

Fugitive Voice

I

A VIBRANT STRAIN OF AVANT-GARDE writing is nowadays centering music as the medium of a luminously varied Black radical aesthetic without much of musicology yet noticing. Such work might bring to mind sonic points along a dolorous history, from “the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs” of slaves traveling to receive their monthly food allowance that Frederick Douglass heard on the plantation—what W. E. B. Du Bois called “sorrow songs,” “through which the slave spoke to the world”—to the stirring blues laments of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Nina Simone brought to light by modern-day Black feminists.¹ Today’s Black avant-garde stretches out from such moments, addressing long histories of racial subjugation and violence intimately bound up with modern histories of capitalism, but it’s up to something different. It understands its aesthetic objects through a nexus of politics, philosophy, and metaphysics that often goes by the name of *fugitivity*, a concept that encompasses those earlier soundings while resituating them.² Not restricted to literal flight from slavery, fugitivity belongs to what philosopher and poet Fred Moten—thus far its most expansive and challenging theorist—describes as a capacious category of the irregular in which freedom and unfreedom perpetually coexist in persons who refuse to be objectified or reduced. Only when a Black being recognizes their oppression, victimization, or commodification by speaking, talking back, or refusing to be named and delimited does fugitivity become a lived reality. Only then does it move in its characteristic temporal arc, bending toward the future even while haunted by a past that is never past.³ Moten conveys this existential

ABSTRACT This essay proposes that current-day notions of fugitivity, understood in the terms Fred Moten proposes as a category of the irregular that escapes easy representations and predications, can undiscipline music histories in productive ways. Among these: it can inflect musicological thinking through attention to sonic remainders of haunted pasts; it can decenter understandings of the aesthetic; and it can lead to more nuanced thinking about the imbrication of music in an “undercommons” of life that refuses ever to fully sound in harmony, residing instead in a disordered space of restless, noisy sound. The essay asks, finally, how such thinking, developed by Moten, Nathaniel Mackey, and Daphne Brooks, among others, can remake aspects of musicological thinking about voice. REPRESENTATIONS 154. 2021 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 10–22. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2021.154.2.10>.

condition in a disarming passage about the resonance between the slave narrative passed down to posterity by Harriet Jacobs (1861) and a nude photograph of an anonymous prepubescent Black girl captured in 1882 in the studio of Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins:

The moment in which you enter into the knowledge of slavery, of yourself as a slave, is the moment you begin to think about freedom, the moment in which you know or begin to know or to produce knowledge of freedom, the moment at which you become a fugitive, the moment at which you begin to escape in ways that trouble the structures of subjection that—as Hartman shows with such severe clarity—overdetermine freedom. This is the *musical* moment of the photograph.⁴

Provocatively, fugitivity here, regardless of its expressive medium, has a consistency that is decidedly musical.

I want to pause at this juncture—obscure at its surface, for how can a photograph without an iota of literal sound have a “*musical* moment”?—because the notion is pivotal, turning on what Moten elsewhere calls “visible sound.”⁵ Avid readers of Moten will recall another photograph that clamors at various points in his prose, that of the desecrated body of young Emmett Till, whose mother insisted he be displayed in all the horror of his savage murder. The image contains what Moten calls an “extensional cry and sound,” one whose power to overtake the viewer’s senses ignites the memory with a disturbance that transduces other senses, other embodied memories.

An image from which one turns is immediately caught in the production of its memorialized, re-membered reproduction. You lean into it but you can’t; the aesthetic and philosophical arrangements of the photograph . . . anticipate a looking that cannot be sustained as unalloyed looking but must be accompanied by listening and this, even though what is listened to—echo of a whistle or a phrase, moaning, mourning, desperate testimony and flight—is also unbearable. These are the complex musics of the photograph. This is the sound before the photograph.⁶

