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When I think about fetishism I want to know about many other things. I do not see how one can talk about fetishism, or sadomasochism, without thinking about the production of rubber, the techniques and gear used for controlling and riding horses, the high polished gleam of military footwear, the history of silk stockings, the cold authoritative qualities of medical equipment, or the allure of motorcycles and the elusive liberties of leaving the city for the open road. For that matter, how can we think of fetishism without the impact of cities, of certain streets and parks, of red-light districts and “cheap amusements,” or the seductions of department store counters, piled high with desirable and glamorous goods . . . ? To me, fetishism raises all sorts of issues concerning shifts in the manufacture of objects, the historical and social specificities of control and skin and social etiquette, or ambiguously experienced body invasions and minutely graduated hierarchies.

—Gayle Rubin, “Sex Traffic”

Nothing is as it seems. History is carried like a pathology, a cyclical melodrama immersed in artifice and unable to function without it. The historical romance creates a will for abusive submission, exacerbated by contemporary ideologies that revere victimhood. Everyone wants to play the nigger now.

—Kara E. Walker, Look Away! Look Away! Look Away!