Julius Eastman: The Sonority of Blackness Otherwise

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The composer and singer Julius Dunbar Eastman (1940-1990) was a dynamic polymath whose skill seemed to ebb and flow through antagonism, exception, and isolation. In pushing boundaries and taking risks, Eastman encountered difficulty and rejection in part due to his provocative genius. He was born in New York City, but soon after, his mother Frances felt that the city was unsafe and relocated Julius and his brother Gerry to Ithaca, New York.[1] This early moment of movement in Eastman's life is significant because of the ways in which flight operated as a constitutive feature in his own experience. Movement to a "safer" place, especially to a predominantly white area of New York, made it more difficult for Eastman to exist—to breathe.

The movement from a more diverse city space to a safer home environment made it easier for Eastman to take private lessons in classical piano but made it more complicated for him to find embodied identification with other black or queer people. [2]

Movement, and attention to the sonic remnants of gesture and flight, are part of an expansive history of black people and journey. It remains difficult for a black person to occupy the static position of composer (as opposed to vocalist or performer) in the discipline of classical music.[3] In this vein, Eastman was often recognized and accepted in performance spaces as a vocalist or pianist, but not a composer.[4] George Walker, the Pulitzer-Prize winning composer and performer, shares a poignant reflection on the troubled status of race and classical music reception: In 1987 he stated, "I've benefited from being a Black composer in the sense that when there are symposiums given of music by Black composers, I would get performances by orchestras that otherwise would not have done the works. The other aspect, of course, is that if I were not Black, I would have had a far wider dispersion of my music and more performances."[5] Walker articulates a double bind experienced by the black composer in that the black composer is at once tethered to and exceptionalized by race and dynamically excluded from the expanse of listenership afforded to white composers. Eastman's exceptionality is that although he was not white, not straight, and did not come to learn about music without hardship, he emerged as a virtuoso outside of dominant terms. I move through different time periods

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of Eastman's life at the opening of my essay to demonstrate that history, especially in the experience of black queer life, is sticky and defies linearity; the trauma and joy experienced in the past informs alternative presents.

In thinking through and against the uneasy archive of Eastman's life and work, I have found that sound, as historicized material, streams through the putatively silent fascia of Eastman's archive. More specifically, I am interested in the sonic elements that allow this archive to breathe anew, as contemporary researchers unearth abject materials from the archive and re-member[6] those that cannot be captured by normative recording practices. This essay draws upon contemporary musicology alongside black queer studies to engage with Eastman on his terms of exceptional experience: a black queer becoming within a white dominated music scene. I depart from musicologist Ryan Dohoney's examination of Eastman's "aesthetic of abjection"[7] to engage with black queer theorist Darieck Scott's notion of abjection that "produces a 'break' in gender and sexuality—a break that looks to all concerned like *broken* gender and sexuality—and how it therefore provides an opportunity for different configurations of gender and sexuality."[8] Recent examples of work related to reinterpreting Eastman, like the Otolith Group's 2017 *The Third Part of the Third Measure* or Dustin Hurt and Tionna Nekkia McClodden's 2017 curated show *Julius Eastman: That Which is Fundamental* in Philadelphia, attempt to figure Eastman at the impasse of abjection *and* excess that dynamically oscillates throughout black queer life.

Proceeding from the intersection between musicology, substantiated by music theorist Ellie M. Hisama's groundbreaking scholarship on Eastman, and rooted in black queer studies, indebted to black queer critical theorists like Ashon T. Crawley, my argument attends to the nuanced ways in which Eastman breathes alternative articulations of life through duress. To explore this, I build on Crawley's hermeneutics of the sound of blackness and black feminist theorist Christina Sharpe's notion of "wake work."[9] I engage both of these perspectives on black sonority and aurality to consider Eastman's life and work alongside the ways in which black and brown folx live, barely breathing, in an anti-black United States. As Crawley writes, "Alternatives exist—*already*—against the normative modes under which we endure."[10] Indeed, the idea of endurance is not foreign to encounters with the work of Julius Eastman. I inhabit a vexted proximity to Eastman's work. My own position as a queer man of color has affected my research on Julius Eastman in that the musical dynamics crisscross features of embodiment. I often listen to the work of Julius Eastman and am left breathless. The fraught embodied position Eastman held, along with the black queer people that have continued before and after him, bursts open an alternative

mode of black becoming. An attendance to the sonic production in that break gestures to how life in the way of things manifests; in town, though very much out of place. [11]

This essay explores the question of black breath as a site for tracing the managed movement, survival, and persistence of black and brown bodies in the wake of chattel slavery. The breath is embedded in conceptualizations of black life and dynamically refused—"that deadly *occlusion* that is continually reanimated" in the unfinished suffocating project of the United States.[12] I open with an analysis of sound in relation to the historicized management of black breath as an analytic for encountering Eastman, whose struggle helped constitute his aesthetic production in the space of revalued occlusion—he composed in and through the wake. I depart from the biographical and musicological to ask: If we can attend to the life and work of Eastman by way of the sounds that have, and continue to, aspirate around him, then what do we learn from those breathy breathless vocal encounters?

Throughout his life as a composer, performer, educator, and listener, Julius Eastman found himself in largely white-dominated neighborhood, institutions, and concert spaces. He would not necessarily have been welcomed with open arms by his black intellectual counterparts, either, as the community too often insisted upon stark positions against a classical music tradition that was already deemed white. I will demonstrate this later in reference to Eastman's 1980 Northwestern concert, which was met by protest from black student organizers.[13] Under the conditions of archivally indicated absence in both white and black dominated spaces, how did he manifest, and under what terms? My hermeneutical analysis of breath that engages history, performance, and compositional intent, starts by way of an interdiction of black breath that is entwined with a sonic aspirating insistence on life.

I hear an uncomfortable resemblance in Eastman's groans and moans in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for A Mad King* (1973) for voice and instrumental ensemble and the horrific sounds of bodies under duress that former-slave Olaudah Equiano can barely stomach in a section of his 1789 book, *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African: Written by Himself,* describing the hold of slave ship: "The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable."[14] Thinking outside of Equiano's account, black studies historian and theorist Saidiya Hartman queries, "How does one listen for the groans and cries, the undecipherable songs, the crackle of fire in the cane fields, the laments for the dead, and the shouts of victory, and then assign words to all of it?"—the "inconceivable"

conceived in a gesture to sound.[15] Yet, this sonic similarity does not only operate as a happenstance connection. The relationship between sounds of suffering and joy, or as Saidiya Hartman notes, terror and enjoyment, offer historicized sites of meaning-making.