The music sounds before the camera clicks, before the viewer views, and sounds again once the viewer looks. Music both precedes and expresses Black life. It triggers memories that turn into griefs and horrors, more images, and (as we learn elsewhere) bundles of sensory events beyond the strictly auditory or visual. Not just unidirectional, however, medial/sensory transformations and intermediations also go the other way. Hence Jacobs, at a devastating moment in her account, hears “a band of serenaders . . . under the window, playing ‘Home Sweet Home,’” which soon turns into the sounding image of moaning children.⁷

Music here is no more resident solely in physical sound than in sounding music. Wherever found, Black music registers fugitive escape via the phonic eruption, which equates to Black experience and is prefigured by

the scream or cry whose originary American instance (to which Moten turns twice, following Saidiya Hartman) are the screams of Frederick Douglass's Aunt Hester being viciously beaten by her owner.⁸ Contained "in the break" (the main title of Moten's first book), the cry disrupts conventional grammars, strictures, and forms, indexing a breakdown or breakage, but also, relatedly, a breakthrough—a Black event that moves the subject from bondage, conscription, and silence to flight, marronage, and voice. Such flight takes the form of a literal (and for Moten paradigmatic) scream in Abbey Lincoln's performance of Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.'s *Freedom Now Suite* (1960), a piece that is otherwise "musical" in the ordinary sense.⁹ But fugitive flight also takes other sonic forms: a plangent, wailing jazz solo; the explosive shouts in James Brown's "Cold Sweat"; the lyrical, dancing rhythms of Rakim's hip-hop, for example—all instances of Moten's philosophies repeatedly articulating the Black radical aesthetic that Michael Gallope describes "as folds, blurs, oscillations, and rewinds; as displacement and dispossession; as the entanglement of lyricism, performativity, improvisation, and virtuosity."¹⁰

Why is blackness here occupying the theoretical space of critical negativity that was once primarily the province of modernism, an experimental '60s avant-garde, and continental philosophy? The answer might lie in the propensity of Moten's aesthetic philosophy to conceive the multisensory nature of Black aesthetics almost as a kind of "master trope" while conceiving blackness as ontologically prior to a social order of antiblackness and agential in its power of performance.¹¹ Even when sound occurs only in the imagination, it's not atomized, sense by sense, sensory domain by sensory domain, but always enmeshed in what Moten calls "the ensemble of the senses" and the ensemble of media that the senses carry along in erotic drives, privileging and augmenting "phonic substance."¹² Sound is thus "unbroken," and

phonic materiality opens to us its own invagination [cut, or turning backwards], a libidinal drive toward ever greater unities of the sensual where materiality in its most general—which is to say its most substantive—sense is transmitted in the interstice between text and all it represents and can't represent and the audiovisual and all that it bears and cannot bear. When in this space a *material* tactility is transferred, the affective encounter of the ensemble of the senses and the ensemble of the social is given as a possibility of this erotic drive that now can be theorized in its most intense relation to the drive for, and knowledge of, freedom.¹³

Grasping this means taking stock of Moten's concept of the ensemble, already introduced in 1994 as that which "produces, consumes, critiques, enacts a music that cuts, remembers, augments and . . . is a constitutive force in black culture" and provides a "transcendental clue that is the improvising

black ensemble.”¹⁴ Yet Moten’s project, far from a sheerly liberatory celebration, remains one of a dissenting utopia, refusing any reduction or reification of phonic substance in favor of a spacious encounter between a variety of ensembles, apprehending through music something Western philosophy has never been able to know. And to approach that something, he has been asking in all his work how music both conveys the content and drive of Black *history* and itself gives freedom.

