



# Conjugal Union: The Body, the House, and the Black American (Race and American Culture)

*Robert F. Reid-Pharr*



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In *Conjugal Union*, Robert F. Reid-Pharr argues that during the antebellum period a community of free black northeastern intellectuals sought to establish the stability of a Black American subjectivity by figuring the black body as the necessary antecedent to any intelligible Black American public presence. Reid-Pharr goes on to argue that the fact of the black bodys constant and often spectacular display demonstrates an incredible uncertainty as to that bodys status. Thus antebellum black intellectuals were always anxious about how a stable relationship between the black community might be maintained. Paying particular attention to Black American novels written before the Civil War, the author shows how the household was utilized by these writers to normalize this relationship of body to community such that a person could enter a household as a white and leave it as a black.



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