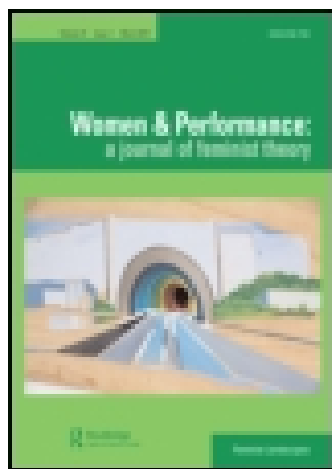


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Preface for a solo by Miles Davis

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TASTE DISSONANCE FLAVOR ESCAPE

Preface for a solo by Miles Davis

Fred Moten

Taste Dissonance Flavor Escape seeks to establish and explain the following assertions: that there is an irreducible relationship between blackness, criminality and the aesthetic; that escape-in-confinement is a fundamental audio-visual motif for black expressive culture; that this motif is essential to modernity and to modernism in their broadest conceptions insofar as it instantiates a relationship between the history of race and the history of cinema. This complex of assertions revolves around the stilled, fugitive performance of a little girl.

The object of theory is not something immediate, of which theory might carry home a replica. Knowledge has not, like the state police, a rogues' gallery of its objects. Rather, it conceives them as it conveys them; else it would be content to describe the façade. As Brecht did admit, after all, the criterion of sense perception—overstretched and problematic even in its proper place—is not applicable to radically indirect society. What immigrated into the object as the law of its motion [*Bewegungsgesetz*], inevitably concealed by the ideological form of the phenomenon, eludes that criterion. (Adorno 1972, 206)

I was sent, tell that to history. (Goodison 2000, 24)

To speak from the position of the not supposed to speak is to submit to an even more fundamental disqualification: that in speaking from that position one relinquishes the possibility of thought or of being thought insofar as one (merely) provides the material conditions (in speech that is, as it were, beneath speech; speech borne in a soma-sonority that refuses to disavow itself) for another's thought and for another's being thought. But questions arise: What happens if, impossibly, the matter that prompts thought—the purportedly bare materiality that is sent as an originary deviance inaugurating the very power that will, by a tortuous road of self-regulation, contain it—is matter of and for thought? What does being-sent (and by what? by whom? for what exploitative and/or salvific cause?), in what has been thought to be the impossibility of its being

thought or of its thinking, in a materiality whose arrival might now be seen as the disruption rather than condition of a given epistemological line or chord, mean? What does being-sent into the terrible pathways and precincts of the human do to or for the human? What happens when we consider and enact the aesthetic, epistemological and ontological escape of and from being-sent? I would like to address these questions—irruptions of that ‘thematics of flight’, towards and within which Hortense Spillers moves, which forms the inspiriting, locomotive foundation of the theory and history of blackness—in the form of some hyperbolic liner notes given in the idiom of black studies, which Cedric Robinson calls ‘the critique of western civilization’ and which could also be understood as a critique of enlightenment and even as a critique of judgment from the position of what Robinson might call an eternally alien immanence or, more precisely, from a radical materiality whose *animation* (fantasy of another [form-of-]life) has been overlooked by masterful looking (Morse 1999, paragraph 35; Spillers 2003, 433).

Scarsign

Harriet Jacobs composed *Incidents in the life of a slave girl* in secret, ‘at irregular intervals’, in the confines of an impossible domesticity from which she had long been on the run (Jacobs 2001, 5). Her work exemplifies that operation under the constraints of anti-abolitionist discipline and surveillance that is essential to black intellectuality. Black art is often concerned with showing this operation. Black art stages it, performs it, by way of things breaking and entering and exiting the exclusionary frame of the putatively ennobling, quickening representations to which they are submitted, paradoxically, as the very enfleshment of the un- or sub-representable; by way of parts improperly rupturing the w/holes to which they will have never belonged or never have been fully relegated but by which they have been enveloped; by way of outlaws moving without moving against the law they constitute; by way of captured motion constantly escaping in a cell like St Jerome. Jacobs cannot give the consent that, nevertheless, she can withhold. She is a problem, a question, posed and thereby revealing an agency that is interdicted, caught in the interval, but no less real. This interdicted agency of the interval, the interred, the incident; this agency that is revealed in the incident, by way of injury, by way of the injunction against action and self-certainty; *this agency of the thing* disowns or unowns knowledge (of slavery, of desire) in the name of another knowledge, a knowledge of the inappropriate. I am concerned with the discovery of this knowledge and its secret location, concerned that this knowledge is locatable, that it is, as it were, *held* somewhere. Eventually this turns out to be a musical concern that one approaches by way of literature, painting, photography and the essential structural apparatus and narrativity of cinema. I hope this concern will, in its turn, allow a more complete understanding of (black) performance as the irruption of the thing through the resistance of the object.

This concern requires that I begin again or that I echo, with differences, my beginning. What is it to be thrown into the story of another's development; and to be thrown into that story as both an interruption of it and as its condition of possibility; and to have that irruption be understood as both an ordering and a disordering movement? And what if one has something like one's own story to tell. One engages, then, in the production of a subplot, *a plot against the plot*, contrapuntal, fantastic, underground—a fugitive turn or stealing away (as Nathaniel Mackey or Saidiya Hartman might put it), enacted by a runaway tongue or dissenting body (as Harryette Mullen or Daphne Brooks might have it), from the story within the story.¹ Lydia Maria Child's editing was meant to regulate Jacobs's disruptions of the master narrative but the irregular and its other regulations were already operative in Jacobs's work as a special attunement to a certain temporal insurrection in the music of constantly escaping slaves and to the status and force of a certain gap between emotional appearance and emotional reality. Jacobs's writing is infused by the music she overhears. That infusion occurs momentarily, carrying forward narrative disruption as a kind of anarchic principle. Stories don't survive this kind of thing intact; (good) taste demands this kind of disowning thing be disavowed. Here's a prime example in her text of the kind of thing that's too hard to take:

I sat in my usual place on the floor near the window where I could hear much that was said in the street without being seen. The family had retired for the night, and all was still. I sat there thinking of my children, when I heard a low strain of music. A band of serenaders were under the window playing 'Home, sweet home'. I listened till the sounds did not seem like music, but like the moaning of children. It seemed as if my heart would burst. I rose from my sitting posture, and knelt. A streak of moonlight was on the floor before me, and in the midst of it appeared the forms of my two children. They vanished; but I had seen them distinctly. Some will call it a dream, others a vision. (Jacobs 2001, 87)

In the crawlspace above the main floor of her grandmother's house, where she confined herself for more than seven years in order to escape mastery's sexual predation (in this first instance a southern man with southern principles), Harriet Jacobs (and/or Linda Brent, her shadowed, shadowing double and counter-affective effect) is on the way to cinema, precisely at the place where fantasy and document, music and moaning, movement and picturing converge. Hers is an amazing medley of shifts, a choreography in confinement, internal to a frame it instantiates and shatters. It's the story of a certain cinematic production and spectatorship prompted by transformative overhearing, driven by broken, visionary steps. This lawless freedom of the imagination, in all the radicality of its adherence to art's law of motion, occurs in a space Mackey would characterize as cramped *and* capacious, a spacing Jacques Derrida would recognize as a scene of writing, that Hortense Spillers has called a *scrawl* space, in which Jacobs/Linda writes against what Maurice Wallace calls the

'spectragraphic surrogacy of the black woman's body', in a tale that is punctuated, which is to say advanced, by small gestures of secret listening that cross into what emerges by way of having been relinquished, the impossible image of the incalculably distant children, just a few feet away from her, whom Jacobs has and cannot have, sees and cannot see (Wallace 2002, 86).

Incalculable distance crosses into incalculable rhythm: Jacobs extends her escape in part by imitating the rickety walking of sailors but her destination turns out to be the rickety bridge between things and the whole they (de)form. This is Jacobs's fugitive trajectory, her autobiographical problematic. She is not the one who would stand in for the one that is not the one. Her solo—which *must be indexed to a line of solos that are equally, impossibly, underwritten, overflowed and overflowed*—is constituted and vexed by a set of unlikely interplays: of written life and the paradox of escape via graphic capture; of the pedagogical imperative and the double edges of thingliness and being-representative; of the audio-visibility of a complaint that can only be given both in more than one voice and in that solitary, autobiographical telling that is always in less than one voice; of aesthetic criminality and the madness—as opposed to the absence—of the work. The 'loophole of retreat' (Jacobs 2001, 91) through and within which Jacobs sees and overhears while under the constant threat of being seen and overheard, is a scar and a sign.