Content, drive, freedom. Filling up and driving Black history, music has a hard-to-grasp metaphysical dimension here, beyond its sensory and social ones. This is something on which traditional musicology has always stumbled, not least because its own metaphysics have historically turned on fetishized objects of white making and attention, objects only provisionally available to those at the margins and often, therefore, irrelevant to them.¹⁵ Moten’s “music” instead produces a disturbance, a set of contrary desires, a space for new subjectivities (if “subjectivity” applies at all) and new ways of mapping them, hence a “paraontological” corrective to the rationalist Europeanist traps that musicology has never really been able to shake off.¹⁶ If music is often thought to model “logics of thought, patterns of culture, stories and plots of narrative, images and depictions of social relations,” then historically and theoretically, it matters that Moten’s “break” compels attention because it is both irrepressible and reverberant with the echoes of histories past and the searing racial problems of our time.¹⁷ It matters, too, that musically the boundaries of the break—which inclines to shed conventional boundaries—overflow the spaces made to contain it, challenging the premises of a linguistic/musical order: sense, syntax, and language; conventional timbres, vocal registers, rhythms, and even pitches; gestural norms; formal structures. As the cry initiates the break, the break as Black event takes the form of encounter and improvisation while also registering as the very form of knowledge necessary for the agency and freedom it signals (though never fully claims).¹⁸

II

Does the voice in Black radical aesthetics resound with what voice theorists often claim as a propensity of voice itself—a leaning toward errancy and polysemy, toward inhabiting a space in between, as Francesca Royster argues with respect to Black postsoul voices and Freya Jarman with respect to queer voices?¹⁹ And if so, could thinking fugitivity with voice provoke new musicological habits and visions? Much occupied with voice of late, musicology has nevertheless only begun to challenge the liberal inheritance of voice that has dogged academic and popular discourse: the autonomous

voice of the violin virtuoso, the great composer, or the diva whose vocality is waiting to be excavated by the enlightened subject in whom it dwells.²⁰

A vital rethinking of voice in connection with fugitivity comes from one of Moten's touchstones, much-cited poet, essayist, and novelist Nathaniel Mackey. In "Cante Moro" Mackey discovers in the poetry of antifascist Federico García Lorca the quality of *duende*—here roughly Moorishness or blackness—as basis for a polyphonic vision of Black voice, tracing it through the reception of García Lorca by US-American poets.²¹ *Duende* here involves what poet Robert Duncan calls "speaking more than one knew," when language is taken over by another voice, manifoldly, polysemously, polyphonically, complicating expression as Duncan's "trouble of an unbound reference" and Mackey's "obliquity of an unbound reference" (186–87). To discover the fugitive join of *duende* to music, Mackey looks to Amiri Baraka, for whom music "intimates fugitive spirit," sliding away orthogonally from the content that improvising musicians initially plot for it and leading them to cultivate "another voice" (187) that hovers between speech and song, haunting and possession. And, as Mackey writes, "Possession means that something beyond your grasp of it grabs you, something that gets away from you—another sense in which fugitivity comes in—gives you a voice" (191). For Mackey, that state of possession might be heard in a blues number, a flamenco *saeta* (an emotive song sung to the Virgin or Christ), or one of John Coltrane's sax solos. It "relates to a forking of the voice . . . doubling the voice, splitting the voice, breaking the voice, tearing it" (193) in a dialogical way proper to African American and African music's call and response, or to the relationships in Black church music between soloist and chorus, preacher and congregation. It might also manifest itself as the agonism of Trane's multiphonics or the polyphonic humming that accompanies Rahsaan Roland Kirk's flute playing—different instances of "metavoice" (193–94)—or in the simultaneously human and instrumental voices of the flute-like Middle Eastern ney. In all these looms something mysterious and obscure, something so inclined to steal away that its "voice" becomes a "phantom limb" even while sounding acoustically—"something you have but do not have" (197), epitomized vocally by falsetto.²²

Falsetto in the European musical tradition has often been understood as shredded, thin, and precarious (as many early modern Italians had it) or as a poor excuse for powerful castrati or women's voices (as betrayed by the performances of the early twentieth-century Handel revivalist Oskar Hagen).²³ More recently, what's mattered to musicologists is how the body of a falsettist is socially, often adversely, coded by listeners, say in Alisha Jones's account of how gospel countertenor Patrick Dailey is heard by Black churchgoers or in Nina Eidsheim's account of misguided hearings of jazz singer Jimmy Scott (who was often wrongly presumed to have been

a falsetto).²⁴ Mackey's take is related but different. As early as his epistolary novel *Bedouin Hornbook* (1986), speaking through his musician-protagonist (who's received an essay on the subject), Mackey was laying out a theory of how Black falsetto might contravene such negative valences.

