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"what is, as is"

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what is, as is

“I have always wrapped myself in this gentle embrace,

A letting go that makes a hostage out of rage from what I cannot change.

A recognition of what is, as is.

A struggle to release, a vengeful peace.

I have found it so,

A balm for wounds, a way to grow.

To learn and move, leading a life to prove.”

— Raymarah Watson-Cunningham

This essay examines the concept of Blackness in the sublime through an interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary art and critical theory. Drawing on insights from artists such as Jordan Casteel, Jennifer Packer, and Kehinde Wiley, alongside writings by Camille DeBose, Meg Armstrong, Ivan Chipkin, and James Williams, the essay explores the intersections of race, identity, and the sublime. With a historical overview of the sublime in Western art and aesthetics, this highlights how traditional conceptions have often excluded the experiences of marginalized communities, particularly Black individuals. It then investigates how contemporary artists and scholars have reimagined the sublime to include everyday experiences and ordinary moments, challenging traditional narratives and offering new perspectives on the relationship between race, identity, and aesthetics. Through a synthesis of artworks and critical texts, the essay argues that Blackness in the sublime offers a rich framework for understanding the complexities and versatility of race and identity, while also providing avenues for further research and artistic practice in the field of contemporary art and critical theory.