details the effects of indigo dyeing among the Eastern Indonesian Kodi, in particular the ways in which "blueness" defines gender identities and produces an entire culture of "blue arts." Among the effects of a sustained interaction with indigo for women is their eventual transformation into witches, signaled by the appearance of blue in and around the body. Hoskins says, "Witchcraft can be detected through bluish marks at the naval, fingertips, or eye sockets, and victims of witch attacks often complain of seeing bluish color moving around them" (149).

14. Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color*, trans. Markus I. Cruse (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 13.

15. Pastoureau, *Blue*, 14. With regard to the hesitant and imprecise status of blue in the classical and medieval languages, Pastoureau writes: "The silence, hesitation, evolution, and frequency or rarity of words give the historian studying the color blue an extremely important body of evidence. The difficulty that the Greeks had in naming blue recurs in classical Latin (and later in medieval form). There were, of course, numerous terms for blue (*caeruleus*, *caesius*, *glaucus*, *cyaneus*, *lividus*, *venetus*, *aerius*, *ferreus*), but they were all polyvalent, chromatically imprecise, and sometimes contradictory. The most common word was *caeruleus*, whose etymology evokes the color of wax (*cera*—a color between white, brown, and yellow); it denoted certain shades of green and black before attaching firmly to the blue spectrum. This lack of lexical precision for blue shades reflects how little Roman authors, and the medieval ones who followed them, cared about blue" (26).

16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 182.

17. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 182.

18. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 183. Bruce R. Smith cites the same passage from Nietzsche as an epigraph to his brilliant reflection on green, *The Key of Green*.

19. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 183, original emphases.

20. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, 27.

21. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, 25.

22. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, 27.

23. Götz Hoeppe describes Saussure's cyanometer: "Literally a 'measurer of blue,' the cyanometer was a scale of fifty-two shades of blue ranging from white ('zero degrees') to black ('51 degrees') via an ultramarine hue ('Berlin blue'). This simple device had been invented in the 1860s by Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, a Swiss geologist and Alpine explorer. Saussure distributed the scale, drawn with water colors following a well-defined recipe, to friends and fellow naturalists with the aim of compiling a comprehensive record of the sky's blueness at different locations, elevations, and times." Götz Hoeppe, *Why the Sky Is Blue: Discovering the Color of Life*, trans. John Stewart (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 110.

24. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977), 36.

25. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 37.

26. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 37.

27. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 37.

28. A whole set of metaphysical features accrue to Goethe's plus and minus colors. To plus/yellow: "Action, light, brightness, force, warmth, proximity, repulsion, and an affinity with acids." To minus/blue: "Negation, shadow, darkness, weakness, coldness, distance, attraction, and an affinity with alkalis." Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, 151.

29. Dina Kraft, "Rediscovered, Ancient Color Is Reclaiming Israeli Interest," *New York Times*, February 28, 2011, A7.

30. Kraft, "Rediscovered," A7.

31. Kraft, "Rediscovered," A7.

32. Kraft, "Rediscovered," A7.

33. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 38.

34. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 38.

35. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 38.

36. Amiri Baraka, "The 'Blues Aesthetic' and the 'Black Aesthetic': Aesthetics as the Continuing Political History of a Culture," in *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 23.

37. Taussig, *What Color Is the Sacred?* 158.

38. Jacques Khalip, "'The Archaeology of Sound': Derek Jarman's *Blue* and Queer Audiovisuality in the Time of AIDS," *Differences* 12.2 (Summer 2010): 82. Khalip reads the "sonic materialities" of *Blue* as a viral assault, not only of the senses but of cinema, linking its force to the destructive force of AIDS: "Jarman's devastated listening in *Blue* occurs on the cusp of a

newly emergent archaeology of sound whose excavations break down rather than document the aural: a queer archive that persists in its phonic destructivity” (76). The phonic destructivity that Khalip identifies in *Blue* is itself blue, a queer blue, inseparable from sound or image, inseparable from cinema. The relation between sound and image, between the plenitudes of one or the other, as well as their absences (the bodies that disappear into blue sounds and images, into the “blue frost”), is queer. “By concentrating specifically on the substance of audition in *Blue*,” he says, “Jarman makes a decisive ethical and aesthetic break in his cinema: he shifts value away from the overdetermined cultural premiums associated with the visual ‘spectacle’ and onto the indeterminate event of aurality that reconceptualizes queer belonging in terms of the erotics of the ear” (76–77). Can blue be queer? Is it ever straight? Is blue always queer, always queering the relation between sight and sound, inside and out, cinema and spectator, color and subject?

