

**Aesthetical Ethics: Moral, Race, and Storied Imagination-
Who believes in race? Exploring the psychosis of race via
the belief in disbelief [Abstract only]**

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Who believes in race? Exploring the psychosis of race via the belief in disbelief

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Abstract

As noted by Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, race maintains a ‘distinctive ... belief structure and evokes powerful and very particular investments in its subjects’ (*Desiring Whiteness*, 4). Echoing such sentiments, Karen and Barbara Fields highlight how examples of racecraft reveal a ‘pervasive belief’ in race (*Racecraft* 18). Their identification of racecraft exposes the extent to which race serves as the justification for racist beliefs as well as for the exploitation, marginalization, and violent discrimination of large proportions of the earth’s population. While accounts of race remain dependent on one’s cultural, historical, and geographical location, and whereas many remain fully cognizant of the fact that race is better conceived as a myth, such arguments tend to make little headway in undermining or combating racist perceptions. This is not simply an ignorance on behalf of those who openly and candidly acknowledge examples of racism, but, rather, speaks to a more fundamental concern in how race occupies a reified form in our social world that frames both its perpetuation and critique. On this basis, it can be said that it is not only the racial-realist who believes in race but also the racial equality advocate: for both assume a certain belief in race that functions to maintain its significance.

In this paper, critical attention will be afforded to exploring the role of belief in upholding as well as fixing our reliance on race and the ongoing perpetuation of forms of racism. Specifically, it will draw from Jacques Lacan’s psychotic structure in order to locate these effects in view of what will be referred to as the psychosis of race (Black, *Psychosis of Race*).

Indeed, it will be highlighted how psychosis presents a lack of belief in the Other. Due to the effects of foreclosure, the Other fails to offer any guarantee to the psychotic’s existence and to their own investment in language and signification. Accordingly, for the psychotic, their lack of belief is grounded in certainty: while they are able to acknowledge a sense of disbelief in the Other, which, for them, holds no value or credibility, they nonetheless concede its influence. It is in critiquing the Other’s credibility, however, that the psychotic inadvertently proposes that there is such an Other who could be conceived as credible. It is in this sense that the psychotic’s disbelief serves as a form of defence; ultimately, for the psychotic, their disbelief is directly subjectivized—there remains the belief in one’s disbelief.

With links made to Lacan’s *les non-dupes errant*, it will be argued that it is through the psychosis of race that a belief in race can be conferred. By way of elaborating on this conference, insights will be drawn from the 1992 Bernard Rose film, *Candyman*, which, it will be argued, offers a unique insight into the effects of belief and its role within the psychosis of race.

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