

Juliet Kaufmann

THE INVISIBLE SPECTRUM

Alpha Centauri is a yellow star. There are black stars, cut out, backlit, silhouetted against cobalt after sunset, but how can we see stars darker than sable wings? Notice, after slowly entering a dark room or closet, how linen folded and laid on shelves envelops every sound generously, how even light around the door hesitates, then stops and finally surrenders in shadows. Just after the last photon ends in jasmine and the room becomes an invisible kingdom, it is possible to see black against lustrous black. The absence of light displaces, then mottles the air in an effervescent pattern near the surface of the eye. The far wall, obscured, opens, the room empties into the darkness its poor contents, leaving only the contemplative quiet of the one color that is no color. Remember what the thick book of blue-and-white clouds says: *objects will become invisible in the total absence of earth-light and earth-shine* within unbounded night. In the dark, hands begin to seem virtual, not real. Open them. They feel almost weightless, as if pressed against a wall and released, exalted, like black angels in Flemish paintings, young, unsmiling, fastened to the pale sky out of zeal or passion, looking earthward without comment.