The duress particular to Eastman's experience is evidenced in his performance and composition, his "Nigger Series" and 1980 Northwestern Concert unveiled his exceptional blackness, both within and outside of his control. His work exceptionalized the larger context of the Civil Rights Movement and the juridical management of blackness in the United States at the time. Crawley "want[s] to pressure the assumption about the narrativity of historical events to think through other lineages" where the sound of blackness emerges not from a single moment or place but from a collective history of journeys, specifically in the context of longing and waiting.[16] These journeys took (and continue to take) place in a variety of contexts, such as the march or a bus ride—the sound of blackness resounds from within the interstices of history, movement, and flesh.

As a Staten Islander from the North Shore, my proximity to the place where Eric Garner was murdered on July 17th, 2014, has left me out of place and speechless to this day. The phrase that stays with me is: "I can't breathe." As a high schooler, it was the first moment when I realized that the state had a particular control over the aspirations as iterations of desire and breath of black and brown folx. This can be extended to inspiration, as Eastman's work has touched so many artists, filmmakers, and contemporary aesthetes. If black breath is indeterminate, what did that make of me and the members of my community who continue to live in intimate proximity to violence and survival? Eastman's performance of Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs* and Garner's murder conjure similar sounds, albeit under completely different circumstances. How might Garner's life and memory persist? What remains of black and brown bodies that live and wait in the wake of his horrific murder? Garner's barely audible voice, his mouth, stifled breath, and strangled voice all persist through the scene of state-sanctioned violence against black and brown people. The white supremacist police state stole black lives, like those of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, weeks before this essay is meant to be published. The management of black life constricts a violent account whereby even the act of writing or listening to sonic insistences of black life become opaque. I do not attempt to repurpose or rearticulate this scene of horror, but to attend to the ways in which it questions efforts to recover life in spite of violently managed black breathing.[17] Yet, I teeter on the edge of an ethical dilemma, with sonic remnants of his gasping voice seared into my consciousness. I invoke Crawley's notion of *otherwise* to provide an impor-

tant perspective in which black sound-making under duress constitutes part of a larger genealogy of dispossession that offers alternative modes of becoming.[18] If we can affirm with Crawley that, "[h]ow to detect, how to produce and inhabit otherwise epistemological fields, is the question of Black Study," then the *I* of "*I* can't breathe," and the person who screams, sounds otherwise, produces "a break with the known, the normative, the violent world of western thought and material condition."[19] Relating the utterance of an *I* that is both alive and dying back to Eastman, I suggest that his nuanced performance of *Eight Songs* becomes one with an articulation of black subjectivity sounding under duress. In the introductory materials for the score of *Eight Songs*, Maxwell Davies writes, "The sounds made by human beings under extreme duress, physical and mental, will be at least in part familiar."[20] Spaces "wherein black flesh cannot easily breathe" pervade our histories and lives: the anti-black United States, the Atlantic Ocean (as a complicit entity in the management of black movement), the hold of a vessel transporting slaves, and claims to normative and essentializing epistemes.[21] The breath is a space of knowing un/livable life. We must listen to the flesh that, in its negotiation with life, encounters life *becoming* stolen.[22]

Attending to the historicity of this embodied and racialized relation to stolen and parodied life, musicologist Matthew D. Morrison's notion of Blacksound helps clarify a distinction I am attempting to articulate. Though Morrison's argument is rooted in an explication of blackface minstrel performances, his dense critique extends into my concern: the hermeneutics of racialized sound. Morrison explains:

> Blacksound is an integration of historical, material, and hermeneutic analysis of performance, publications (sheet music, minstrel manuals, pop music charts, reviews, and so on), recordings, and other ephemeral technologies vis-à-vis the aesthetic construction of race and racism within popular entertainment.[23]

In my listening of *Eight Songs* I am not simply interpreting blackness under duress, legible through interdicted breath, but also moving along the kinds of invocations of black life "to the fullest," in Eastman's own words and perspective.[24]

Eastman's performance was captured on a Grammy-nominated recording of Peter Maxwell Davies's, "crazy theater piece…one of the most difficult and demanding vocal works of the avant-garde."[25] His performance placed him within the ranks of recognized virtuosic performers. Hisama writes, "Eastman's dazzling performance of this work, which spans some five octaves and requires extraordinarily challenging avant-garde vocal

techniques, is all the more remarkable in light of his lack of formal training in voice."[26] The spectacular performance is at once both exceptional and the exception which figures, like an *objet trouvé,* into the larger narrative of Eastman's life and career. The vocal timbral range is strenuously full of breath in Davies's piece.[27] Eastman groans, yells, and whines through the octaves, making sounds reminiscent of choking, guttural sounds finding themselves at the intersection of history and aesthetics. *Eight Songs* affords an opportunity to attend to alternative methods of interpreting and understanding, in that Eastman makes sounds that, constitute part of a larger history of black and brown sound making under duress beyond the scope of Davies's composition.

An earlier piece from 1971, *Macle*, is an exciting example of Eastman's own compositional interest in garbled breath, shouting, laughter, and extra-linguistic sounds: "black broad sounds."[28] Some of his directives include: "yell as loud as possible"[29] and "Erotic sounds Erotic Sounds."[30] *Macle* is a black compositional act that comes decades before contemporary composers and performers including Matana Roberts, Elaine Mitchener, and

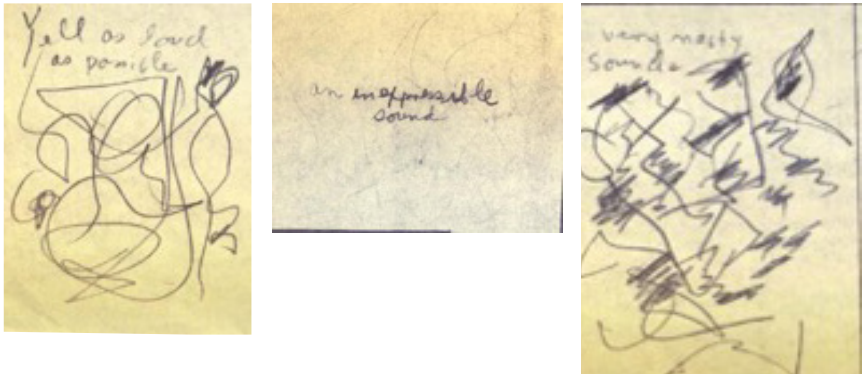

Figure 1 Excerpts from Julius Eastman's 1971 score for *Macle.*[31]

Nicole Mitchell, who engage different breathy bodily evacuations and desires (consonant with the yell, moan, or gasp) in an effort to articulate the various histories and futures of black life that have traversed environments of subjection. These are demanding vocal techniques and sounds similar to the ones that Eastman engages in his interpretation of Maxwell Davies's work.