Would it be going too far to say that in your essay the black falsetto has in fact found its voice? . . . In any case, the uncanny coincidence is that the draft of your essay arrived just as I'd put on a record by Al Green. I've long marveled at how all this going on about love succeeds in alchemizing a legacy of lynchings—as though singing were a rope he comes eternally close to being strangled by.²⁵

And then:

What is it in the falsetto that thins and threatens to abolish the voice but the wear of so much reaching for heaven? At some point you'll have to follow up this excellent essay of yours with a treatment of the familial ties between the falsetto, the moan and the shout. (51)

Shouting, moaning, singing: a Motenesque conjuncture, yet Moten fears in this case it “could be said to desecralize the legacy of lynchings, precisely by way of an ‘alchemizing’ that seems to fetishize or figure on the literal” by invoking the “absolute fact and reality of so many deaths” while “opening the possibility of redemption.”²⁶

Let's take Mackey's passage not at its literal word but for its value as an incitement, considering the subjunctively fictive mood in which it appears. It figures falsetto as a register of pain that is also a redemptive unleashing, much like Moten's imagining of Abbey Lincoln's screams or the “fractured, fracturing” shouts of James Brown called out in the same text.²⁷ But let's also listen to what Daphne Brooks hears as a problematic gendering of this alleged martyrdom.

Many critics have grappled with the unbearable lightness of being bound up in the classic soul falsetto, and they recognized that gendered register as the site of troubling, laborious (masculine) genius. The falsetto is the place where, to cite Nathaniel Mackey's famous passage . . . , “the dislocated African's pursuit of a meta-voice” bears the weight of a gnostic, transformative desire to be done with the world.” It is a form of vocal expression that articulates and “explores a redemptive, unworded realm.” Far less, however, has been made of the alto and contralto voices of black women artists—from [Nina] Simone and [Marian] Anderson to comedian Moms Mabley to [Lauryn] Hill contemporary MeShell NdegeOcello. That lowdown sound perhaps fails to generate the kind of heated striving, the dangerous ascensions, and the risky/risqué transgressions associated with the falsetto. We expect our black women to descend to the depths of despair while our men (Al Green, Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, Maxwell) who (sonically) rise are valued for crossing over into the realm of exigent martyrdom, sacrificing their hard-won manhood for the painful heights of gender ambiguity, rehearsing the sounds of emasculating torture as

a means of actualizing, in part, a kind of hetero(sexual) healing. Out of this trouble comes “restoration,” “renewal,” a “new word,” a new “world.”²⁸

For Brooks, the low Black female voice animates female fugitivity, even as it does the work of archiving ghosts, expressing itself in numerous forms—in Simone’s shifting, “itinerant” styles, genres, and subject positions, in the musical and subjective cosmopolitanism of Simone and Eartha Kitt, in the suffering conveyed by Hill and Sarah Vaughn.²⁹ In all these, the wounded kinship of the Middle Passage, that irreparable, irremediable gash in maternity, is always present, continually signifying and resignifying in Black voice.³⁰ And Brooks’s centering includes not just womanhood, but voice itself as an instrument of fugitivity.

Although Moten’s writings isolate voice only occasionally, and only sometimes female voice, voice is ubiquitous in his project of disinterment, of exhuming that which was murdered and unceremoniously buried in the long, ugly history of race that still resounds. In “The Phonographic *Mise-en-Scène*,” Moten offers a sustained meditation on voice by imagining the scene of Theodor Adorno listening to legendary Black soprano Jessye Norman’s 1993 recording of Arnold Schoenberg’s monodrama *Erwartung*.³¹ The essay finds Adorno, doggedly Europeanist, tolerating the otherwise problematic mechanical apparatus of the phonograph because it permits and facilitates structural listenings, repeated ones that turn living performance into comfortingly textualized and studiable composition, much as montage turns film into writing. Yet Norman’s performance-as-recording, Moten notes, can only undercut that project, especially toward the end of the piece when her voice erupts to betray “the irreducible trace of the (slave) narrative” (120).

