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older way of understanding black protest runs too deep. However, among academicians who study black protest from a black perspective, that shift has already occurred. In fact, the Black Freedom Movement has been the driving force behind the very best scholarship on 1960s-era black protest since the 1990s. Although it may still be a while, all signs indicate that “Black Freedom Movement” will one day roll off the tongues of the public as easily as “civil rights movement” does today.

5

Blackness

Fred Moten

Blackness is enthusiastic social vision, given in (non) performance, as the surrealization of space and time, the inseparability of gravity and matter, fabric’s fabrication, field’s feel, rub’s rub, plain’s chant, an endlessly ante-inaugural endlessness of means, an empillowed, haptically ham-boned coinstrumentality of care, in caressive sound and anachoreographic sounding. Anticipating originary correction with self-defensive division and (re)collection, it goes way back, long before the violent norm, as an impure informality to come. Its open and initiatory counterpleasures reveal the internal, public resource of our common sense/s, where flavorful touch is all bound up with falling into the general antagonistic embrace. That autonomous song and dance is our intellectual descent; it neither opposes nor follows from dissent but, rather, gives it a chance. Consent to that submergence is terrible and beautiful. Moreover, the apparent (racial) exclusivity of the (under)privilege of claiming this dis/ability serially impairs—though it can never foreclose—the discovery that the priority of sovereign regulation is false. In order to get the plain sense of this, you have to use your imagination against the world, since in the world—that dream, that nightmare of dominion, overview, and oversight—blackness comes sharply into relief against its negation. On the ground, in the field, in the plain, it doesn’t come into relief at all, really, but as a mode of sensuous theoretical practice, it celebrates against predatory and incorporative worldliness, whose

primary weapon is the imposition of the desire for worldliness. Blackness, lived both as the denial of and the incapacity for worldliness, is properly understood as constraint when constraint is improperly understood as undesirable, as a radical undesirability in the face of the belligerent fantasy of the freedom of, or of freedom in, the world. Blackness, in and as a kind of fleeting, prior persistence, resists these bad thoughts. It's the good trip before the bad trip that good trips can induce. Blackness is midnight blue as midnight comes again.

If it seems like blackness shows up most clearly against the backdrop of its negation, perhaps this is because affirmations of it—out of the bloody constraint that makes them necessary—are often given as if a claim on property. And yet it is impossible to think it without the making of a claim, though the claim is an effect of a triple dispossession—the giving away of what was never ours, the theft from us of that same thing, and the refusal to take that shit as given. But all this is just to say that same thing is anything but. It's everything but, never the same, must change, and if that imperative implies sameness, it's only because our language, our naming, is inadequate to what is irreducible in the name when the name is irreducible in what is irreducible to the name. Only in a certain profligacy of naming, a terrible and beautiful festival of predication, is something approached—as Ed Roberson (1970) and, then, Aldon Nielsen (1997) show—through the various calligraphies of black chant. Deeper still, the thing we share is not a thing, and though we share it, it is not ours. We share it in our practice of it, which is a plain of commonness in work and play. Constrained to show no restraint, trained in the refusal of training, our interminable refrain is, “I’m serious as a heart attack. I’m just playing.”

Our thing, which ain't no thing, which is absolutely nothing, is real, though any isolated instance or aspect of it that is put forward as the real thing ain't. Often

thought to be a thing of darkness, it is, more gloriously, more severely, a thing of nothingness. In this regard, being everything in being nothing; it's not a thing, not anything at all but, rather, that shared practice of sharing, that simplest explosion of an absolutely complex simplicity, that we have sometimes thought of under the rubric of the gift, that sometimes we think by way of the concept of the given, but whose materiality is most precisely imagined in giving. On the cusp where generosity and generativity converge, it proffers convergence as a general and inescapable blur. Often thought to be a property of certain bodies or the troublesome property of that troublesome property that stands in, without standing, for the theft of body, as such theft's victim and effect, it is more beautifully, more terribly, an openness of flesh, a monstrosity to be claimed, as Hortense Spillers (1987) proclaims—an animated, animaterial showing, an empathic and emphatic refusal of body and mind, of self in relation to world, all of which have been refused to it as a matter of law and custom, science and philosophy. Blackness is (the improvisational sociology of) quantum sociality. Blackness is the old-new math.

Blackness bears the history of the epidermalization of the alternative. The alternative bears that history in turn, will never not be black, now, whatever else that irreducible and inexhaustible blackness is, or will be. Whenever a cop busts a guy in the head, our busted head is model and precedent. The police were called into being to come get us. Their constantly coming to get us—“Shade! Good God! It's a raid!”—shapes the way we shift our shape. He always be killing us, and we are constrained to survive that (W. Brown [1847] 1970). He's tight grilled. If his situation ain't improvin', he try'n to murder everything movin' (Jay-Z 1998). He imposes improvement on everything that moves. He tries to use everything until it's all used up, but, giving nothing, all

he does is (lay) waste, throwing shells everywhere. Part of what we are is the imperative to see him clearly, to look into the argon of his eyes, finally, so we can see that we are not there. The analysis of our murderer, and of our murder, is so we can see we are not murdered. We survive. And then, as we catch a sudden glimpse of ourselves, we shudder. For we are shattered. Nothing survives. The nothingness we share is all that's real. That's what we come out to show. That showing is, or ought to be, our constant study.

6

Body

Jayna Brown

We often take our bodies for granted, as if they were self-evident and as if to think or talk about them was a matter of obvious description. But there is nothing “natural” about the ways we perceive our bodies, and there are many ways to approach the term. What a body means in relation to other bodies and to the world around it has taken shape and shifted meaning through the languages of science, philosophy, politics, and history. Nowhere is this more graphically illustrated than in the ways we understand race, sex, and gender, terms that determine who we are and where we rank in the social structures of the modern world. In African American studies, the term “body” takes on a particular resonance as it is used to draw attention to the visceral nature of racism as well as the physical forms of African Americans’ resilience and resistance.

Scientific discourses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were made up of elaborate systems of classification and categorization. Natural scientists such as Johannes Blumenbach and Carl Linneaus drew up detailed hierarchical systems to define and rank the races. These categories, meant to be taken as scientific fact, were descriptions of not only physiognomy but also temperament. Race was considered as much a matter of behavior and intellectual capacity as it was skin color or appearance. In accordance with the hierarchical dichotomy between body and mind, articulated by René Descartes, the European race was associated with the mind and its capabilities, while the African race was