Catalogue Number 308 (The Black Apparatus is a Little Girl)

At the beginning of *In praise of nonsense: Kant and Bluebeard*, Winfried Menninghaus comments on a passage from 'On the combination of taste with genius in products of beautiful art', section 50 of Kant's *Critique of judgment*:

'All the richness of the imagination . . . in its lawless freedom produces nothing but nonsense', Kant cautions. Nonsense, then, does not befall the imagination like a foreign pathogen; rather, it is the very law of imagination's own 'lawlessness'. Kant therefore prescribes a rigid antidote: even in the field of the aesthetic, understanding must 'severely clip the wings' of imagination and 'sacrifice . . . some' of it. (Menninghaus 1999, 1)

When Kant speaks of imagination a distinction is implicit between *Phantasie* as lawless, quotidian creative activity (at the intersection of the ordinary and the merely [phonetic, culinary, gestural, cultural, sensual]) and such activity's regulation into/as a philosophical faculty, the means and ends of *Einbildungskraft*: in other words, clipped wings. However, if Kant prescribes what Menninghaus calls a 'politics of curtailment' (1999, 1) of the imagination it must also be said that he acknowledges a resistance to that politics that occurs, as it were, before that politics. Menninghaus's work is structured by the disclosure of this ambivalence in Kant that can be said to disrupt and appose origin in general. I want to consider this necessarily irregular opening of the regulative and to think

it in relation to Kant's deployment of race and, more pointedly, of blackness, as not only exemplary but constitutive of regulative and/or teleological principle. As Robert Bernasconi argues in his reading of Kant's 'On the use of teleological principles in philosophy':

Kant's interest in the question of the color of Africans . . . seems to have kept him focused on the question of the adequacy of mechanistic explanations offered in isolation from teleology. In Kant's first essay on race the purposive nature of racial (which meant for him color) differences was assumed but not argued on the basis that because neither chance nor mechanical laws could have brought about the developments that enabled organic bodies to adapt to the climates into which they first moved, those developments must be construed as preformed. [Later, Kant] wrote that the purposive nature of color was visible in the Negro race . . . The blackness of blacks provided Kant with one of the most powerful illustrations of purposiveness within the biological sphere. But perhaps it worked as a powerful example among his White audience because it addressed their fascination with the fact of Blackness. (Bernasconi 2001, 25–26)

For Kant, the blackness of blacks can be said to stand in for race because it seems so powerfully to illustrate purposiveness—which he defines in the Third Critique as 'that the existence of which seems to presuppose a representation of that same thing' (Kant 2000, 19), as things 'whose possibility must be grounded in an idea of them' (20), a supersensible lawfulness of the contingent as such, a teleological impetus that trumps both chance and mechanistic laws, 'an extravagance for our theoretical faculty of cognition, but not thereby useless or dispensable, but which rather serve as regulative principles partly to restrain the worrisome pretensions of the understanding' (55). In other words, the understanding, which had been invoked as that which polices the imagination in its lawlessness, is itself restrained by an imaginative excess, an irregular supersensible regulator that, paradoxically, by way of the specific, unadorned sensuality of a visible difference (the blackness of blacks), *embodies* purposiveness. It is, therefore, a foundational *aesthetic* experience of blackness, given in the register of the merely sensual, held in the relay between the agreeable, which in any case blackness cannot attain, and the disagreeable, which blackness could be said almost to define, to which Kant appeals in order to espouse the importance of teleological principle. Race or racial difference, which shows up sensually, stands in, as it were, for the principle of the supersensible, which in turn grounds the universal, intersubjective validity of judgments of taste. But blackness, even though it is the sensuality that negatively bodies forth the supersensible, precisely insofar as it is 'merely' sensual, is not subject to the intersubjective validity of judgments of taste that it could be said to ground. Rather, as mere sensuality, it occupies and quickens a series: the stupid, the irrational, the deformed and/or deformative, the unfinished and/or disruptive, the driven and/or transportive, the irregular and/or anti- and ante-regulative, the blurred and/or

blurring, the curved, the arabesque, the *parergon*, the outwork and/or mad absence of the work, the outlaw, the would-have-been-outside, the thing of nature that defies or defers, rather than presupposes, representation. That series will have always been inseparable from a natural history of inequality that it animates and by which it is animated. Disagreeable blackness is sent, as it were, into what is characterized as a natural servitude, a captivity in which the embodiment of the need for constraint, whose own foundational and constitutive constraining force has been deployed and forgotten, precisely insofar as s/he is supposed to be incapable of self-regulation, is given over to the ultimate form of governance, namely that impossible and phantasmic condition of being wholly for another, of being merely for another's use, in a regime whose benevolence is located precisely in the severity of its exploitativeness. This is how the justification and imposition of exploitation is interinanimate with that constant tension between material ground and imaginative leap, each of which must be bracketed and disavowed by the modern subject that they constitute, each of which must be invoked not only in the interest of such constitution but also in the interest of the other's disavowal. Blackness is the in/audible, in/visible, subterranean and submarine focal point of this matrix.

Insofar as it is an aesthetic experience that initiates these declensions, it is possible to see the justificatory roots of a range of anti-aestheticisms, most notably that of Adrian Piper, that justify themselves by linking the aesthetic to the paradoxically xenophobic expansionism that drives our modernity (see Piper 1985, 29–40). But Piper's advocacy of a kind of flight from aesthetic acculturation in the name of that trace of the disagreeable that re-emerges in and as conceptual assertion and catalytic ethical performance, seems anomalous insofar as it swerves away from the aesthetic realm that constitutes something like a retroprojective ground for (or the locale of the culmination of) the critical philosophy upon which her own ethics and epistemology are based. Can any avoidance of the national and/or racial market that aesthetic acculturation implies maintain proximity to the rational and ethical field whose foundation is, according to Kant, the regulative or teleological principle, the structural guarantor and embodiment of the purposive, that blackness-as-race exemplifies? If Kant's movement within an imperative to maintain the unmaintainable distinction between animality and humanity is any indication, the answer is no. Race or the raced figure, particularly the figure of the black, occupies and enacts a kind of force field—the not but nothing other than human—that maintains that distinction while embodying the necessary danger of its inevitable collapse. It is the very mark and location of the non-categorical, of the outlaw that guarantees the law. This is how the exemplary figure of abjection, exploitation, pity and revulsion is also always the exemplary figure of danger, threat and irreducible, unavoidable attraction. Racial slavery constitutes the condition of concretization and dissolution for these concepts and figures. In an age which locates humanity in the drive to be free of any externally imposed law and the impulse to push against the limits of the law in general, the black slave's desire to

be free must be dehumanized, pathologized, naturalized as somatic and mental defect or disease; or mythologized as its opposite, as docility, preternatural cheerfulness, contentment, and/or imperviousness to pain. More to the point, and to return to ground Menninghaus prepares, that desire to be free, manifest as flight, as escape, as a fugitivity that may well prove to veer away even from freedom as its *telos*, is indexed to an original lawlessness. The predisposition to break the law is immediately disrupted by an incapacity for law, an inability both to intend the law and intend its transgression and the one who is defined by this double inability is, in a double sense, an outlaw. At the same time, one is now both able and obligated to speak of something like the natural and lawless freedom of the natural servant. The imagination, the black and the thing (*das Ding*) all partake of the lawless freedom that attends the anti- or ante-intentional; all are in need of some external, regulative force that they also body forth.