Of course the most visceral object of Adorno’s contempt is the vulgarity of the culture industry with which phonography was complicit.³² Accordingly, what Adorno’s musicology really wants to slough off are opera’s hybridities, those places where the autonomous arts might “falter” (119), where the phonograph provides at least the illusion of overcoming hybridity, but where what is recovered is in fact a mere “architrace” (121). Somewhere in those tainted objects the body is inscribed, by the timbre and tone of the voice—even though the body is provisionally exiled in a rupture that phonographic listening is supposed to suture by accommodating structural listening, with all its pretense of soliciting the subject’s temporal coherence. And when the voice returns along with media hybridities, and the body comes roaring back into view, Norman’s *Erwartung* awaits, haunting the scene with its “discomposing” material trace of sensuality, corporeality, and especially the Black-bodied voice. To expose this, Moten traces the “unnatural descriptive history” through which Black voice is figured, always

carrying an “ineradicable and collective pain,” a sense of something troubled that *manifests* its fugitive materiality in performance, revealed by Adorno’s resistance to Black unfreedom, which inevitably turns the “mise-en-scène . . . into a *mise-en-abyme*” (132–33)—yet another resistance of the object.

The crisis of personhood thus incited echoes that raised by Stephen Best in *The Fugitive’s Properties*, which follows the wayward legal itineraries of ex-slaves who had to repay their release from bondage with debt and duty to landowners and others.³³ As law became increasingly wedded to personhood, Best argues, protections against arbitrary power were subordinated to a growing interest in promoting the personal right to invest and receive market benefits. Applied to the new technology of phonography, these rights meant exchanging human voices as properties that were thereby paradoxically in danger of becoming impersonal stolen things, and thus legally contestable. The “troubling fugacity of voice” and its “legal fungibility” made the emergent property that was voice at once “an inalienable aspect of personhood” and “an alienable property within the market” (19). We are back to fears of voice as something that might circulate dubiously, that might turn personhood into a commodity—imitable, stealable, reproducible, exchangeable.

III

To ask that musicology pay attention to phonic substance may seem paradoxical, for doesn’t it already situate phonic substance front and center? Perhaps, but Moten, Mackey, and Brooks are asking something different of us, something that emerges vividly in Brooks, one of Black music’s keenest listeners and, along with Mackey, among the most engaged and astute of Moten’s musical interlocutors. Brooks comes from African American studies and theater, literature, and gender studies, in all of which she’s deeply invested in the historical project of analyzing race through sound. In work after work, she hails those of us professionally quartered in the citadels of musicology to open the gates and hear what’s going on outside, wielding her provocations with a fiercely committed, exceptionally exuberant, and imaginative intelligence to hear the sounds of Black singers, especially women, as they confound audiences and rupture expectations beyond the bounds of words.³⁴ Female sound artists, she notes, from Simone to Moms Mabley, Adrienne Kennedy to Zora Neale Hurston, Beyoncé to Kitt and Vaughn, have been engaged in that work through an overloaded inventiveness, what Moten calls “chromatic saturation” and Brooks calls “Afro-sonic feminine excess.”³⁵ More recently, emerging

philosopher-musicologist Fumi Okiji is bringing something else to the conversation, beautifully spun arguments for the capacity of jazz to gather and mobilize the inherent difference of blackness and in the process also explore critically the expressive potential of failure—Moten’s “break” and “crack” as the “trace of some impossible initial version or inaugurative incident”—to sound both literally and metaphorically as a necessary part of the improvisation demanded of living jazz.³⁶

Insofar as Moten’s own versions of sonic fugitivity point to new musical pathways, to undisciplined futures and elusive, metaphysical sounds, they might seem to foreclose musicology altogether, so let me close by proposing three avenues they might open up. One is *spectrality* (or *hauntology*), because the fugitive not only pushes toward liberation but also always leaves sonic remainders, what Avery Gordon calls “haunting reminders of lingering trouble” from the past with which ancestors engage.³⁷ A second is the *aesthetic*, especially “the fracturing and multiplicative powers” of the Black avant-garde to make it into something new and different from Enlightenment versions that never seem to shed their kinship with the white European subject.³⁸ And a third is *intersectionality*, because the imbrication (minimally) of gender, race, and class is part of the “undercommons” of broken refuse that refuses ever to fully repair itself, ever to fully sound in harmony, resting instead in a disordered space of often noisy sound.³⁹