Macle is expansive in its use of performance, interpretation, improvisation, and graphic visualizations of written material. Scribbles, doodles, and extensions of lines of flight all "drop the syntax," to engage with a phrase from critical theorist Michelle Koerner who analyzes George

Jackson's *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, originally published one year before *Macle* in 1970. The score, in appearing opaque or difficult to read, offers alternative ways for the listener and researcher to engage with a black queer critique of composition. The "drop" suggests that Eastman grasped the language of composition and did away with it, an act we see happening over and over in Eastman's career as he resisted becoming pigeonholed in one practice. Blackness, as a chromatic and racialized distinction (e.g. musical timbre or skin color), and sound coalesce in the intersection between the social and the historical. Sonority and breath function as an analytic for considering blackness in- and out-side of capture. Blackness breathes, sonically and otherwise, amidst chromatics and flesh, precariously manifest, framing a particular state(lessness) of being. Although the history of chattel slavery the United States frames the space and time of blackness, black sociality exists between scenes of disaster and joy. Black becoming resounds through normative forms of capture as single moments in time that blast through the hold.[32]

In spite of the horror of blackness under duress, sound pours out and insists upon becoming otherwise. Sound insists upon a subject status that shifts between notions of personhood, flesh, thing, and object. An insistence on sonic subject formation, as sound introduces the subject outside of external management, considers embodiment otherwise. Alexander Weheliye writes, black people make sound "drenched…in the ancestral vocal perspiration." [33] I extend this affective weight beyond the artistry of black musicians and performers to include the sonic remnants of violence inflicted upon black bodies. How can an enslaved body and bodies in the wake of slavery, denied a normative subjectivity, sound a claim to life between power, sound, and race?

Resisting Recovery: Encountering Eastman

What becomes of the black body when the sound it produces obliterates both itself and the scene around it before the performance has even occurred? In approaching an "utterance" that resists capture, we "nourish the latent text of the fugitive."[34] The latent text is uncovered with attention to sound and soundings that are not contingent upon apprehension but are intimately engaged with absence and silence. That is, our contemporary excitement and relief around the recovery efforts of Eastman's work as this essay is being written should not suggest that his sound and practice were not already rumbling on the lower frequencies of our consciousness. Perhaps it is the fiction of black queer absence that signals the ultimate project, and constitutive limits, of the archive. In an effort to problematize

the language of empowerment that can seep into this scene, I am interested in the nuanced ways in which Eastman's black queer sonority has persisted loudly through the silence of the archive.

Eastman crafts fugitive sounds and bodies that escape right before the blast in the archive. In approaching the archival wreckage, I find the streaks of what Eastman calls a "gay guerilla" in his Northwestern pre-concert remarks. The phrase is used both as a title for one of Eastman's pieces, and a signifier for a type of person who Eastman describes as "someone who in any case is sacrificing his life for a point of view."[35] This positions Eastman's title as a marker of an embodied characteristic by which Eastman himself strived to live: "That is the reason that I use 'gay guerrilla' in hopes that I might be one, if called upon to be one."[36] Ready to sacrifice his life for his gay and black identity, Eastman conjures an insurgent.

Eastman's artistic oeuvre crossed the boundaries of choreography, singing, composition, and acting, and is a poignant example of black sonority "errantry."[37] For Eastman, errant becoming while black gay meant generative sound making that critiqued, exposed, and engaged his abject position. Eastman wandered through living spaces and job positions and did not remain rooted for sustained periods of time. Loitering, which has been discussed by black queer theorist La Marr Jurelle Bruce, can be a generative articulation of black queer experience that does not necessarily resist capture, but simply cannot be traced.[38] Errantry—as part of mobility, rather than a prescriptive, frozen blackness—comes into play, as he not only continued to create outside of the context of stable living and working conditions, but also across genres.[39]

I depart from Morrison's earlier referenced notion of Blacksound to think about the active tense of black queer sonority: always disturbing, acquiescing, moaning, and desiring past linear notions of archival time. I thus argue that Eastman's dance through the Downtown scene was disidentificatory: he was deeply interested in pre-tonal music and Bach and could perform those pieces with as much vigor as works by avant-garde composers like Meredith Monk. Musicologist George E. Lewis also offers an interpretation of the term relating to the "disidentification with standard tropes of what it meant to be black in [the downtown New York] scene. We're sort of both allowed by that scene but also looked at as rather quizzical. Julius [was] an extreme case of that…"[40] Here, errantry functions as an analytic that assists an engagement with Eastman where he seems to undo himself; partying and creating alongside perspectives that seem to be against his embodied practice.[41]

Eastman's ability to exquisitely perform and embody compositions that span temporally distant eras also means that he performed in

multifarious spaces, although often for predominantly white audiences largely not accustomed to black gay male performers interacting with and producing such sounds. Returning to Lewis's notion of "Afrological" and "Eurological" sound, I suggest that Eastman not only spans racialized logics of music production but also normative logics of performance, domestic and academic spaces. The sound of blackness, in Eastman's case, becomes as a kind of sonic inflection on the genres and spaces that (cannot) hold his performance. I arrive at the sound of blackness as the sound between joy and dispossession—a kind of excellent irregularity. Eastman's vocality opens possibilities for alternative ways of being and sounding.

The 1980 Northwestern University Concert

On January 16, 1980, Eastman completed a yearlong residency at Northwestern University with a performance of three of his works, the titles of which he introduced from the stage: *Evil Nigger*, *Gay Guerilla*, and *Crazy Nigger*.[42] He referred to the first and last pieces as part of his "Nigger Series" of which Eastman claims there are fifty-two.

In the days leading up to the performance, Eastman's concert was greeted with significant protest, especially from black students and faculty of the university. These protests altered the perception of Eastman's works even before the performance itself. Peter Gena, Eastman's friend and an Assistant Professor of Music at Northwestern University at the time, recalls a conversation Eastman had with black students and faculty:

> [Eastman] spoke so eloquently, but [the Northwestern black faculty and fraternity] just didn't get it… "You know," he said, "when I was your age, I was either a nigger or a Negro. There was none of this black or African-American stuff." [Eastman] told them what a badge of honor it was, but they did not get it, so we didn't print the titles which caused a bigger ruckus, because then it hit the school newspapers.[43]

In his Foreword to *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, Lewis contextualizes the students' response by noting that the black members of the Northwestern community "were beset with their own issues of campus racism and thus were not quite ready to fully support Eastman's invocation and exegesis of the word."[44] Lewis continues by stating: "the evil nigger and the crazy nigger are more similar than different. Whether by choice or necessity, both become desperadoes, outlaws, to who it is prudent not to get too close—you might get burned."[45] The qualifier "crazy," which becomes a title of one of his pieces performed at Northwestern University—*Crazy Nigger* emerges out of a white supremacist act of jettisoning black music,

and black embodiment more generally, outside of the neurotypical due to lack of more expansive kinds of descriptors.[46] The revaluation of the qualifier "crazy" in black sonic production is about expanding on the ways in which normative descriptors of musical production lack. Crazy was a term used in the decades before Eastman to describe black sonic production; becoming crazy *had already been* a generative analytic for understanding black life, particularly as it becomes legible through sound and music, otherwise.[47] Eastman's recollection of finding himself as "either a nigger or a Negro"[48] was not about maintaining one position or the other but about exposing the need to understand that "black or African-American stuff" has a particular history—a crazy history.[49] Eastman engages a history of naming, and the lack thereof, that operates between material and marker—sound and slur.