In such a context, amputation/castration/'clipped wings' emerge as psycho/somatic remedy in need of remedy. After slavery, so-called natural tendencies to break and or (a)void law, to violate, for instance, the limits of a juridical rationality whose protective function was directed towards or through rather than for the 'freedman', were criminalized, attached to some primordialized excess-as-category, some spiritual tendency for mayhem that must, paradoxically be thought as a certain criminality of imagination or pathologization of form that, again, is deployed to mark both the human and its excluded, inhuman essence. Race, then, is an always already troubled concept, the consolidation or protection of which is the occasion for, among other things, the massive exertion of theoretical energy. It is, finally, black resistance to such foundational strife, or rather, the yoking of such resistance to blackness, that constitutes the ground whereby the figure of the black not only occupies the space wherein the difference between animal, criminal and human would be maintained and always collapses but at given moments is the exemplary figure of the animal, the criminal *and* the human. To be figured as the exemplary human—and as the very opening through which access to the human is given—is perhaps the *greatest* index of racism. But what is most important is that blackness itself, insofar as it stands in for the inadequacy of mechanistic explanation, operates for Kant within the realm of the transcendental—it is a physicality that is indexed to something more than the 'merely' physical. Though not subject to the intersubjective validity that grounds judgments of taste it is, as it were, the field or the ground—that takes the form of an imaginative leap—within which the universalizing strain of subjective individuation is intelligible. For us, as apposed to Kant—who bears but does not speak for, disavows but is constituted by, supposedly mute and decidedly mutative disagreeable blackness—there is a certain romanticism to be entered and exceeded insofar as it constitutes the occasion for a recovery or rehabilitation of the 'merely' sensual even as it calls upon us to consider how the material instantiates the teleological, the transcendental. And all this requires a deeper consideration of the nature and fate of the material, the physical. But what is the materiality and physicality of blackness? I would tend to agree

with both Kant and Du Bois that simple description doesn't come close to getting at that animaterial, metaphysical thing in itself that exceeds itself

In the end, the question of ownership, of property and the proper, will always be the field upon which the specifics of these general structures are laid out. *Finally, race is the locus of the conceptual and practical protection and the uncontainable endangerment of the proper.* The black slave is, again, the key manifestation of this double icon but s/he is also always a strong reminder that both this danger and this saving power can neither be limited to nor contained within that iconic figure. The co-mingling of the constraints of and the resistance to the proper and the law turns out to be the very essence of the modern conception of personhood. There is an impurity at the very heart of the modern subject that the notion of general and abstract equivalence cannot regulate. What is figured as external threat to that structure of equivalence is the shadow of its already fatal internal differentiation. The figure of the outside that guarantees the equality of 'all men' is the embodied shadow of a difference internal to all men, an interior paramour (as Wallace Stevens would have it) or blackamoor (as Denis Diderot would have it), one that might have been conceptualized otherwise. The anxiety that structures the impossible experience—within which we all operate—of race as a conceptualization of difference and the justification of the derivation of inequality from difference is this: race endangers what it was meant to protect (Diderot 1994, 84; Stevens 1997, 444). It must then become, as Michel Foucault argues, the locus and the method for a kind of endless war, a war as endless as the current war on terror that is its offshoot and contemporary guise, an endless task of violent regulation and enforcement that responds to the resistances and flights that prompt it (Foucault 2003). Implicit, here, is that race must do the work that would fulfill its destiny. This is to say that it must be activated, and is paradoxically always already activated, in the work of its own self-destruction.

The regulative discourse on the aesthetic that animates Kant's critical philosophy is, therefore, inseparable from the question of race as a mode of conceptualizing and regulating human diversity, grounding and justifying terror, as well as marking the limits of human knowledge and human action through the codification of quasi-transcendental philosophical method, which is Kant's acknowledged aim in the critical philosophy. I am concerned with the extent to which it could be said that the black radical tradition, on the one hand, reproduces the political and philosophical paradoxes of Kantian regulation and, on the other hand, constitutes a resistance that anticipates and makes possible Kantian regulation by way of the instrumentalization to which such resistance is submitted and which it refuses. A further elaboration of certain material figures is demanded such that we understand the strife that ensues in the space between two fantasies—the black as regulative instrument and the black as natural agent of deregulation—as a turmoil foundational to the modern aesthetic, political and philosophical fields. Thus my interest in the anticipatory resistance to 'this politics of curtailment' that Kant prescribes. Such resistance, which might be called

a radical politics of the imagination, moves in preparation for the question concerning the law of lawless freedom; but it must be said immediately that this question, which is nothing other than the question of the fugitive irruption of thought, is here and now inseparable from the racialization—at once phantasmatic and experiential—of the imagination.

This is to say that Kant's conceptualization of race, of blackness-as-race or racial difference, is not just one instance among others of him stretching his own wings, of his evasion of their regulative, if partial, amputation. Rather, Kant's conceptualization of race—as a way of ordering the disparate facts that comprise the set of human differences; as an instantiation of the cantilevered bridge from natural description to natural history—inaugurates the culmination of the critical philosophy where culmination is best understood as invagination, as a folding that opens the whole that it would also enclose. Kant's imaginative deployment of blackness is also his enactment of those simultaneously constitutive and disruptive properties, those irreducible improprieties, that will have accrued to blackness in the interinanimative development of the knowledge of race, the justification of racialized power and the sciences of man. We must note, therefore, along with Menninghaus, the precariousness of that "'ideal" liaison between beauty and imagination' that the strict regulation of 'genius's excessiveness and unreason' (Menninghaus 1999, 1) can never fully protect, that genius's paradoxical policing of the understanding that is supposed to police it can never fully unleash. That liaison is subject to the internal danger or difference, the irreducible materiality, that structures the beautiful, the pure. The irreducible materiality of the beautiful and the irreducible irregularity of the imagination define an enclosure that will have always been invaded, as it were, from the inside. This troubled interiority is domesticated by way of a cycle of projection and importation or exoticized as an object of attraction, incorporation and exilic hope. As Menninghaus points out with regard to what he calls the escape of nonsense 'for a brief moment in the history of Romantic Literature'; a certain refuge is found 'in the aesthetics of ornament, arabesque, and fairytale, and acquires the character of a hyperbolically artistic form rather than of a natural power prior to all culture' (1999, 1).

Another version of this hyperbolic aesthetic is the object now, a version that is also a more than natural power. This particular brand of ornamentation is and enacts a ruptural augmentation. This is ornamentation as serration and it's set to work at the broken edge where sexualization and racialization meet. That this other version might be said to work this way is surprising since it, and the precise description of it, take such a torturous path. This is to say that here I will be concerned with how nonsense escapes in a tale of escape where escape is figured as a regulative turn against escape; where regulation is, above all, the regulation of a quite specific, nationally and racially circumscribed market place; where mercantilist regulation merges with mercantilist (turns from) escape (a turn, seemingly, towards power—a choreophonic response) precisely at the constant and demonstrative making of sense and the reduction of (phonic)

materiality such making seems always to imply, an ordinance that protects the exclusionary universality of a totality that cannot stand, in its orderedness, in the face of the rough non-sense or extra-sense—the non-reduction of sense that is more than sense—of the aesthetic event and its ordinary serrations. It is no accident that irruptions on the surface of the event, that irruption as (the surface of) the event, will have constituted the severest challenge to that Kantian notion of freedom that depends upon smooth containment. The romanticism of the black radical tradition, if you will, is at issue here and, as I hope to show, both are played out—in and as surface, in and as irruptive, uncontainable, fugitive, phonic materiality—on the plain of the ordinary.

One way to think of that plain or field is as the domain of J. L. Austin, whose work was devoted to the proposition that the proper object and methodological apparatus for philosophy was ordinary language—the material, as it were, of everyday discursive events or, in his parlance, speech acts. However, when Austin sets out on the path toward a general theory of language he moves along lines determined by the paradigmatic opposition of material surface and semantic depth. Austin anticipates the enterprise of deconstruction in his comportment towards the critique of what he calls false alternatives but, like Derrida after him and Ferdinand de Saussure before him, the desire for universality in language and in the theory of language requires a silence that must be underheard. Still, Austin's anticipation of deconstruction comes upon an effect that, perhaps efficaciously, is never fully crystallized as method. He submits his own work (his own logical direction, his own diegetic comportment) to that effect—a liberating cascade of breakdowns in which linguistic categories are cut by the everyday events of speech so that, within the plain of the ordinary, the distinctions between words and gestures and between words and sounds emerge and recede in order to let us know that the extraordinary is the always surprising path through the ordinary that is made by way of the montagic, transversal sequencing of events. That sequence is, in turn, structured by the logic of the surprising, multiple singularity of the event—that it is unprecedented, that it is infused with the plexed singularity of its fellows. The event in question is the criminal, repeating head of a step aside; the object at hand is the lawless choreophonography of stolen light, stolen life. Such movement in sound and light, such dispossessed and dispossessive fugitivity, in its very anticipation of the regulative and disciplinary powers to which it responds, reminds us, along with Foucault, that 'it is not that life has been totally integrated into techniques that govern and administer it; it constantly escapes them' (Foucault 1978, 143). Therefore, I will try to pay some attention to a certain vexed variation on the arabasque—and on the Odalisque—hoping to hold my eye and ear on what will turn out to have been the emancipatory reproductivity of a seizure, of an abolitionist frame. What remains of this paper will be concerned with a certain prefiguring of and postscript to modernism understood as race war becoming art.