In a brilliant essay on “Uplift and Criminality,” Moten looks to the “phonographic edge,” to sonic palimpsests of Black history, in order to understand the stolen life of Black things; and for this he returns to the far reaches of history, this time to the pre-urban “black ordinary” to discover some kind of initiatory disconnect in the normative and regulative tendency of Black uplift.⁴⁰ He finds it by retracing several old “fugitive” tunes previously traced by C. L. R. James, Baraka, and Du Bois, each of whose account of those tunes was inevitably entangled in what Moten calls “(mis)translation, (mis)transliteration, and (mis)transcription.” Each listens to ancestors crying out in song in the face of oppressive masters, and each hears in the music the resistant force of African-inflected new world song as well as echoes of loss and transfer from Africa, albeit in different forms and registers and with differently errant paths to understanding: exile in Du Bois’s case, a liberatory Haitian future in James’s, a return to African origins in Baraka’s. In all, the Black musical aesthetic for Moten is indivisible from Black history, senses, memory, sociality, conditions.

Moten’s analyses, like Mackey’s and Okiji’s, are permeated with ghostly re-memberings—hauntings that are the very twin of forgetfulness, expressed as that which imbues the present with a past that refuses to remain there, however vexed its recovery.⁴¹ That vexedness is attested here by the fact that Du Bois, James, and Baraka all, in Moten’s interpretation,

distort things somewhat but convey in the process a longing for something lost, something haunting the scene of remembrance and commemoration and failing to be recovered in part because not amenable to progress-oriented discovery, linearity, agency, and subjectivity—refusing the individuation of conventional (white) histories. The struggles of Du Bois, James, and Baraka are in this way all struggles to hear and comprehend an obliterated past—a past that must be heard but resists the specificity of auditions some might wish for. Their very efforts push back against a self-satisfied Western rationalism, we might even say against the *sciences* in human sciences. They allow a lingering in unknowing, a fugitive resistance to squaring away—perhaps the thing that musicology can best learn from Black radical aesthetics.⁴²

Notes

- My sincere thanks to colleagues who gave me astute feedback on this piece: Seth Brodsky, Michael Gallope, Travis Jackson, and Ingrid Monson, and my co-editor for the special issue in which the essay appears, Nicholas Mathew.
1. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845; reprint, Columbia, SC, 2020); W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk with “The Talented Tenth” and “The Souls of White Folk,”* introduction by Ibram X. Kendi (New York, 2018), 192; Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York, 1998), and many others, e.g., Tammy L. Kernodle, “Having Her Say: The Blues as the Black Woman’s Lament,” in *Women’s Voices across Musical Worlds*, ed. Jane A. Bernstein (Boston, 2004), 213–31. Crucial is Daphne A. Brooks, *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound* (Cambridge, MA, 2021), which appeared too late to consult for this essay.
 2. See Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, 2003); *Black and Blur* (Durham, NC, 2017); *Stolen Life* (Durham, NC, 2018); and *The Universal Machine* (Durham, NC, 2018); as well as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK, 2013). Of the few musicological studies that engage Moten, most confine themselves to the introduction to *In the Break*. See recently, for example, Vijay Iyer, “Beneath Improvisation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Concepts in Music Theory*, ed. Alexander Rehding and Steven Rings (New York, 2019).
 3. On slaves as speaking commodities see Moten’s *In the Break*, 7–14.
 4. Fred Moten, “Taste Dissonance Flavor Escape (Preface to a Solo by Miles Davis),” in *Black and Blur*, 76, originally in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 17, no. 2 (2007): 217–46, including images not in *Black and Blur*; reference to Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1997), who has recently written about the same photograph in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York, 2019), 24–30. Tavia Nyong’o treats the visible/invisible dialectic of blackness explored in “Taste Dissonance Flavor