Even before we get to Eastman, and the Northwestern performance scene, we are confronted by a "seizure of the words 'nigger' and 'faggot' in the titles for his compositions."[50] What does it mean for the sound of blackness to seize the very slurs that plan for the destruction of blackness before we have arrived to hear its sound? Eastman's discussion with protesters and his preconcert talk hearkens back to what he was called and understood himself to be, a gesture to his own becoming in relation to a particular retelling and marking of black embodiment. The titles, which somehow skirt away from "this black or African-American stuff," outwardly misfire: Eastman's measured voice did not convince Black members of the Northwestern community, who did not identify with the slur and found it offensive. The flow of information about this performance proceeded as follows: concert advertisements, press, protest and Eastman's failed attempt to discuss his black experience with the black community of Northwestern, preconcert remarks, and the performance. The preconcert vocality of Eastman's effort to engage with the Northwestern intelligentsia leaves out, as Matthew D. Morrison has noted, the question of the particular politics of Eastman's dissenters who largely found his remarks to be offensive and counterproductive to student-activist efforts against racism on campus.[51] "The largely white audience at Northwestern" uncomfortably witnessed Eastman's initial remarks.[52]

Anticipating further backlash and understanding that the titles of his pieces had been removed from the concert programs, Eastman delivered a nearly seven-minute spoken introduction to his concert. The recording of his remarks reveals that his remarks were met with complete silence, yet that silence was filled with meaning.[53] A sonic blackness, through voice, argument, and protest, flows through different discursive spaces, but Eastman's ability to speak "eloquently" did not matter in either the time

preceding the performance or the preconcert remarks, especially around "fellow" black people. The fraught dynamic of the reception of the piece, before Eastman had even performed a single note of music, became part of Eastman's legacy as a trickster and provocateur.

I now turn to the scene of the preconcert remarks where Eastman's composition, performance, and theoretical endeavors collide. Race and space intersect in affecting Eastman's embodied experience of adversity laced with critical acclaim. Eastman and his black sound were invested, says Rene Levine Packer in her chapter on Eastman, in "detoxification through insistent confrontation" with the slur.[54] However, his engagement with the pejorative did not insist upon its "slur value." Rather, naming black aesthetic production hollows the slur of its meaning while retaining its sociohistorical impact as a hollowed signifier that still burns. The slur and the referenced subject are opaquely maintained. Around the same time that Eastman was composing and performing, Richard Pryor, Miles Davis, and Malcolm X were all—well before Eastman—insisting upon the term "nigger" in relation to its fraught becoming in the United States context.[55] By placing Eastman in relation to this broader context of black aural aesthetic and political production, I draw attention to ways that the sound of blackness is historically produced in disjunct community. Though not everyone is making music, politically driven, or acting in coalition, the Civil Rights era is filled with people expanding on the ontological motility of blackness in positions of abject denial (e.g. the "nigger") and embodied affirmation (e.g. "black to the fullest").

In the Northwestern speech, Eastman opens his remarks by introducing two important concepts: his notion of "organic music," and his identification of "that which is fundamental." At first blush he appears to define the former in terms of self-referential organicist musical structure: "These particular pieces—formally—are an attempt to, what I call, make 'organic' music.' That is to say, the third part of any part (of the third measure or the third section, the third part) has to contain all of the information of the first two parts and then go on from there."[56] This framing of organicism is identified against "Romantic music or Classical music where you have actually different sections and you have these sections which for instance are in great contrast to the first section or to some other section in the piece, these pieces, they're not—they're not exactly perfect yet."[57] While Eastman insists upon the embodied features of music, he is also referencing a Germanic tradition of organicism in both musical composition and the philosophical tradition.[58] However, although *Evil Nigger* is self-contained and referential, as Eastman notes, his analytic of the organic, including the multiple frames in which the organic is rendered in Eastman's practice

of composition, exceed the musicological limits of organicism, overflowing into the analytic of organic matter: matter of the body, field, earthen ground. The organic also relates to the biological and material—black flesh.

"What I mean by niggers," Eastman then tells his audience, "is that thing which is fundamental, that person or thing that attains to a basicness, a fundamentalness, and eschews that thing which is superficial or, or, what could we say—elegant."[59] It is peculiar that Eastman is as interested in offering a critique of the fundamental—which, along the lines of Germanic organicism, would seem to be functional and un-or a-qualified—as he is eager to evince a fundamental that cannot be anything but black—blackness and the note cannot be separated. He notes, "Without field niggers you wouldn't really have such a great and grand economy that we have. So that is what I call the first and great nigger, field niggers."[60] Thus, for Eastman, both the fundamental and the organic arise out of the figure of the "nigger." He conflates the organic with the economic around the appropriation of the slur on multiple registers. The slur not only marks an abject status, as with Eastman's rendering of the black field hand, but also names an *ur*-becoming outside of a neat western ontology. First, Eastman names the abject subject (field hand); second, he calls them by a name used to reject their ontological status as "that thing which is fundamental,"[61] and third, because of the slur's presence in the archive (e.g. as quote or as voice recording) the sound and the effects of its mark on the black experience wafts into our collective present. I linger on the third in an effort to critically engage with an analysis of this moment in Eastman scholarship. Yes, authorial intent calls for us to engage with Eastman on his terms, yet we must peel back the fraught relationship between this intent, which articulates a real and true modality of abject life, and the actual repurposing of violence that this slur manages.

Eastman's example sonically insists on the poetic construction of blackness (a kind of fashioning blackness through sound) as well as offering an alternative site of black becoming. The sound of blackness, as it manifests in Eastman's appropriation of the slur and his intense reference to the black labor that has sustained the United States, "opens up the possibility for a counter-speech, a kind of talking back that would be foreclosed by the tightening of that link."[62] This spatial opening, and the talking back that dynamically manages the aperture, effects subject relations as much as it effects the space that holds (or cannot hold) it's becoming. The provocatively titled pieces, when read aloud, emphasized the slur both audibly and semantically.