39. Khalip, “‘The Archaeology of Sound,’ ” 80.

40. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 199. Moten here reflects on the irreducibly sonic quality of the image of Emmett Till, of the phonographic dimensions of the photographs of Till’s murdered body.

41. Rudolf Steiner, “Lustre and Image,” in *Colour*, trans. John Salter and Pauline Wehrle (East Sussex, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1992), 32.

42. Steiner, “Lustre and Image,” 33.

43. Steiner, “Lustre and Image,” 32–33.

44. Steiner, “Lustre and Image,” 32.

45. Steiner, “Colour Experience—Image Colours,” in *Colour*, 22.

46. Steiner, “Lustre and Image,” 39.

47. Hoskins, “Why Do Ladies Sing the Blues?” 149–50.

48. Charles S. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” in *Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance)*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover, 1958), 158.

49. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 150.

50. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 150.

51. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 98.

52. Jarman, “Into the Blue,” 104.

53. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 150.

54. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 152.

55. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 151.

56. Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” 14.

57. Léon Bollack, “Advertisement,” in *Abridged Grammar of the Blue Language, Bolak; National Practical Language; English Version* (Paris: Bolak Ditor, 1900), original emphases.

58. Bollack, “Propagation of the Blue Language,” in *Abridged Grammar of the Blue Language*, original emphases.

59. William Gass, *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1976), 8.

60. Gass, *On Being Blue*, 20.

61. Gass, *On Being Blue*, 20, original emphases. For Gass, the blue dimension of blue language is language itself, language rendered blue, in blue: “The ultimate and essential displacement is to the word, and . . . the true sexuality in literature—sex as a positive aesthetic quality—lies not in any scene and subject, nor in the mere appearance of a vulgar word, not in the thick smear of a blue spot, but in the consequence on the page of love well made—made to the medium which is the writer’s own, for he—for she—has only these little shapes and sounds to work with, the same saliva surrounds them all, every word is equally a squiggle or a noise, an abstract designation” (43). When language turns blue, it is the language itself that does so. In neither euphemism nor vulgarity, “the thick smear of a blue spot” defines the blue firstness of language.

62. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 151.

63. Peirce, “The Architecture of Theories,” 151, original emphasis.

64. Albers, *Interaction of Color*, 3.

65. Jarman, “Into the Blue,” 108.

66. Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 109.

67. Rosalind Gault, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 95.

68. Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, 80. “What the French school found in water,” says Deleuze, “was the promise or implication of another state of perception: a more than human perception, a perception not tailored to solids, which no longer had the solid as object, as condition, as milieu.”

69. Colesworthy Grant, *Rural Life in Bengal* (Calcutta: Bibhash Gupta, 1984 [1864]), 128; cited in Taussig, *What Color Is*

the Sacred? 152.

70. Taussig, *What Color Is the Sacred?* 152.

71. Wilhelm Reich, *The Orgone Energy Accumulator: Its Scientific and Medical Use* (Rangley, ME: Orgone Institute Press, 1951), 9.

72. Reich, *The Orgone Energy Accumulator*, 15, original emphases. William Gass also cites this passage in *On Being Blue*, 33–34.

73. Ad Reinhardt, “Art in Art Is Art-as-Art (Art-as-Art Dogma, Part III),” in *Lugano Review* (1966), reprinted in *Ad Reinhardt* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 126.

74. The understanding of blue as darkness made visible is much older than Jarman, or Kandinsky and Steiner before him. In his *Theory of Colors*, Goethe aligns the antitheses of yellow and blue with light and dark, respectively: “As yellow is always accompanied with light, so it may be said that blue still brings a principle of darkness with it” (170).

75. Rudolf Steiner, “Two Fundamental Laws of Colour Theory,” in *Colour*, 128.

76. Steiner, “Two Fundamental Laws of Colour Theory,” 128.

77. Steiner, “Two Fundamental Laws of Colour Theory,” 128.

78. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, trans. Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 22e.

79. Baraka, “The ‘Blues Aesthetic,’” 25.