

Editors' Notes

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This issue marks the beginning of an exciting intellectual partnership with Duke University Press and is the first of three foundational issues on the themes “liquidity,” “blackness,” and “aesthetics.” These are also the building blocks of the concept, practice, and praxis of *liquid blackness* since the beginning of the research group at Georgia State University in 2013, as discussed in Alessandra Raengo’s introduction. We now reexamine them in a much larger forum.

The invited contributions featured here range in style, genre, mode, and length and reflect on the meaning of black liquidity and the conceptual possibilities and shortcomings of liquidity itself. We conceive of each journal issue as a musical ensemble, an “atonal symphony,” in the words of John Akomfrah, whose interview concludes the present one and whose work graces our cover. Thus the issue’s content is not divided by genre but rather by tone and pace. The main section—“Studies in Black”—assembles various modes of black study; “Critical Art Encounters” offers sustained and at times meditative engagements with contemporary artworks; the section called “Accent Marks” indicates shifts that emphasize possible lines of flight; “In Conversation” features a dialogue with practitioners or theorists. The art, writing, and conversation in this issue demonstrate the continuity between these scholarly modes as our contributors explore the concept of “liquidity” through the lens of capital, diaspora, the environment, materiality, movement, and sound. Our aim is to sustain this dia-

logue, allowing it to take new forms in our next issue, *liquid blackness* 5.2, “blackness,” which invites contributors to think about the ways in which blackness indexes its own processes, whether that describes the ways chromatic blackness points to processes of accumulation and saturation or the ways blackness may function as a kind of record keeping and referentiality. Our third foundational issue, 6.1., turns to aesthetics to explore its radical potential for Black Studies. We are inspired by Fred Moten’s posing of black aesthetic sociality as a problem for ontology and appositional to epistemology and phenomenology (see Moten in this issue). Moten’s insistence on the irreducible vitality of black sociality has been both inspirational and aspirational to the theoretical foundation, the ethics, and the praxis that sustain this journal.

Liquid blackness is a reflectively liquid term that always describes and reflects on its own praxis. Thus we would be remiss if we did not express our heartfelt gratitude to the contributors who are making this conversation possible despite the exceptional challenges faced since the beginning of 2020. They have been working under extreme duress at a time when blatant episodes of antiblack violence compound the political and social neglect that causes COVID-19’s devastating effects on communities of color. We are thankful for their commitment and the clarity of their voices. Finally, we thank Duke University Press for creating such a welcoming home for this project.



A Note on the *liquid blackness* Style Guide

As we approach, while gently resisting, the complex task of committing the fluidity of blackness to the page, so to speak, we are mindful of recent editorial policies that require capitalization of terms used to identify people of color or of historically marginalized origins, mostly implemented since, or at least partly in response to, the 2020 summer of “racial reckoning.” Most prominently, the Associated Press announced a change to its style guide in July 2020. As we think deeply about these policies that, for the most part, are encouraging capitalization of terms that refer to people and culture but inevitably also color, sound, style, and the complex theorizations that they demand, we are reminded that this journal’s field of inquiry is located precisely amid the expansive possibilities tucked between the slippage between uppercase *Black* and lowercase *black* / uppercase *Blackness* and lowercase *blackness*.

Encouraged and inspired by the editorial policy put in place by ASAP/J “Black One Shot” editors Lisa Uddin and Michael Boyce Gillespie, we recommit to this contested site as we note, once again, that for so many of our contributors, typography matters: it is a way to signal one’s position within (or without) the gesture that this sudden capitalization might perform: is this a social justice gesture, a reparative gesture, an assimilationist gesture, or . . . ?

Following the advice of our boards, the wisdom of our closest interlocutors, and the flexibility of Duke

University Press (whose openness to constant intellectual inquiry is both humbling and inspiring), we have resolved to capitalize only clear instances in which these terms refer to people or their history as people, but we will continue to maintain in lowercase any concept, framework, and heuristic associated with blackness that is still in need of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological sounding out.

A key part of this continuous theorization is maintaining flexibility for our contributors that are writing about and engaging in their own formal experimentation. Thus we will also support writers that rely on grammatical rules to maintain the distinction between blackness and the proper (nouns and adjectives) and, thus, will always use lowercase, and those who consistently use the uppercase as a point of emphasis. In every case, our writers demonstrate their commitment to a dynamic conversation about blackness that is evident in their claims. As *liquid blackness* journal we understand this as an issue of ontology that typography cannot resolve. It is also an issue of genre, form, grammar, aesthetics, and their combined effect on the journal's ability to convey the nuances between them. We hope that these fluid and adaptable typographical choices will act as a reminder that this journal is a welcome place where this expansive intellectual inquiry can and indeed should take place. ■