The question of the sound of blackness, in relationship to black becoming, operates around a scene of ownership where the mechanism of

production casts away the black subject. R. A. T. Judy writes, "Of particular importance in this regard is the belonging-togetherness of the categories *nigger* and *work*, an association articulated in the American English expression 'to work like a nigger.'"[63] Similar archival and affective encounters of black gay aesthetic production extends to the intimately provocative 1980s journal entries of Gary Fisher, a black gay graduate student at University of California, Berkeley. The journal entries were posthumously published by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in a time unsure why a black gay man would have such an intimate connection with the slur, especially as it marked a landscape of his sexual desires or encounters. I am reminded of Robert Reid-Pharr's extraordinary explication of Fischer's work and the literary and academic discomfort that surrounded the publication of Fisher's journals:

> I have been struck by how difficult the text seems to have been for those people—white, black, and otherwise—who have encountered it…. What I have been concerned with, however, is the difficulty that Fisher creates for those of us he left behind. Fisher neither establishes the fairy tale black, white, red, yellow, brown beloved community so feebly articulated by innumerable rainbow flags; nor does he signal a separate, resistant black (gay) identity. What Fisher tells us is much more difficult, more shocking than any of this. Fisher goes beyond demonstrating that black/white intimacy is necessary and inevitable. Instead, he insists that if we are to maintain the clear distinction between the black and the white, this intimacy will never move beyond the ugly display of the master's dominance over the slave and the ugly scene of the slave's yielding to the same. There is no way to say "black" without hearing "nigger" as its echo. Fisher allows none of us to remain innocent. That is his challenge and his promise.[64]

Reid-Pharr's description of Fisher, for me, is like listening to Eastman's preconcert remarks. Fisher writes and Eastman sounds the tunes of a black queer orientation towards the "nigger"; they both have left us too soon with a "necessary and inevitable" proximity to eradication and desire. To bring Gary Fisher to play with Julius Eastman, two black gay men of the late-20th century in this space of debasement and incredible exposition—of body, self, frustration, and desire––is to attend to a black queer sociality in its "echo." A reader and listener alike holds their breath in anticipation of whether either figure is present after their written/spoken words. Both persist, however, after their remarks. It is up to the listener to manage "the fiction of white dominance put on display" and to attend to the ways in which this performance, too, taps into that fiction.[65] Eastman publicly casts his relationship with sound and embodiment in the face of exceptional positionality—he doesn't call himself a "nigger," but offers its tune. He com-

poses a piece that grasps at an *ur*-quality of the figure of the "nigger;" he plays a trick on us, and the piece manifests in what I call the sonic trickster figure.[66] The "nigger," in all its basicness and fundamentalness, "eschews that thing which is superficial." What could be more powerful, yet so superficial, than a title? The "nigger," which operates as "that person or thing that attains," or agentive in its being able to attain, can only emerge through this figure of the slur and abject combined in Eastman's framework.

Evil Nigger and Signification Otherwise

Running nearly twenty-two minutes long, *Evil Nigger* is a prime example of the racialized distance between composer, composition, and the figure of the trickster who dances between those lines.[67] The piece "explores the concept of the 'bad nigger' as set out in autobiographies such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Iceberg Slim's *Pimp: The Story of My Life*."[68] Black queerness, articulated across race and sexuality in Eastman's context, escapes the hold of normative capture in this particular feature of the "good nigger" as well, one that sounds the limitations of the current minimalist aesthetic disinterested in the less attractive questions that undergird understandings of race, gender, and sexuality.

The sonic trickster figure, along with Eastman's play with prevocal sound and silence, are essential elements of his Northwestern concert series. *Evil Nigger* opens with a rapid, stepwise-descending, three-note gesture. Eastman, who could be provocative and disruptive yet maintain excellence otherwise, seems to be playing with an old adage African American slaves used: "Got one mind for white folks to see, 'Nother for what I know is me; He don't know, he don't know my mind."[69] Eastman articulates black sonic potentiality in the position of maestro and trickster alike; he occupies multiple creative positions at once and, in doing so, demands that listeners and researchers hear the depth of his positionality. The tension between black performance and racialized space has a history rooted in narrative and literature, and in spite of all the odds, or perhaps hand-in-hand with the odds, Eastman managed to compose pieces and perform in spaces that normally thrived on a particular kind of white aesthetic production. Were he white, perhaps, his virtuosic potential and craft would have been easier for many to see.[70]

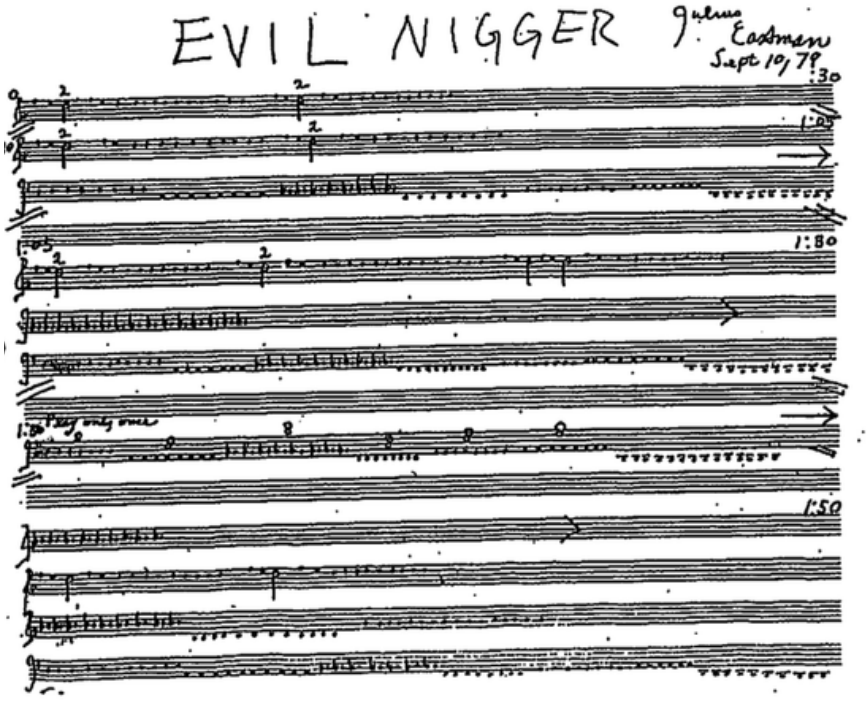

Figure 2 Excerpt from Julius Eastman's 1978 score for *Evil Nigger*.[71]

Eastman notes that the Northwestern concert series "are pieces that can be played by any number of instruments," but I argue that choice to perform *Evil Nigger* on the piano presents particular limitations.[72] The piano presents a material limitation to the musician and is not forgiving, as the key has to rise again in order for the next triplet to be executed. The double escapement mechanism of the piano, which allows "the hammers to rebound in such a way that notes [can] be repeated very rapidly," makes the rapid succession of triplets complex.[73] The performer is constantly working with and against this mechanism of the piano, an insistent reminder of the instrument's materiality as every note is articulated. The composition requires not only temporal accuracy (e.g. remaining in time with fast movement) but also developed, instrument-specific skill in order to articulate each repeated note. Composition and execution, here, bend at the place of escapement which can be tight and expansive at the same time.