Consider (the music of) the interplay of literature, painting, photography and cinema—an interplay or interstice or interval that could be called, by way of Michael Fried but very much against his grain, *theatre* (see Fried 1998, 148–172). This requires concern for the story that animates that interplay and the apparatus that is necessary for both that interplay and that story to be carried out (where and when it is carried out precisely by way of the animating force of the interval). I will be concerned with a spasmodic trajectory, a line constituted by its fracture, a turn that turns on and against itself, that moves toward and away from and around the photograph of a little girl in a kind of art historical dimensionality that will bring into focus at the moment of its having been made secret an instance of the black apparatus, of the sound/image of the black in the modern Euro-American audio-visual imagination (see Figure 1).² This photograph opens onto a Philadelphia story. The capital of nineteenth century American photography and the point of departure for nineteenth century pseudo- and social-scientific study of the negro is a scene we have to enter, following Tera Hunter in her investigation of the post-emancipation struggle of black women workers to ‘joy their freedom’ and, on the other hand, channeling Hartman’s wariness regarding the vexed history and interdicted possibility of black enjoyment and its doubled edge (see Hunter 1997). Entrance into that scene and its disciplinary pleasures means entering the history of the pose and its fictions that are carried in this image by a little girl’s inaudible and imperceptible phono-choreographic quickening. In the photograph, she quickens against being



FIGURE 1

African-American girl nude, reclining on a couch (1882), Thomas Eakins. Courtesy of Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia.

stilled, studied, buried, stolen, as she steals away, moving without moving, like Harriet Jacobs.

I'm interested in the motion of the work, of the thing-at-work, at the intersection of cinema and music. The undisciplined image of a little girl resides there in a stillness that is always partial. It breaks the law that it bodies forth, the law of motion it lays down but cannot still. This law is the essence of a Philadelphia Story, of a Philadelphia Negro, having waited until what is given in literary reproduction is unheld, now, in mechanical reproduction. It's not about breaking the law of motion. Nor is it that the law of motion exists criminally, fugitively, that the law of motion is a being against the law in all of its constitutive fugal, improvisational, fantastical terribleness. The black apparatus, black performance, the thing's interruption of the object in resistance, blackness-as-fugitivity, the teleological principle in suspense, the broken breaking bridge and broken circle, cuts the revolt become law, lies before the law, not as a criminality that is of the law but rather as a criminality that is before the law. The Negro must be still, but must still be moving. She steals away from forced movement in stillness. Meanwhile, music and cinema must show movement in stillness and so, who better to deploy in the service of that project? What public produces such forms? What public is produced by such forms? Early cinema and *neue musik* moves from disruptive attraction to seamless arc, a forced movement embedded in the stillness of the little girl.

Specific individual attribution of the photograph is problematic; it was taken at Thomas Eakins's studio in Philadelphia by him or someone in his circle. The little girl is posed as an unarticulated question. She poses a question. The posing of the question is a gift. The little girl is posed. She poses. The little girl is (ap)posed, apposes. She is embedded in the history of a pose: the history of the pose of the thing, the commodity (stop now to consider what it is to be a person); the history of the pose of the prostitute; the history of the working girl; the history of the impossible domestic; the history of the *metoikos*; the history of the inside-outsiders of the city of brotherly love; the history of the outlaw; the history of fugitive gathering inside the city. (Harriet Jacobs speaks of the crisis that ensued in her North Carolina 'home' town immediately after Nat Turner's insurrection: 'No two people that had the slightest tinge of color in their faces dared to be seen talking together' (Jacobs 2001, 54). Later, Du Bois reveals, in his catalogue of the laws pertaining to the Negro in Philadelphia, that such crisis was eternal, that it elicited a kind of endless and terrorizing war on 'terror' manifest in acts like the 1700 law against the 'tumultuous gathering' of two or more blacks in the city but unable to establish that they were on their master's business (DuBois 1996, 411). The little girl poses a problem, posing as a problem, as a kind of thrownness; thrown into a problem and a pose and that pose's history, she exposes the venal etiolation of publicness that imposes exposure upon her; in her nakedness, finally, a form of life and the emergency it prompts is held and revealed.

In *The painting of modern life* T. J. Clark says Olympia has a choice, working against the definition of the prostitute offered by Henri Turot, for whom prostitution implies 'first venality and second absence of choice' (Clark 1984, 79). For Turot, further, the prostitute's very existence depends upon the temporary relations she entertains with her customers, the subjects, relations that are public and without love. An absence of privacy, then, where privacy implies a self-possession aligned not only with reason, will, choice, but also with feeling or with the ability to feel. An absence of sovereignty where sovereignty implies a kind of auto-positioning, a positioning of oneself in relation to oneself, an autocritical autopositioning that moves against what it is to be positioned, to be posed by another, to be rendered and, as such, to be rendered inhuman, to be placed in some kind of mutual apposition with the in/human and the animal (the black female servant; the lascivious little cat). The little girl's image extends a line traced by Clark from Olympia's pose, to the pose of Titian's *The Venus of Urbino* (see Figures 2 and 3). That line moves within the history of the idealization and re-materialization of the nude, the history of the prostitute as artist's model, the history of the wresting of modeling from prostitution and the yoking of it to pedagogy.

In *The black female body: A photographic history*, Deborah Willis and Carla Williams excavate the condition of possibility of a choice for the one who is said to have no choice, moving by way of Hugh Honour's phrasing to reveal what and who has been hidden on the edge of the image, which is also an archive. They pay attention to the 'slaves of the Slaves of Lust', most famously given in the figure of Olympia's maid, and narrate a transition in which the black female

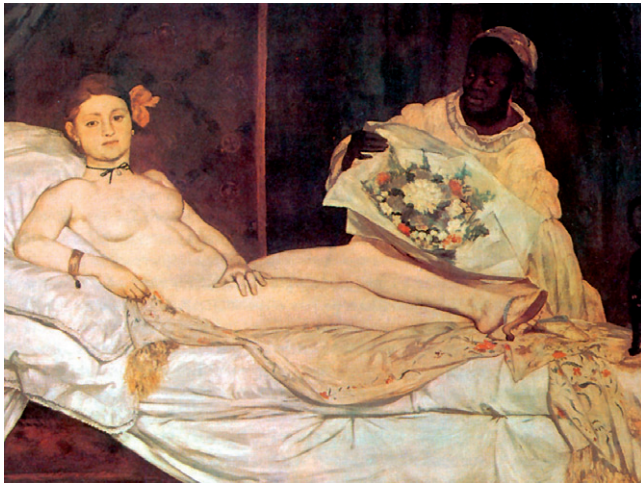


FIGURE 2

Olympia (1863), Edouard Manet, 130.5 × 190 cm. Courtesy of Musee d'Orsay, Paris.

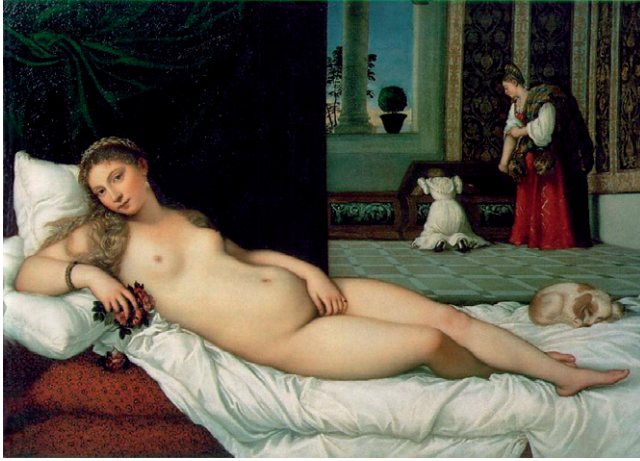


FIGURE 3

Venus of Urbino (1538), Titian, 119 × 165 cm. Courtesy of Uffizi, Florence.

shifts from upright servitude to ‘the salacious sexualization of the reclining body’ (Willis and Williams 2002, 36, 44). Clark’s art historical line, is worried, as it were, by another that cuts and enfolds it; by an underground that shadows, edges, blurs and surrounds it. That underground ungrounds Clark’s smooth trajectory. Willis and Williams show how such tilling is accomplished by secrets who are, and who deconstruct, and who reconstruct a (secret) archive that is extended beyond the little girl in Afro-diasporic photography that can respond to her pose or being posed with Seydou Keita’s re-appropriative chastity or the expropriative challenge of Colleen Simpson’s interdicted gaze (2002, 45, 46).³ The point, however, is that by way of the emergence of Olympia’s servant from shadow, the little girl brings to the surface what had always lay at the heart of this history, as if Eakins, by way of the photograph, brings this line to its true self which is its end, as if the social force that had been allegorically represented by way of the painting can only now be realistically presented by way of the mechanical apparatus.