- Escape” in his *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York, 2019), 167–68.
5. Moten, *In the Break*, chap. 3.
 6. *Ibid.*, 200.
 7. Harriett Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Frances Smith Foster and Richard Yarborough, 2nd ed. (New York, 2019), 93; quoted in Moten, *Black and Blur*, 68–69.
 8. Moten, *In the Break*, esp. 18–20; Moten, *Black and Blur*, ix–x. Cf. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 3–4.
 9. Abbey Lincoln’s scream occurs on Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.’s album *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*, in the “protest” portion of the middle track, “Triptych”; *We Insist! Max Roach’s “Freedom Now Suite,”* recorded August 31 and September 6, 1960, compact disc.
 10. Quoted from Michael Gallope, “Black Art as Unmappable Dissent,” review of *Black and Blur*, by Fred Moten, *Cultural Critique* 111 (2021): 195, a rare sustained musicological encounter with Moten, which he generously shared with me before publication. Ronald Radano’s excellent “Black Music Labor and the Animated Properties of Slave Sound,” *boundary 2* 43, no. 1 (2016): 173–208, criticizes Moten for missing the “inner radicalism” from within the structures of slave capitalism (176–77 and 176n10), but I feel he mistakenly reads Moten’s invocation of Douglass’s account as if it were a case-claim argument grounded in linear historical developments.
 11. Quote from Travis Jackson, private communication, August 25, 2020. On Moten’s Afro-optimism see Jared Sexton, “Ante-Anti-Blackness: Afterthoughts,” *Lateral* 1 (2012).
 12. Moten, *In the Break*, 189 and *passim*.
 13. *Ibid.*, 191.
 14. Frederick Charles Moten, “Ensemble: The Improvisation of the Whole in Baraka, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Derrida” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1994), vi.
 15. For Gallope, Moten’s project refuses the center because it is saturated with excesses of meaning that make it numinous, even quasi-mystical, writing into existence an antiliberal, unregulated Black aesthetic; Gallope, “Black Art as Unmappable Dissent,” 193–205.
 16. On paraontology, see Moten, *Stolen Life*, 11–12, following Nahum Chandler, and *Universal Machine*, *passim*.
 17. “Logics of thought . . .” is quoted from the Musical Pasts Consortium meeting prompt, Yale University, October 2018.
 18. See Kara Keeling’s brilliant expansion on Moten’s fugitivity as it relates to Karl Marx and music in *Queer Times, Black Futures* (New York, 2019), 36–38 and *passim*.
 19. Francesca T. Royster, *Sounding Like a No-No: Queer Sounds and Eccentric Acts in the Post-Soul Era* (Ann Arbor, 2013), and Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (New York, 2011).
 20. James Q. Davies, “Voice Belongs,” in the colloquy “Why Voice Now?” convened by Martha Feldman, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (2015): 677–81; James Q. Davies, “‘I Am an Essentialist’: Against the Voice Itself,” in *The Voice as Something More: Essays toward Materiality*, ed. Martha Feldman and Judith T. Zeitlin with afterword by Mladen Dolar (Chicago, 2019), 142–68; and Seth Brodsky, “There Is No Such Thing as the Composer’s Voice,” in *The Voice as Something More*, 227–46.