Doubly immediate was the need for instrumentalists who could play the difficult compositions. Whereas other composers, like Steve Reich,

were able to form their own ensembles, Eastman did not. An open score meant more flexibility in terms of instrumentation, and in turn, more performance options. I argue that the open score, along with other examples of Eastman's use of the visual score, opens alternative possibilities where black queerness can exist in and outside of capture. The racial tension played with, here, rests in the pieces' flexibility: being "black to the fullest" exceeds the fungibility of blackness and performance.

The third note of each triplet is sustained and then the triplet is repeated. I hear this opening triplet and lingering last note as the sonic articulation of the trickster. The triplet sounds like jumping on a hot surface and the nature of the surface extends through multiple extratextual registers in the scene of the sonic jump—the sound of blackness in-and out-side of capture. Mirroring Eastman's antagonistic relationship with truly comfortable housing or social environments, this triplet jumps around between the foreground and background of the piece. Eastman died without a home and was known to give away money and possessions; the sonic trickster, too, has no sustained place in the piece. The hot surface can also be extended to the Northwestern sociopolitical environment during Eastman's concert: his performance, though highly contested, brought up the hot-button issues of race and sexuality.

The triplets, too, play with the intra- and extra-textual tension; when they are played on top of each other an uneasiness akin to affective dissonance emerges. At 1:40-1:50 on the recording on the *Unjust Malaise* album are exemplary moments where the dissonance is held in time as each triplet is repeated without missing a beat.[74] I want to think through the term dissonance musicologically and affectively to ask: what makes a listener register the abject status of the composer? Or, perhaps more perversely, how might we, as listeners in community, be at odds with the composer (as a kind of dissonance between bodies) in that we unjustly produce his malaise? Eastman was a revered member of the Downtown scene but was never fully accepted because of his black gay embodiment. The poetic work of the dissonance articulates the larger social critique that the rest of the series leverages—this music cannot be anything other than black and gay. Eastman, as a provocateur and thinker at the limits of the politically acceptable, positions the performer and critic in a dissonant bind. Though Eastman plays with alternative phrasings of the main note articulated multiple times (e.g. 12:15), the sonic trickster reemerges constantly (e.g. 12:24-12:28). The opening triplet, repeated throughout, flows between the foreground and the background of the piece. The ubiquity of the triplet across layers of sound congeals the sonic trickster figure's hold on the piece; it is everywhere, a part of the piece, and, at times, merely a garnish.

As the piece shifts into a new section, the recording captures Eastman's voice screaming "one, two, three, four!" A sound of becoming organic that incorporates the once-abject performer and composer, his voice creates a wall of sound whose sonic immensity does not disturb the precise articulation of the triplet that lurks underneath. Eastman's voice is not meant to be in the piece (as it is not formally in the composition), though its deep baritone timbre resounds as maestro of the sonic scene.

9:27 represents an exemplary moment when the tickling repetition is interrupted by the triplet, though the sonic trickster does not emerge in the foreground of the piece. Here, a distinction emerges between the repeated notes and the triplets. Towards the end, between 17:44-18:07, multiple notes are repeated outside of triplet form. These repetitions create intense dissonance and set up an ominous prelude to spaces of silence. Again, silence offers an analytic for considering blackness in-and out-side of capture. From 18:25 in the recording until the end of the piece at 21:29, Eastman orchestrates fascinating patches of over-and under-tones. One note is hit, and the listener is faced with a gorgeous dissipating sound—a sharply attacked note expands into silence. Each note in this section generates two conclusions. First, the sound can dissipate over a longer period of time because of the initial attack. Second, the silence that immediately envelopes the sharply hit note smoothly takes over the performance space, suggesting contrast between the sound of the note and the sound of silence.

The piece dissonantly ends in a patch of silence as one note echoes into a close that is never quite closed in earnest. The silence resounds loudly as the trickster figure returns. In the African tradition, "By definition, tricksters are ambiguous figures, and as we speculated earlier concerning the potency of silence, such silent creatures are extremely ambiguous."[75] Eastman plays with silence in the end of his piece in that the earlier sections were dense with sound in the foreground and background; the piece closes with individual notes and a play with dynamics.

Aside from the trickster figure, though, silence is another form of escape (harkening back to the escapement mechanism). Silence is sound where there is *no thing*, yet Eastman is present loud and clear. The triplet ever so quietly returns between 20:03-20:11, followed by a loud bang on the piano in the low register. The sound that does emerge through the silence in the last part of Eastman's piece is startling, but the fullness of its influence resounds. The silence "comes to create an image of subjectivity that is available to us precisely because it is fractured, uneasy, always in a process of reformulation, precisely because it mirrors the obscene nature of all subjectivity."[76] In the space of repetition and silence listeners reflect on what was immediately heard but are not given the opportunity to get

too comfortable. *Evil Nigger* closes as the last note dissipates at 21:00; the echo casts its mirror onto our jagged encounter with a timed piece always already out of time.

Eastman's piece stirs me, in part due to its use of both precariously fast and uncomfortably slow articulations. Eastman composes music that is black and gay to the fullest and "tricks" audiences and concert spaces that presume music to be apolitical and uninterested in a history of black sound making. Eastman refuses a political economy of sound production in which the distinction between composer, piece, and audience is fraught with (dis)embodied concerns. He is clear that his music is "black to the fullest," and the audience finds itself in a tense relationship with his subjectivity in the appraisal of his work. The critical distance maintained in the assumption that a composer is separate from their composition collapses.

Evil Nigger threatens a sonic sociality between composer, performer, audience and space: we are made uncomfortable yet dynamically overwhelmed by the effulgence of Eastman's composition. We are asked: "Does black life, in its irreducible and impossible sociality, and precisely in what might be understood as its refusal of the status of social life that is refused it, constitute a fundamental danger—an excluded but immanent disruption—to social life?"[77] The music is irreducible, not only to one phrase or key, but also to the putatively neat distinction between composer, performer, and listener—another "immanent disruption" that breathes life into a Eastman's disavowed black sonic movement. In resisting normative sound making practices, black sonority does not guarantee escape. The potential to *be* emancipated exists in the indeterminacy of life and death in-and out-side of the hold. Listening and sounding otherwise articulates refusals of state violence and insists on alternative possibilities of sounding in the world.

