of intimacy (genitalia), foreignness (marginalia) and wires? Should I announce myself racially, give myself a secure racial identity? As an experiment, I conducted a poll in CompuServe's African American forum, asking how participants situated themselves online:

> More often than not I do not identify myself when I interact with people except in forums such as this one. Why should I, really? I have had more negative experiences with people being overtly racist in cyberspace than I have in FTF (face to face) life. I find it intriguing to experience what people will tell me when they think I am White. —Deborah Carter

> In the other CompuServe forums and Usenet newsgroups which I frequent, I encounter a lot more racist (and sexist, and homophobic, and anti-Semitic, and otherwise bigoted) messages than in "real life." I think the anonymity of on-line communications is very enticing to bigoted fools. —Peter Jebsen

> Here's a thought: Do you think bigoted people are attracted to cyber-space, or are "normal" people encouraged to show their hidden bigoted sides? — Michelle Pessoa

> I have heard people making derogatory comments about Mexican Americans, Asians, Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals, etc...and although I am not a member of those groups, I feel it is essential that I confront intolerance, period. So I suppose letting people know who I am is not as important to me as letting people know what I will not put up with. —Deborah Carter

What was most interesting about the response was how quickly the thread moved away from the question of how one identifies oneself to a more manageable debate about racism. From what I've been able to glean in this and other online conversations (my survey was limited in sample), many African Americans are unwilling to probe too deeply into what part racial identity plays in their conception of themselves, what part of them stays black when they present no "evidence" of blackness. Race is either "taken for granted" or deliberately left unspoken. In a GEnie conference on African American access to information technology, a quiet consensus emerged on the value of racial anonymity online:

> One nice thing about online communication is that everyone is equal; no one knows how old a participant is, or what color, or what gender, or what religion—which frees our minds a bit to listen to more diverse opinions.

Another participant commented:

> When you type away, no one online need know your skin color. Accents don't matter as much. High-tech is a wonderful way to fight snobbery!

Given that cyberspace is a racialized domain, this sort of virtual transvestism is by no means neutral. In an another era it used to be called passing.

There is another option. Taking a cue from the adolescent boys who determine so much of cyberculture, I could play. I could try to extend my engagement with cyberspace beyond the ludic economies of North American teenagers to include trick-ster traditions, signifying, and elements of spirituality that lie outside Western rationalism. That way subjectivity need not be a fixed racial assertion nor a calculated transvestism; it could be more fluid, more strategic. William Gibson was the first to write

about various cosmological approaches to cyberspace, contrast-ing his protagonist Case with the Rastafarian-derived "Zionites" in *Neuromancer*, and making extensive uses of vodun in *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. While this offers enormous possibili-ties, there is a danger, at least in fiction, of surrendering to the same sort of essentialism that defines people of colour in exoti-cizing, body-oriented terms. Michael Heim, for instance, in lamenting cyberspace's retreat from the physical body, offers Gibson's Zionites as a symbol of salvation:

> Gibson leaves us the image of a human group who *instinctively* keeps its distance from the computer matrix. These are the Zionites, the religiously *tribal folk* who prefer music to computers and intuitive loyalties to calcula-tion.... As we suit up for the exciting future in cyberspace, we must not lose touch with the Zionites, the *body people* who remain *rooted in the energies of the earth*. (italics mine.)

In the novel, the Zionites are rooted in both technology and spirituality. But taken by Heim as a symbol, they get reduced to "body people."

I prefer to go all the way back to that View Master™, holding it up to the bright Barbados sun so I could see Canada better. Maybe this is an answer: the ecstasy of projected com-munity and irresolvable difference, both claimed at the very same moment.

Further Reading
Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
Benedikt, Michael, ed. *Cyberspace: First Steps*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1991.
Bhabha, Homi. "Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative." *Anatomy of Racism*. Ed. David Theo Goldberg. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. 183-209.
Bukatman, Scott. *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.
Descartes, René. *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*. Trans. and eds. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach. London: Open University, 1970.
Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books, 1984.
Green, Noah. "The Sixth Borough: A Bulletin Board Grows in Brooklyn." *Village Voice* July 12, 1994. 38-39.
Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." In *Black Film, British Cinema*. ICA Documents 7. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988. 27-30.
Hayward, Philip and Tana Wollen, eds. *Future Visions: New Technologies of the Screen*. London: BFI Publishing, 1993.
Kehoe, Brendan P. *Zen and the Art of the Internet: A Beginner's Guide to the Internet*. Internet: 1992
Maw, Joan and John Picton, eds. *Concepts of the Body/Self in Africa*. Wien: Afro-Pub, 1992.
Mercer, Kobena, and Isaac Julien. "De Margin and De Centre." *Screen* 29.4 (Autumn 1988).
Murrell, William, host. "Information Highway Discussion on African American Issues." GEnie. June 13, 1993, 10:00p.m.
Schneider, Karen G. "Poverty and Information." Usenet post: kgs@panix.com.

OH TELEVISION. OH CANADA.

Does either really matter anymore? There seems to be a sense these days that both TV and nation have nothing left to communicate—that each contains repetitive gestures that we've seen too many times before. Forget that old "effects" model of communica-tions which holds that TV can somehow powerfully persuade us all to adopt specific attitudes, behaviours and moral values. When nothing really flows through the glass tit anymore except for "Friends" and its ilk, does this matter? And forget the once-grand idea of using television for the purposes of nation-building. At a time when the Canadian state is actively involved in the wholesale embrace of a global market, and the CBC has been cut back not just to the bone, but now to the marrow, such national-ist concerns are treated only as minor irritations. And yet, such disparaging words about pedestrian objects fail to account for the complexity both of TV and nation as forces for the reworking of social and cultural life. We still long for their stories, how-ever untrue, meanspirited and overwhelmingly driven by profit they may be. And in these days of radically shifting parameters—of technology, of capital, of social value—we need to be attentive to the ways in which these new reconfigurations may allow or disallow certain tales to be told. Today, programming has left the hands of the transmitters (the state, the networks), and is now found in the transmission devices of computer modem, VCR and remote control; it also resides in a populist individualism. We may all now zip and zap and time-shift through a structured agenda at will. Does this allow for new freedoms? Or only ensure that more frightening tyrannies prevail?

BETH SEATON