21. Nathaniel Mackey, “Cante Moro,” in *Paracritical Hinge: Essays, Talks, Notes, Interviews* (Iowa City, 2018), 181–98 (originally in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. Adelaide Morris [Chapel Hill, 1997], 194–212).
22. The “phantom limb” also appears in Nathaniel Mackey, *Bedouin Hornbook*, vol. 1 of *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate* (New York, 1986), 16.
23. See my *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Oakland, 2015), 44 and chap. 3. Oskar Hagen’s revival of George Frideric Handel’s *Ottone* was staged on July 5, 1921, at the Göttingen International Handel Festival.
24. Alisha Lola Jones, *Flaming? The Peculiar Theopolitics of Fire and Desire in Black Male Gospel Performance* (New York, 2020), chap. 3; Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality* (Durham, NC, 2019), 107–10.
25. Mackey, *Bedouin Hornbook*, 50. Richard Middleton’s view of Delta blues singer and steel string guitarist Charley Patton’s falsetto, in *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York, 2006), 60–62, resonates with Mackey’s take.
26. Moten, *In the Break*, 197.
27. *Ibid.*, 22.
28. Daphne A. Brooks, “‘Bring the Pain’: Post-Soul Memory, Neo-Soul Affect, and Lauryn Hill in the Black Public Sphere,” in *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor, 2013), 184–85. Cf. Jack [Judith] Halberstam on falsetto as queered voice, “Queer Voices and Musical Genders,” in *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music*, ed. Freya Jarman-Ivens (New York, 2007), 183–95.
29. Daphne A. Brooks, “Nina Simone’s Triple Play,” *Callaloo* 34, no. 1 (2011): 176–97; Daphne A. Brooks, “Planet Earth(a): Sonic Cosmopolitanism and Black Feminist Theory,” in *Cornbread and Cuchifritos: Ethnic Identity Politics, Transnationalization, and Transculturation in American Urban Popular Music*, ed. Wilfried Raussert and Michelle Habell-Pallán (Tempe, 2011), 111–25; Brooks, “Bring the Pain”; and Daphne A. Brooks, “Open Channels: Some Thoughts on Blackness, the Body, and Sound(ing) Women in the (Summer) Time of Trayvon,” *Performance Research* 19, no. 3 (2014): 62–68.
30. Even in 2003, Moten’s irreducible scream expressed a “materiality” encompassing soul, funk, R&B, and avant-garde jazz—to none of which falsetto is immune.
31. Fred Moten, “The Phonographic Mise-en-Scène,” in *Black and Blur*, 118–33, originally in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 269–81.
32. Cf. Moten, “The Phonographic Mise-en-Scène”: “The scene of phonographic audition comes to constitute something like a prophylactic against the degradation or waste of musical substance that is always given as a danger of the ideological spectacle of operatic staging as well as the irreducible materiality of sound, of the musical moment” (121).
33. Stephen M. Best, *The Fugitive’s Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (Chicago, 2004).
34. Daphne A. Brooks, “Afro-sonic Feminist Praxis: Nina Simone and Adrienne Kennedy in High Fidelity,” in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham, NC, 2014), 204–22, and Brooks, “Bring the Pain.”
35. Moten, *Universal Machine*, chap. 3.
36. Fumi Okiji, *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* (Stanford, 2018), 68, quoting Moten on Billie Holiday (Moten, *In the Break*, 107). Both are members of Le Mardi Gras Listening Collective. On failure and crack see my “Voice Gap Crack Break,” in Feldman and Zeitlin, *The Voice as Something More*, 188–208. Others for whom Moten is important have yet to engage him extensively in print; see Matthew Morrison’s fine essay “Race, Blacksound, and

- the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 3 (2019): 792.
37. Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, 2008), xix.
 38. Gallope, “Black Art as Unmappable Dissent.”
 39. Cf. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, esp. Jack Halberstam’s contribution, 7–9.
 40. Fred Moten, “Uplift and Criminality,” in *Stolen Life*, 115–39, esp. 116–20, originally in *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum (Minneapolis, 2007), 317–49. Moten also invokes here what Mackey calls, following Robert Duncan, “meta-voice,” “whose features carry some important information regarding the history of blackness as politicoaesthetic assertion” (121).
 41. For example, Moten, *In the Break*, 44–46, 161, 196. Cf. Sharon Patricia Holland on Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London, 2013), 264.
 42. I deal with a case of “fugitive voice” in “Love, Race, and Resistance: The Fugitive Voice of Nina Simone,” in *The Female Voice in the Twentieth Century: Material, Symbolic, and Aesthetic Dimensions*, ed. Serena Facci and Michela Garda (London, 2021), 83–101, a complement to this essay.