Olympia was shown in the Salon of 1865. Eakins began studying in Paris a year later. Eakins was in town for the retrospective of Manet’s work that included *Olympia* and the *Dejeuner*. Of the 1868 Salon he writes:

there are not more than twenty pictures in the whole lot that I would want. The great painters don’t care to exhibit there at all. Couture Isabey Bonnat Meissonnier [sic] have nothing. The rest of the painters make naked women, standing sitting lying down flying dancing doing nothing which they call Phyrnes, Venuses, nymphs, hermaphrodites, houris & Greek proper names. (Thomas Eakins to Benjamin Eakins, 1868)

What Eakins wants, and what he will later incorporate, seems clearly to be, at least in part, what Manet offers. Eakins will fully commit himself to a kind of painterly natural description whose teleological principle is everywhere illuminated but dark to itself. His paintings exhibit a scientism that moves in the direction of an ever greater accuracy that is, itself, the effect of an ever greater de-animation of the body, the profound and necessary in/accuracy of the picture. This near-pathological de-animation (of the image, of the body, as exemplified in a painting like *The gross clinic*) is in the interest of a certain photographic naturalism that seeks to reflect and to attach itself to a law of development or movement—the mechanics of a more than personal history. I'm thinking, now, of the relation between the law of the movement of the body (by way of or in relation to the anatomical rigor in whose service he would put photography but for whose service photography would have to recognize its own inadequacy, an inadequacy that tends, eventually, toward Eadweard Muybridge (whose work Eakins championed and the mechanical reproduction of motion but which has to take a little detour into the seedy studios of Francis Galton's evolutionary criminology) and the law of a narrative development that we could think in terms of the story that must accompany the dispersion of sovereignty, a story animated by the interplay of race and teleology, a story that animates the particular scientific aims of Herbert Spencer to which Eakins makes a special appeal. Eakins seeks to discover, by way of the picture and, then, of the motion picture, the laws of movement, of motion in history as well as the motion of bodies (see Figure 4). Such discovery comes by way of the consideration of the movement of the image as such; of the impossibility of its internal movement, the illusion of a movement imposed, transversally, from outside. From *tableaux-vivant* to *movement-image*, *The Philadelphia story of The Philadelphia negro* is the story that cinema is meant to tell. The means of cinema is directed toward this telling and must deploy, in a range of obsessive ways, the simultaneously invisible and hypervisible image and its forced, disruptive movement and gathering. Philadelphia is the place where Galton's aggregative superimposition of the criminal visage (see Figure 5), his over-layering of the rogue's gallery of evolutionary criminology's objects of knowledge, is taken up in the serialization and de-layering of the palimpsest, in the service of Eakins's naturalistic obsession with the production of the illusory movement of an individual body so that the laws of such movement might be discovered and extended towards Cynthia Wiggins's critical redeployments of a black female image always crossing the borders between invisibility and hypervisibility, seriality and aesthetic criminality, as well as towards the kind of advanced cinematic technique that shows us the way back into cinema's racial ground (see Willis and Williams 2002, 188).

My point is that the story that cinema tells in general is held within the frozen and de-animated image of a little girl. Cinema is the animation of *that* image. Animation forced upon, then stolen from an invisible flower that has the look of a flower that is looked at. Between Olympia and her maid lies, poses,

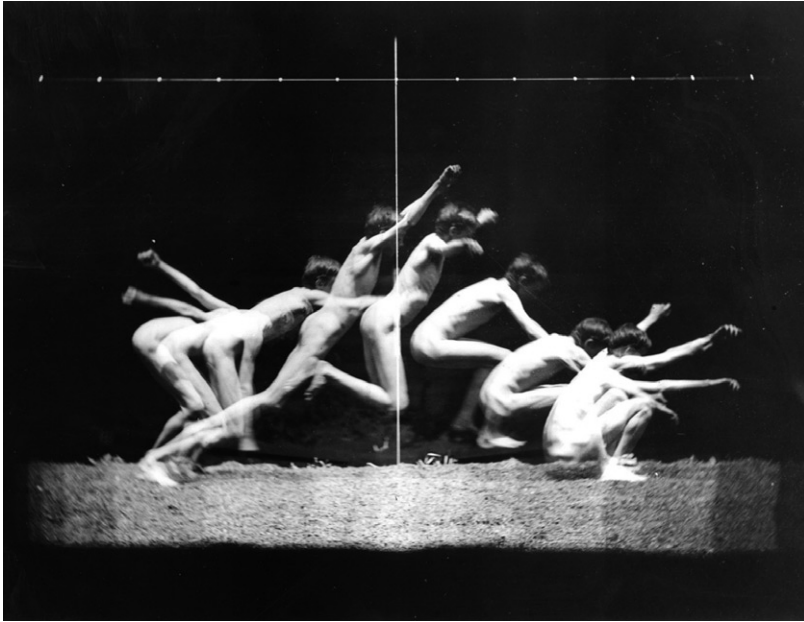
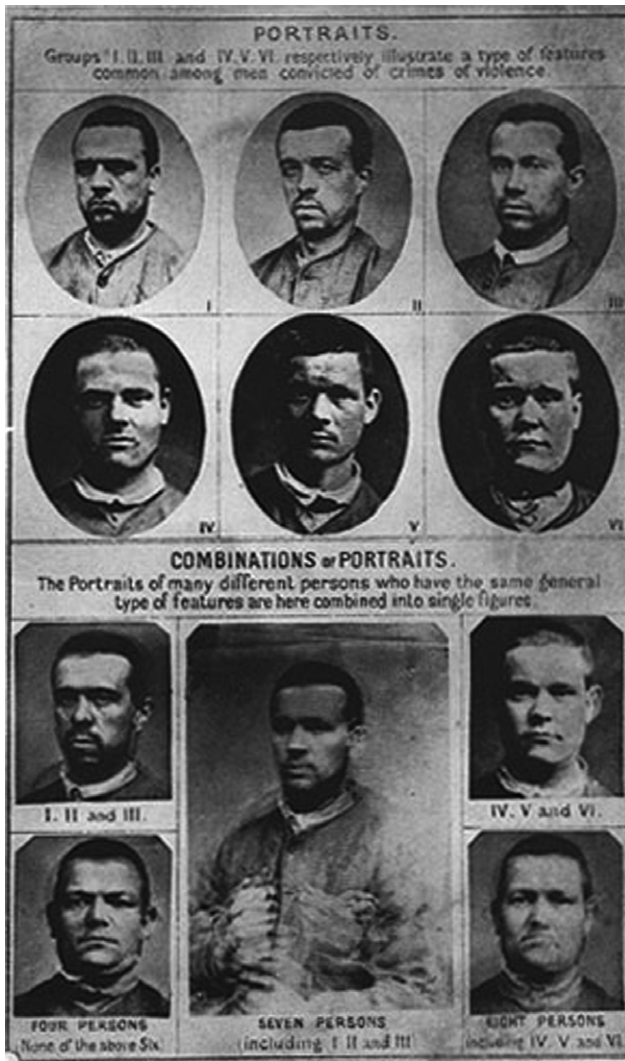


FIGURE 4

Motion study: Male nude, standing jump to right, Thomas Eakins.

this little girl, awaiting movement (the imposition of a natural anatomical law of motion/the imposition of a natural, racial law of development). The little girl blurs Olympia and her maid, blurs hypervisibility and invisibility, marking impurity, disease and degradation not only with the prostitute's direct gaze but with blackness as the essence of what is supposed to be always already degraded and degrading female sexuality. Animation releases a range of potential energies held within the story that awaits its telling. The story of racialized biopower is the story of this condensation and dispersal of the image and its time. In 1882 the image had to be concentrated, fully condensed, made entirely full by its animating story before being infused with and dispersed by movement so that a story (*The Philadelphia story of The Philadelphia negro*) could be told. We witness the full animation of the image (however much it awaits activation) by way of the full de-animation of the little girl. This is about how the interplay of painting, photography, cinema begins to tell the story that animates it, the story of the interplay between freedom and determination, between movement and containment; the story of what Foucault has called 'the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations' (Foucault 1978, 140); the story of a set of concentric legal and philosophical naturalisms; the story of the (imposed and stolen) life of the thing under (the constant threat of) sovereignty's power of death and its gentler, diffused but no less terrible, no less sententious, modern administration.