Conclusion or, Perhaps a Call to Stay On It

I close with a reflection in the spirit of the dissipated and worried note: one that will continue to echo into the search and sound of Julius Eastman, his creations, and philosophical ruminations. To call this a conclusion would be to limit the scope of Eastman's composition of and through the otherwise, as he is always already behind-and-ahead of what we expect to hear and find from him. I have yet to explore Eastman's firm interest in non-western cosmologies or his punk rock creativity, but it is that multiplicity of identification that makes this scholarly direction so urgent and exciting for me. I departed from the biographical to learn about specific aspects of Eastman's life in relation to the sound that he produced and communities

with which he, perhaps obliquely, shared collective spaces, practices, and performances. I offered a musical analysis outside of the purely theoretical, musicological, or historical rendering of sonic critique in an effort to expand upon the breadth of scholarship that has inspired so much of my thinking around the life and work of Julius Eastman. The capacity to conceptualize black queer life through and against the wake, sometimes with, takes the wind out of me. At times it calls for pause. Eastman demonstrates that the position of the abject can be an exciting, exhausting, and generative space to become—and even then, the analytic of the abject does not seem capacious enough. The repetition of words, musical phrases, crashes, and silences in Eastman's 1973 *Stay On It* suggests that holding Eastman in ecstatic tension between abjection and exceptionality is ongoing. This iterative quality of Eastman's work is the price of a ticket to his always ongoing show. The show is sticky and sometimes self-effacing, but the shock cascades listeners into new practices of listening. We, his dissenters and lovers, approach Eastman renewed in the key demanded by a multilayered and motile black queer performance, performer, and composer who existed at the center and margins of thought.

Acknowledgements

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*Notes_*

1. Ellie M. Hisama, "'Diving into the Earth': The Musical Worlds of Julius Eastman," in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Much of the biographical material and musical analysis throughout this text is indebted to Hisama's scholarship.

2. Although Eastman identified as "gay," my use of the term queer in the space of identity is first to ensure that other people's experiences, especially those of persons not present in the archive, are not overlooked or collapsed by the way Eastman identified. Second, I rely on Jose Esteban Muñoz's notion of queerness as an unfinished project. I argue that our position of un/recovering, particularly in the emerging scholarship about the work of Julius Eastman, is an unfinished queer act in that who and what we find requires us to think outside the boundaries of historiography. See, José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity, (New York: New York University Press, 2009).*

3. As musicologist George E. Lewis noted in a conversation on April 16, 2020, alienation of black composers from the title of composer is strung throughout the archive of western classical music. This is especially evident, Lewis shared, in the case of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer George Walker (1922-2018).

4. Ellie M. Hisama has noted that Eastman pursued compositional study only after being accepted as a piano student, receiving a degree in composition in 1963 from the Curtis Institute. Hisama, "'Diving into the Earth,'" 266–7.

5. "George Walker, Educator and a Ggiant of the Music Industry, Dies at 96." *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (online). September 24, 2018. Available at: https://www.jbhe.com/2018/09/george-walker-educator-and-a-giant-of-the-music-industry-dies-at-age-96/.

6. I am continually inspired by Karen Barad's discussion of re-membering. See Karen Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness: Re-Turning, Re-membering, and Facing the Incalculable," New Formations 92 (2017): 56–86.

7. Ryan Dohoney, "A Flexible Musical Identity: Julius Eastman in New York City, 1976–90," in *Gay Guerilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, ed. Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane Leach (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 123.

8. Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 129.

9. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 109.

10. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath,* 20.

11. I am continually inspired by Amiri Bakara and Rob Brown. "Something in the Way of Things (In Town)". YouTube Video, Febuary 21, 2009. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bArO35pbn6Q.

12. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 109.

13. I am reminded of Amiri Baraka's words: "American classical music is at base Afro-American Classical music" in *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2009), 203. Baraka does not mean European classical music, but a classical music tradition in American sustained by black people; there is no American music without black artists and composers. This quote precedes my later discussion of Eastman's notion of the fundamental character of the black experience in the production of a kind of American capitalist system. I share this now, at the opening, to trou-

ble the distinction between music forms precisely on the grounds that racialized expropriative logics have always already been at play in the creation of an American sonic aesthetic.

14. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African Written by Himself*, (New York: Penguin, 2003), 58.

15. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 3.

16. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath,* 5.

17. I arrive at this ethical polemic by ways of Fred Moten and Saidiya Hartman and their discussion on Aunt Hester's scream. See Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

18. Crawley, 2. He writes, "Otherwise, as word—otherwise possibilities, as phrase—announces the fact of infinite alternatives to what is. And what is is about being, about existence, about ontology. But if infinite alternatives exist, if otherwise possibility is a resource that is never exhausted, what is, what exists, is but one of many. Otherwise possibilities exist alongside that which we can detect with our finite sensual capacities."

19. Ibid., 5. Though my text does not focus on Blackpentacostalism, I am interested in the "break with the known" offered by Crawley's formulation of the "otherwise."

20. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (Boosey and Hawkes, 1971, music score), 3.

21. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath,* 3.

22. M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 189. Also see Fred Moten, *Stolen Life* (Duke University Press, 2018); Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65-81. I am building off of a phrase with which NorbeSe Philip opens her section titled "Notanda" in *Zong!* Philip writes, "There is no telling this story; it must be told:" There is no way to truly tell the story of Garner's murder, black life stolen again. And the again makes it so difficult to tell, as it is a part of a larger history of black life stolen by the white supremacist state.

23. Matthew D. Morrison, "Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 3 (2019): 789.

24. Quoted in Zachary Woolfe, "Minimalist Composer Julius Eastman, Dead for 26 Years, Crashes the Canon," *New York Times*, October 28, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/30/arts/music/minimalist-composer-julius-eastman-dead-for-26-years-crashes-the-canon.html.

25. Kyle Gann, "Damned Outrageous": The Music of Julius Eastman," liner notes for Julius Eastman, *Unjust Malaise* (New York: New World Records 80638, 2005, 3 compact discs).

26. Hisama, "'Diving into the Earth,'" 262.

27. For more on racialized timbre and virtuosity, specifically as it concerns black performers engaging with a western repertoire, see Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Phantom Genealogy: Sonic Blackness and the American Operatic Timbre," in *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019). Many thanks to Marc Hannaford for sharing this reference with me.

28. Part of the Eastman's score for *Macle*. Julius Eastman, *Macle*, 5, Score available at https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/57991/Macle--Julius-Eastman/. Recorded performance available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI9kRQNTwEY. Accessed April

20, 2020.

29. Ibid., 7.

30. Ibid., 6.

31.Julius Eastman, "Macle," score available at https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/57991/Macle--Julius-Eastman/, accessed April 20, 2020.

32. For more on the relationship between sound and the hold, see Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's chapter "Fantasy in the Hold" in their text *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Brooklyn: Minor Compositions, 2013).

33. Alexander G. Weheliye, "Black Life," in *ERRANS* (Berlin: ICI Berlin, 2016), conference paper. Available at https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/alexander-g-weheliye/, accessed April 20, 2020.

34. Saidiya Hartman, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors," *Souls* 18, no.1 (2016): 171.

35. Julius Eastman, quoted in Matthew D. Morrison, "Julius Eastman: Gay Guerrilla" (*Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2015).

36. Julius Eastman, "Julius Eastman's Spoken Introduction to the Northwestern University Concert," Disc 3, Track 2 on Julius Eastman, *Unjust Malaise* (New York: New World Records 80638, 2005, 3 compact discs).

37. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), xvi.

38. La Marr Jurelle Bruce. "Shore, Unsure: Loitering as a Way of Life," GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 25, no. 2, (2019): 352–361.

39. Many thanks to George Lewis for assisting me in bridging Glissant's notion of errantry to Eastman's escape from capture.

40. See, George E. Lewis, Lecture, e-flux, Recording May 29, 2018, https/ www.e-flux ,com/video/214784/the-otolith-group-part-one-of-nbsp-the-third-part-of-the-third-measure/. For a queer theoretical perspective on the term "disidentificatory," see, José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

41. A deeper look into Eastman's relationship with punk, alternative, and new-wave aesthetics is outside the scope of this paper. For more on this and Eastman's collaborative engagements with Arthur Russell I recommend Tim Lawrence, *Hold On to Your Dreams: Arthur Russell and the Downtown Music Scene, 1973-1992* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), specifically Chapter 4, "Intensities."

42. Andrew Hanson-Dvoracek, "Julius Eastman's 1980 Residency at Northwestern University" (Master's thesis, The University of Iowa, 2011), vi.

43. Renée Levine Packer, "Julius Eastman, A Biography," in *Gay Guerilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, ed. Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane Leach (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 54.

44. George E. Lewis, "Foreword," in *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, ed. Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane Leach (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), xiv.

45. Ibid., xiii.

46. For more literature on the relationship between studies in music and disability see

Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, "Finding Autism in the Compositions of a 19th-century Prodigy: Reconsidering 'Blind Tom' Wiggins," in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music*, ed. Neil Lerner and Joseph N. Straus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 199–216; Daphne A. Brooks, "'Puzzling the Intervals': Blind Tom and the Poetics of the Sonic Slave Narrative," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. John Ernest (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 392–414. Many thanks to Marc Hannaford for sharing these resources with me.

47. See, for example, Charlie Parker, "*Crazeology,*" Track 7 on *Jazz Masters* (London: EMI Gold B008OURDFI, 1999, compact disc). Many thanks to George Lewis for this helpful sonic reference.

48. Packer, "Julius Eastman, A Biography," 54.

49. Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives": 95. Lewis notes that in the jazz tradition listeners would often call performers "crazy."

50. Packer, "Julius Eastman, A Biography," 50.

51. Matthew D. Morrison, personal communication, October 10, 2019. See, Sarah Willie-LeBreton, *Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 47, specifically "The Ivory Tower: Life at Northwestern." Willie-LeBreton's work in this chapter engages with the perspectives of Northwestern Alumni from the 1970s and 1980s. Willie-LeBreton writes, "College campuses, however, are unique spaces, in that the authority for declaring authenticity and measuring racial identity within the black student community is in the hands of black students. Unlike their fellow white students—or the larger white-dominated society outside the college walls—black students often measure race loyalty (regularly abbreviated as race) by behavior or association and less by color or ancestry." Eastman's "nigger" pieces seemed to work *against* his attempts to form associations with black student organizers. Many thanks to George Lewis for this reference.

52. Hisama, "'Diving into the Earth,'" 274.

53. Eastman, "Julius Eastman's Spoken Introduction to the Northwestern University Concert," on *Julius Eastman: Unjust Malaise*, disc 3, track 2.

54. Packer, "Julius Eastman: A Biography," 50.

55. George E. Lewis, "Foreword," in *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, ed. Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane Leach (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), xii.

56. Eastman, "Julius Eastman's Spoken Introduction to the Northwestern University Concert."

57. Ibid.

58. For an influential critique of organicism, see Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out," *Critical Inquiry* 7, No. 2 (Winter, 1980): 311-31.

59. Eastman, quoted in Hisama, "'Diving into the Earth,'" 273.

60. Hisama, "'Diving into the Earth,'" 273.

61. Eastman, quoted in, Ibid.

62. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 15.

63. George Eliot, quoted in R. A. T. Judy, "On the Question of Nigga Authenticity," *Boundary 2* 21, no. 3 (1994): 223.

64. Robert Reid-Pharr, *Black Gay Man: Essays*, (New York: New York University Press), 149.

The reference to Gary Fisher is doubly synchronic because Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick faced some of the worst criticism of her career from the posthumous compilation and publication of Fisher's work—not unlike the scathing criticism that Mary Jane Leach received after she recited the titles of Eastman's work at the OBEY Convention in June 2019 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. See Mary Jane Leach, "How to Talk About History? A Spurned Speaker Wonders How to Handle Incendiary Titles by Composer Julius Eastman," ARTNews, September 13, 2019, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/julius-eastman-incendiary-titles-13168/. Also see Calum Slingerland, "OBEY Convention Issues Apology Following Julius Eastman Event," *Exclaim*, June 5, 2019, http://exclaim.ca/music/article/halifaxs_obey_convention_issues_apology_following_julius_eastman_event.

65. Ibid., 141.

66. Though my reference to the trickster figure emerges out of African-Diasporic interpretation of the trickster figure, Eastman has been described as a trickster by other friends and colleagues as well. Mary Jane Leach writes, "Here is Eastman the trickster at work, creating a problem for which there is no good solution." Leach, "How to Talk About History?"

67. Julius Eastman, "Evil Nigger," on *Julius Eastman: Unjust Malaise*, disc 2, track 3.

68. Hanson-Dvoracek, "Julius Eastman's 1980 Residency at Northwestern University," 80.

69. Gretchen Martin, *Dancing on the Color Line: African American Tricksters in Nineteenth-century American Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 13.

70. See, again, "George Walker, Educator and a Giant of the Music Industry, Dies at Age 96," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (September 24, 2018), https://www.jbhe.com/2018/09/george-walker-educator-and-a-giant-of-the-music-industry-dies-at-age-96/.

71. Image from Matthew D. Morrison, "Julius Eastman: Gay Guerrilla" (Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, 2015).

72. Eastman, preconcert remarks on disc 3, track 1, *Unjust Malaise* (00:33-00:41). A tension arises in the putatively indeterminate orchestration and the structural limitations that arise when performing the pieces in the series.

73. See, "Double Escapement," in *The Oxford Companion to Music,* edited by Alison Latham, (Oxford Music Online: Oxford University Press, 2011). I am interested in how the trickster figure plays with the question of escape, and how black sound, in its errant behavior, traverses confinement and freedom. Many thanks to Marc Hannaford for explaining this feature of the piano to me.

74. All timings refer to the performance of "Evil Nigger" on disc 3, track 1 of Julius Eastman, *Unjust Malaise* (New York: New World Records 80638, 2005, 3 compact discs).

75. Philip Peek, "The Sounds of Silence: Cross-World Communication and the Auditory Arts in African Societies," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 3 (1994): 488.

76. Reid-Pharr, *Black Gay Man,* 145.

77. Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 188.

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