**FIGURE 5**

Combination of portraits: violent criminals (1870s), Sir Francis Galton, composited images.

She is placed, then, within a certain history of sexuality, of life and death, of troubled and troubling enjoyment; within the art historical trajectory of the female nude which is, it turns out, nothing other than a history of race; and within a history of photography as a scientizing aid for realist painting which, in the extremity of its fidelity makes possible the profoundly imaginary unleashing of the very motion upon whose arrest its fidelity depends. Imaginary motion is unleashed, to be more precise, by way of the interplay

of fidelity and seriality. Motion within the frame is stilled so that motion between frames can be activated. Here's where fidelity and capture converge. Seriality makes a motion out of stillness, a one out of a many: so that the essence of cinema is a field wherein the most fundamental questions are enacted formally and at the level of film's submission to the structure of narrative. At the same time, blackness—in its relation to a certain fundamental criminality that accompanies being-sent—is the background against which these issues emerge. Po(i)sed between emergent techniques of motion capture and composite imaging, she is held at the crossroads of the history of art and the history of science, the history of race and the history of sexuality. This intersection is where Eakins' fascination with photography is inappropriately inaugurated, extending similar predilections in, and posing similar questions as, Manet. But Eakins' turns to an actual thinking of the photograph as such, one that moved from its relation to the quest for anatomical fidelity to a concern for its capacities for the enactment of narration and the simulation of movement. The photograph displaces the prefatory, preparatory sketch. No painting follows from it. This study of a sent thing is a study for nothing that seems to be much ado about nothing precisely insofar as she is placed within the history of posing's relation to the trafficked woman (to a sexuality whose criminality lies in and before the fact that it is marketed). That placement simultaneously enacts and justifies her further placement within a movement of fugitive framing and the criminological photographic capture that responds to it. That movement and its attempted seizure are on the way to cinema. At the same time that she is posed or placed within these intersecting trajectories, the singularity of the photograph—its detachment from the movement and/or development that the series makes possible—seems to imply her being held. She lies, as it were, in a bare frame or cell, a photographic, choreographic, phonographic scrawlspace in which nothing is given to look at—no props, no things, no décor—save the arabesque printed couch that serves as a kind of pedestal for a literal thing, an anthropomorphized nothing. The girl on the couch stands in for what had been given earlier in this pose's history as décor. And it is precisely in this stillness, as this seizure, as a momentous enactment of escape, that she constitutes a dissonance in the histories to which she is submitted and marks the dissonance of any attempt to harmonize them. She is a link within and between these lines even as she arrests and solicits both of them.

I speak of her placement, her position (within a structure), thereby raising, by way of a kind of submergence, the question of her agency, her transverse, auto-excessive intervention in the history of agency. To attempt to locate her agency is precisely to mark the fact that it lies, impossibly, in her *position*, in an appositional force derived from being-posed, from being-sent, from being-located. Her agency is in her location in the interval, in and as the break. This is what it is to take, while apposing, the object position with something like that dual force of holding and outpouring that Heidegger attributes to the thing

which in its defiance of the ennobling force of representation ennoble representation.

Jacobs famously recites the moment at which she became aware that she was slave. Hers is also a sexual moment, poised between awakening, fitful awareness and nightmare, when one becomes aware of one's placement within aestheticized, scientific trajectories of predation and pursuit. But 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—over-determine freedom. This is the *musical* moment of the photograph. It's not just that this is not a story to be passed on, not a story that stories can simply pass; for insofar as these formulations are true, this is not just one story among others. If it could be said that D. W. Griffith establishes certain rules and techniques of cinematic narrative, activating those ruptural suspensions that move narrative film to a level that exceeds the realm of mere attraction, then it remains to focus more intently on the particular story that he had to tell, which is the story that animates both Kantian teleology and the mechanization of the image. It's no accident that the story of the disciplinary animation of the image comes more fully into its own by way of the black apparatus. I'm thinking, here, outside of the opposition between narrative cinema and non-narrative cinema in order to think the question of the *essential narrativity* of cinema in its relation to the question of discipline or, to use more precisely Foucault's terminology, the question concerning sovereignty, biopower and their interplay. This question turns out to be an historical one, articulable by way of series of apparatuses of the new apparatuses of aesthetic modernity (montage, dissonance, abstraction and the emancipation of their seriality), and of the black apparatus. The beginning of *The birth of a nation* asserts that everything was fine till *they* came (as if of their own free will or by way of some combination of accident and corruption like Africanized bees), seeds of disunion breaking out criminally in dance, in the intervallic everyday step and fall of a runaway editorial blade, in the complications of rhythm correspondent with fugitive—if never quite fully emancipated—dissonance, in the contagious disruption of polite, policed, legitimately political gesture, in abstract, *thingly* anti- and ante-figuration.

Some Relationships

Adorno opens a late essay called 'On some relationships between music and painting' with the following claim:

The self-evident, that music is a temporal art, that it unfolds in time, means, in the dual sense, that time is not self-evident for it, that it has time as its problem. It must create temporal relationships among its constituent parts,

justify their temporal relationship, synthesize them through time. Conversely, it itself must act upon time, not lose itself to it; must stem itself against the empty flood. (Adorno 1995, 66)

Music 'binds itself to time at the same time as it sets itself against it' (1995, 66) thereby embodying art's *Bewegungsgesetz*, its law of movement, which Adorno characterizes as the revolt against the fact that 'the inner consistency through which artworks participate in truth always involves their untruth' (Adorno 1997, 168–169). Music's broken interiority—and the rebellion against that brokenness that redoubles it, that becomes the artwork's law of movement—manifests itself severally, in antinomian ensemble: as the juxtaposition of truth and untruth, stillness and movement, freedom and constraint, temporality and spatiality, structure and expression, matter and writing, regression and advance, part and whole. Music, as the temporal art (*Zeitkunst*), 'is equivalent to the objectification of time' (1995, 66), Adorno adds. Moreover, he states:

If time is the medium that, as flowing, seems to resist every reification, nevertheless music's temporality is the very aspect through which it actually congeals into something that survives independently—an object, a thing, so to speak. (Adorno, 1995, 66)

Music consists of the organization of events so that they do not dissolve or pass away but rather coalesce into a thing that seems to suspend time precisely by bodying forth a temporal progression that belies thingliness. Adorno adds, 'What one terms musical form is therefore its temporal order. The nomenclature "form" refers the temporal articulation of music to the ideal of its spatialization' (1995, 66). I'm interested, finally, in the fact that this reference is unbound, in Mackey's terms, precisely by the irreducible materiality that constitutes and deforms the musical work and the musical sign. Even if the objectification of time is made possible by what Harryette Mullen might call a kind of 'spirit writing', a fetishizing secrecy of technique from which the work emerges, such writing does not undermine and is indeed made possible by an irreducible materiality that lies before the work as well and, as it were, *as writing* (see Mullen 1996, 670–689). When Adorno says, 'The most extreme esthetic progress is intertwined with regression' (1995) this interarticulation of writing and matter—something akin to what Deleuze and Guattari call 'bodily inscription'—is part of what he means (see Deleuze and Guattari 1983). Adorno will speak of this material graphesis by way of the metaphor of electricity, which Akira Lippit requires us to consider in relation to animality and animation, as animetaphor (see Lippit 2000). This animetaphorical electricity lies between the hieroglyphic and the seismographic in Adorno's discourse, in the realm of non-subjective language (akin to what Benjamin calls object-language). Adorno is after a mode of writing that, in its renunciation of the communicative function, exemplifies an abandonment to impulse that:

has an affinity with pure expression independent not only of its relation as a signifier to something that is meant to be expressed, but also of its kindred

relation to an expressive subject that is identical with itself. This affinity reveals itself as a break between the sign and what it signifies. (Adorno 1995, 72)

This brokedown, broke-off musico-painterly *écriture* is, and not only in its impulsiveness, precariously close to what shows up for Adorno as an almost absolute antipathy.

This bodily inscription, this hieroglyphic–seismographic register, where mimetic and expressive impulse asymptotically (non-)converge, at the (dis)juncture of (abstract) painting and (atonal) music, is again what remains to be thought in and as the law of (e)motion. This is the place where Adorno addresses the transcendental clue of musico-painterly (non-)convergence, namely that ‘musical theory cannot manage without . . . quasi-optical term[s]’ (1995, 73). But while Adorno sees a fundamental asymmetry such that the theory of painting and the theory of music approach each other awkwardly and unsuccessfully, that approach still constitutes another transcendental clue that allows something like a more precise, because improper, naming (an antinomial and antinomian nomenclature) of music and painting in their articulate difference from one another: on the one hand, this interarticulation is theater; on the other hand, it is cinema.

In the meantime, it’s still necessary to consider Adorno’s attention to that temporalization of painting as *Raumkunst* that corresponds to the spatialization of music as *Zeitkunst*. If, as Adorno, says, ‘The nomenclature “form” refers the temporal articulation of music to the ideal of its spatialization’:

It is no less true that painting, *Raumkunst*, the spatial art, as a reworking of space, means its dynamization and negation. Its idea approaches transcendence toward time. Those pictures seem the most successful in which what is absolutely simultaneous seems like a passage of time that is holding its breath; this, not least, is what distinguishes it from sculpture. That the history of painting amounts to its growing dynamization is only another way of saying the same thing. In their contradiction, the arts merge into one another. (Adorno 1995, 67)

This too must be thought in relation to art’s *Bewegungsgesetz*. (In both painting and music the law of motion redoubles itself in a way that is fateful for cinema’s mixing of sound and image. I want to consider cinema, by way of Adorno’s consideration of some relations between painting and music, not as hybridities or interstices or ‘pseudomorphos[e]s’ (1995, 67) but, rather, as non-convergent interarticulation—the transcendental aesthetic given in a kind of material performativity.) The paradoxically mobile stasis of artworks will manifest itself as simultaneity:

In a picture, everything is simultaneous. Its synthesis consists in bringing together things that exist next to each other in space, in transforming the formal principle of simultaneity into the structure of the specific unity of the elements in the painting. Yet this process, as a process that is immanent in

the thing itself, and by no means belongs merely to the mode of its production, is essentially one of its tensions. If these are lacking, if the elements of the painting do not seek to get away from each other, do not, indeed, contradict each other, then there is only a preartistic coexistence, no synthesis. Tension, however, can in no way be conceived without the element of the temporal. For this reason, time is immanent in the painting, apart from the time that is spent on its production. To this extent, the objectivization and the balance of tensions in the painting are sedimented time. In the context of his chapter on schematization [q.v.], Kant observes that even the pure act of thinking involves traversing the temporal series as a necessary condition of its possibility, and not only of its empirical realization. The more emphatically a painting presents itself, the more time is stored up in it. (Adorno 1995, 69)

Adorno, working against his own opposition of music as internal world theater to cinema as a mere series of pictures, reintroduces the law of motion by way of the Kantian notion of the necessity to thought of motion, of traversing the temporal series. This is to articulate the 'little heresy' that says that the condition of possibility of music as an internal world theater is, precisely, its temporalization as a series of pictures, events, details, frames, crawlspaces, each with their own internal strife and syntax (Adorno 2002, 318–324).⁴ Time is imminent in the painting as tension, the elements set in relation to one another trying to get away from one another. We could think this in relation to the history of the pose, the history of the composition: the nude from Titian to Manet to the little girl that Eakins seeks to possess. The becoming-theater of music—of, for instance, the symphony, or the truly symphonic as opposed to radio symphonic Beethoven—is always threatened, however, by the very seriality that makes it possible. For Adorno, the radio symphony:

ceases to be a drama and becomes an epical form, or, to make the comparison in less archaic terms, a narrative. And narrative it becomes in an even more literal sense, too. The particular, when chipped off from the unity of the symphony [as trivia, quotation, reductively expressive detail], still retains a trace of the unity in which it functioned. A genuine symphonic theme, even if it takes the whole musical stage and seems to be temporarily hypostatized and to desert the rest of the music, is nonetheless of such a kind as to impress upon one that it is actually nothing in itself but basically something 'out of' something else. Even in its isolation it bears the mark of the whole. (Adorno 2002, 262)

The denigrative invocation of narrative is instructive here if only because it confronts us with the duality of the little girl. The photograph contains a narrative, a story, a history. It is something out of something else, an emergent object, of the whole of the story. At the same time, as Adorno will get to in his 'Little heresy', this expressive detail, this picture, in its paradoxical temporalization, not only bears the theatrical continuum, as it were, but makes that

continuum possible. As problematic as the image character of radio (or of the photograph) might be, it must be understood, in Adorno's terms, as the regressive motive of aesthetic advance. As Adorno writes:

in highly organized music... the whole is in the process of becoming, not abstractly preconceived, not a pattern into which the parts need merely to be inserted. On the contrary, the musical whole is essentially a whole composed of parts that follow each other for a reason, and only to this extent is it a whole... The whole is articulated by relations that extend forward and backward, by anticipation and recollection, contrast and proximity. Unarticulated, not divided into parts, it would dissolve into mere identity with itself. To comprehend music adequately, it is necessary to hear the phenomena that appear hear and now in relation to what has gone on before and, in anticipation, to what will come after. In the process, the moment of pure present time, the here and now, always retains a certain immediacy, without which the relation to the whole, to that which is mediated, would no more be produced than vice versa. (LH 319)

To fight the one-sided emphasis on the hearing of the whole that he himself advances in his valorization of structural listening, Adorno would rehabilitate the moment of pure present time in the interest of the narrativity that it bears, a narrativity which here is not opposed to but is the condition of possibility of the symphony's theatricality. 'The right way to hear music includes a spontaneous awareness of the non-identity of the whole and the parts as well as of the synthesis that unites the two' (LH 321). The law of motion returns as that interanimation of result and process that marks the demise of 'overarching forms to which the ear could entrust itself blindly' (LH 322). This impossible audiovisuality, this no longer operative blind trust of the ear, demands '*exakte phantasie*', the precise improvisation of foresight, of a kind of insight of and through prophetic blindness, that I wish to think of in relation to the fugitive and the fugue, where *phantasie* holds imagination (in its lawless freedom, as the essential criminality of the law of [e]motion), improvisation, and the cut augmentation of rationality that is associated with the fugal interplay of voices. In the absence of overarching form, one turns to detail, to the unit of expression, as the condition of possibility of the whole, its anticipatory and retrospective—premature and post-expectant—effect. The whole is now given in something like an Ellisonian lingering in or over individual detail, in the depth, as it were, of such detail's surface, which is already stereoplexed in a black and blue underground scene. This phonographic movement between suspension and submergence becomes a critical model. The point, here, is to think the little girl in all of these terms—as exact imagination and expressive detail; as the possibility and effect of the whole of the story that is held within and animates the image—an anthology of material detail that, nothing in itself, gets to the nothing that is not there and the nothing that is, like a snowman. Part of what's at stake here, at the level of affect and of the modes of bodily

inscription or grapho-mimesis embedded in the pose and its vexed relation to the everyday, is the breakdown of the rigid opposition that Adorno makes between improvisation and writing, an opposition based on the assumption that:

the act of notation is essential to art music, not incidental. Without writing no highly organized music; the historical distinction between improvisation and *musica composita* coincides qualitatively with that between laxness and musical articulation. This qualitative relationship of music to its visible insignia, without which it could neither possess nor construct out duration, points clearly to space as a condition of its objectification. (Adorno 1995, 70)

I want to consider improvisation as precisely that material graphesis which is, for Adorno, essential to the syntax, the articulation of individual detail, that makes the organized whole a possibility. Composition is imagining improvisation—*quasi una fantasia*. Improvisation is the animative, electric, hieroglyphic-seismographic tension that cuts the pose while also being its condition of possibility even as the pose is the condition of possibility of the whole in its unavoidably narrative, unavoidably fantastic, theatricality. All of this is embedded in the image of the little girl. Here's where the visible insignia is, again, a bodily and performative inscription, everyday and ordinary recomposition and/or repositioning, the audio-visual recording of a choreography of the scene of overhearing which, like the opera, requires a natural history, but one not quite so easily dismissive. *What if we consider that improvisation is the unacknowledged grapho-spatiality of material writing*—the arrangement of people at the scene as audiovisual condition and effect.

Such arrangement goes hand in hand with the effects of writing's irreducibility to communication and is bound up with the state of affairs of our modernity—and the place of the black apparatus within that modernity—wherein:

Écriture in music and painting cannot be direct writing, only encoded writing; otherwise it remains mere imitation. Hence *écriture* has a historical character; it is modern. It is set free on the the strength of what in painting, with a devastating expression, people have taken to calling abstraction, through distraction of attention from its object-relatedness. In music this has occurred through the mortal contraction of all its imitative moments, not only its programmatically descriptive elements, but its traditional expressivity, as well . . . (Adorno 1995, 71)

Adorno speaks of this mortal contraction as that abandonment of music to its impulse that is essential to atonality, to the emancipation of the dissonance. The question concerns what telling a story is, now, in the age of the emancipation of dissonance and in the age of a kind of abstraction, a distraction of attention from the object and from whatever narrative material is held within the image of the object, that accompanies Eakins's photographic scientism as

a kind of mechanically reproduced anticipation. This is to say that Eakins's work is active in the historical preface to the distraction from the thing that results in its reanimation and in its replacement within the whole of the story. One day it might be possible to consider Eakins's relation to abstraction, his relation to, say, Mondrian that would be revealed in a comparative analysis of their understandings of the sociality that makes painting possible and that painting would bring about—two relations to Bohemia and, by extension, to Bohemia's relation to the black (socio-)apparatus that will have become the very model of the outskirts and underground. (The little girl, decapitated by shadow and discomfort, is a forethought and pathway, an anticipation of cubism's broken portraiture.) Then we would know what the little girl has to do with, how she is embedded in and as, narrative and music in, say, *Victory boogie-woogie* (the new abstract arrangement of things on the streets of a public sphere whose blackness can only be fully acknowledged in the wake of disaster).

While Adorno's late work gets us to the point of a necessary reevaluation of the musical moment, it remains impossible to forget how much grief he gave such moments in the 1930s. In 'The fetish character in music and the regression of listening' Adorno begins with the formulation that 'music represents at once the immediate manifestation of impulse and the locus of its taming' in order to investigate the ways that the contemporary 'golden age' of musical taste was only properly understood as the era of its almost complete degradation. When tameness is taken for abandon, when amusement no longer amuses, what obtains is a general anesthesia, a numbness that is paradoxically induced by what Adorno calls 'the recklessness of a singer with a golden throat or an instrumentalist of lip-smacking euphony', elements that once:

entered into great music and were transformed in it; but great music did not dissolve into them. In the multiplicity of stimulus and expression, its greatness is shown as a force for synthesis. Not only does the musical synthesis preserve the unity of appearance and protect it from falling apart into diffuse *culinary* moments, but in such unity, in the relation of particular moments to an evolving whole, there is also preserved the image of a social condition in which above those particular moments of happiness would be more than mere appearance. (Adorno 2002, 290)⁵

My concern has been with the relation between fugitivity and the musical moment, between escape and the frame. Adorno, after Kant, is, on the other hand, interested in freedom. If freedom is a matter of taste, perhaps escape is a matter of flavor. I've never been one to heed Adorno's call to exclude 'all culinary delights' (OTF 291). Indeed, I wonder what is lost in adhering to an ancient line in which the culinary indexes the sense that signifies a sensual degradation irrupting into the breach between taste and the super-sensual. Deeper still, the lip-smacking (*geschlekt*) euphony of the instrumentalist seems always to carry with it the unique varietal character (*geschlecht*) of some quite particular local soil. In 'On jazz' Adorno is already concerned that the trumpeter's embouchure

carries a racial mark, a coloristic effect that bespeaks servitude, hysteria, impotence or prematurity. But what if the constitution of the whole is precisely the intensified reproduction and internal structure of the climax (however premature or, more precisely, untimely), sustained and interrupted. That's what jazz is—in the break that is and breaks the climax. Tarrying, lingering, (productive) of bone deep listening. Consider Marvin Gaye's plea 'Don't make me wait' as a profound manifestation of musical patience, offered by someone who has been waiting for a long time, uttered so far behind the beat that its adherence is a kind of displacement.⁶ His is a climax way too long in coming. It is Adorno who is impatient, who simply cannot wait for, refuses to wait upon, the continually auto-augmentative miniature that the black apparatus affords. It is, perhaps, an impatience born of the legitimate critique of the delusional work to which the black apparatus has been put. Nevertheless, Adorno relinquishes something that he cannot live without. This is to say that there is an experience of listening that Adorno cannot imagine until he begins seriously to meditate on the possibilities for structural listening that are held within the long-playing phonograph record. His little heretical deviance from the doctrine of musical ends and, even, musical resolution or resoluteness comes later, might even be said to manifest the fits, starts and lyrical condensation and fragmentation that Adorno himself associates with late work.

The real issue, it turns out, is the relationship between authentic, as opposed to virtual, dissonance and the constitution of the cell, the frame, the crawlspace, the magic/fatal circle. Constant escape is uneasy. It demands the blinking intermittence, the radical flight, of a certain experience of constraint that will have been best understood as sustained, unflinching fantasy, as a look through or away, listening to and playing over, under. Perhaps constant escape is what we mean when we say freedom; perhaps constant escape is that which is mistreated in the dissembling invocation of freedom and the disappointing underachievement/s of emancipation. This is to say that Adorno is correct, however venomously, when he says, 'to make oneself a jazz expert . . . one must have much free time and little freedom' (OTF 310). He's just wrong in thinking, however momentarily, that this condition is not his own. That momentary delusion is lost when he speaks of 'the terror which Schönberg and Webern spread'. That terror stems:

not from their incomprehensibility but from the fact that they are all too correctly understood. Their music gives form to that anxiety, that terror, that insight into the catastrophic situation which others merely evade by regressing. They are called individualists, and yet their work is nothing but a single dialogue with the powers which destroy individuality—powers whose 'formless shadows' fall gigantically on their music. In music, too, collective powers are liquidating an individuality past saving, but against them only individuals are capable of consciously representing the aims of collectivity. (OTF 315)

This is a pure expression of the persistent and terrible dialectic of constant escape, a condition with which many musicians beside Webern and Schönberg are more than intimate. Think of the ones who were sent. Sent, because they already left and carry leaving with them like a scar, they want to go. Always they have already left already and are still not arriving. How unfortunate for Adorno that the music that one most fears might best exemplify the fugitive impetus that is the thing one most loves! Meanwhile, the convergence of patience and lateness could be called Miles Davis's personal temporal coordinate.

Crawlspace

There's a band playing outside the booth; the riff is a mode of confinement: the ear and hand of Gil Evans *drive* Miles who is placed, composed, arranged.⁷ He shoots up an octave, ascending into the underground; narrates a constriction that he dances out of by dancing in. Dissonance escapes into a kind of resolution and victory is deferred by this successful outcome, as when Jacobs's mistress buys her freedom, thereby stealing her triumph. But this is an old-new sonority's old-new complaint and Miles, like Jacobs, keeps going past such emancipation by way of a deeper inhabitation of the song that makes it seem as if he were young again, as if embarking for the first time on the terrible journey towards some new knowledge of (the) reality (principle), the new knowledge of homelessness and constant escape. With the proper inappropriate differentiation, acknowledging what it is to own dispossession, which cannot be owned but by which one can be possessed, what Adorno says of Beethoven—that his is the most sublime music ever to aim at freedom under continued unfreedom in the history of freedom in unfreedom—is applicable to Miles's ascendant Jacobsean swerve in and out of the confinements of Gershwin's composition and Evans's arrangement (Adorno 1998, 44). Freedom in unfreedom is flight and this music could be called the most sublime in the history of escape.

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NOTES

1. See Mackey, 'Cante Moro' (1997, 199–200); Hartman (1997, 102–112); Mullen (1992, 244–264); Brooks (2006).

2. I want to thank Rebecca Schneider for insisting that the notion of trajectory is worried and must be worried. The broken line/broken circle I am trying to follow here is illuminated by and must go through her work. It is also a privilege to try to work ground that has been broken by Lorraine O'Grady, by Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, by Cheryl Wall and by Jennifer Doyle, whose questions were the initial provocation for this essay. See Schneider (1997); O'Grady (1998, 268–286); Willis and Williams (2002); Wall (2005); Doyle (2006).
3. I am very much indebted to Akira Lippit's brilliant excavation, his deep illumination, of the secret, the archive, the *anarchive*. See Lippit (2006).
4. See Adorno, 'Little heresy'. In *Essays on music* (2002, 318–324), hereafter cited in text as LH.
5. Adorno, 'On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening'. In *Essays on music* (290), hereafter cited in text as OTF.
6. Marvin Gaye, 'Since I had you', *I want you*, Motown cd3746352922. For more on Gaye's performance see Moten (2003, 211–231).
7. Miles Davis, 'The buzzard song', *Porgy and Bess*, orchestra dir. Gil Evans, Columbia CI 1274.

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