# ALIVE IN THE SOUND

## BLACK MUSIC AS COUNTERHISTORY

RONALD RADANO

A L I V E

I N T H E

S O U N D

**REFIGURING AMERICAN MUSIC**

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IN MEMORY OF

TEJUMOLA OLANIYAN

• 1959–2019 •

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# CONTENTS



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# PREFACE

Although we might assume life to exist nearly everywhere on earth, it startles the imagination to think something living and breathing could inhabit the realm of sound. Alive in the sound? What could that mean? And yet there it is, or at least there it appears to be.

Not just in any sound, though. For nearly two hundred years, Americans—and through their influence, listeners around the world—have engaged in a kind of magical thinking about US Black music, attributing its tremendous power to qualities thought to extend from the body and spirit of Black being. The multiple discourses describing its expression—the realness of R&B and hip-hop; the sensuous grit of funk; the transcendence of soul; the transfiguring intensities of groove; the unearthly shake, rattle, and roll of a boogie band—are enactments of an interracial agreement about the music's embodied character, an implicit pact on its remarkable ability to reveal the depths of Black experience. Black music's perceived attachments to Black physicality have everything to do with this tacit understanding. Not only do they commonly orient African American listening; they also enable those who are not Black to experience the music's spectacular effect. Despite the widespread awareness of Black music's unique qualities of animated expression, though, most of us have not considered how musical links to the Black body came into being, how the origin of the music's enlivened character traces to an era founded on racial animus and economic struggle: the disposition of modern listening is born of a time when fantastical ideas about a highly valued and subjected Black personhood ruled the land. Sensations of aliveness that seem so uplifting today descend from a long racial past, their endurance fundamental to the history of Black music's value-making.

If Black music's embodied character is now mainly gestured to indirectly through a joyous language of emotion and affect, it is only because the perception contradicts what we already know to be true. Science, after all, has proven that race is not real and that humans are biologically the same. Still, assumptions about Black music's sensible presence persist:

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they inspire the apprehension of an ontological peculiarity that, many contend, identifies why Black music is superior to other forms. This same peculiar sensation, moreover, underlies contrasting opinions among those who remain skeptical about the music. If for some Black music's exuberance and drive enable it to reach incredible aesthetic heights, for its detractors the same traits explain why it lacks credibility altogether. What endures as a never-ending tension also indicates a distinctive pattern of growth, with each position in its own way expressive of the belief that there is, indeed, a quality of aliveness animating Black sound.

The enlivened presences heard and felt in Black music are something more than idle fantasy. They are ideological sensations, symptoms of a common sense deeply ingrained in the racial imagination and traceable to Black music's initial conceptualization in the US South. As the book examines, modern-era notions of aliveness have their origin in the 1840s, two decades before the US Civil War, when enslaved workers in their various labors invented a vast musical pageantry, often stunning White listeners who took it to be a sonic outgrowth of "Negro" being. Having been granted this uncanny physical capacity, African and African American slaves invested in it heavily, their sounding practices becoming a critical component of culture-making and a way for them to participate in a nascent entertainment economy. The act of buying and selling Black music—with performances introduced into the market by slave masters and sometimes by slaves themselves—fueled the circulation of enlivened sound across the South. Value rose in proportion to the enslaved person's transactional status as human property.

What made the slaves' music appear so utterly fantastic, though, was how it compromised the laws of property ownership to the point of disturbing the basic principles of southern capitalism. Because the slaves' musical capacities were thought to be racially endowed, the sounds they produced remained formally linked to their "Negro" status. This meant that what was "black" about Black music challenged White possessive claims; its sonic character retained a material dimension of the slaves' physical presence no matter how widely the music circulated, no matter how frequently owners profited from their property's performances. Within the emerging markets of entertainment, racialized Black sound endured as a fleshy resonance, its inalienable nature contradicting capital's exchange mechanisms and compromising the universal authority of White ownership. Through their labor, Black musicians had created something incredible: an expressive form economically constituted as an illicit property that was inextricably attached

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to the human property that produced it. As Black music gained commercial value, it continued to grow in its primary economy under Black ownership, finding creative sustenance in a rich spirituality and Africanized vernacularity where notions of human sound's livingness were common.

Black music arose as a commodity in contradiction of itself: a cultural practice whose embodied racial essence moved paradoxically within the circuits of capital while simultaneously turning against those circuits to find renewal in the creative and philosophical networks of southern African American culture. After Emancipation, as free Black musicians entered commercial markets and began reshaping popular music, their creative actions supported the same back-and-forth dynamic, which also informed the pattern of musical change. The inalienable possessions of Black sonic being—at once celebrated for their peculiar presence and demeaned as the audible outcome of an abject class of personhood—journeyed into and out of the entertainment economy, their double movements setting into motion an expansive metamorphosis of form. With each outward step into the formal economy, Black music labor turned away, finding restorative inspiration in the wellspring of Black sonic material to forge new enlivened expressions. What structurally revealed a cyclical motion, with Black musicians and their music circulating into and out of commercial markets, mimicked a larger contradiction in the relationship of race to capital: the racially inalienable sounding practices of Black performers participated antagonistically in a system whose efficacy depended on the alienable exchange of commodity forms. The contradiction sustained, and still sustains, a dialectical energy that never resolves. Commerce compels Black music innovation as African American musicians continue to lean back, drawing strength and inspiration from an evolving imaginary of racially conceived animated sound.

To comprehend this dynamic, *Alive in the Sound* closely examines the history of US popular music, giving particular attention to its industrial productions, genre categories, media apparatuses, and means of circulation. The book explores how multiple generations of Black musician-laborers, from George W. Johnson to Scott Joplin, Fletcher Henderson to Muddy Waters, Aretha Franklin to Drake, produced grand bodies of musical creativity while navigating capitalized institutions and negotiating with White competitors who routinely sought to claim ownership of Black music's animated qualities. These expropriative efforts had the effect of amplifying the racial sensation, and hence the value, of enlivened sound. If, over the course of the modern, the unrelenting force of the market spelled

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multiple losses for Black musicians, it also inspired repeated symbolic gains for African American culture at large: from the onset of the twentieth century, Black music identified the standard by which popular music style would be measured. So successful were Black music's gains that it seemed to take on a life of its own, routinely detaching from the labor that produced it and circulating as a strangely disembodied version of racially embodied sound. As it advanced globally into the commercial arena, Black music grew ever larger, more ontological, its appeal to artists and consumers alike standing in stark contrast to the structures of negation that perpetually challenged Black existence.

Herein lies the informing logic of value production. Over the course of the long modern era, Black music value has developed as an accumulation of economic losses endured by Black labor; these losses, which mark the music's aesthetic and commercial value, have repeatedly inspired African American musicians to produce new innovations advancing popular style. Through these means, losses generated through the expropriation of Black creativity realize symbolic "profits" that compel the invention of new animated forms. *Alive in the Sound* analyzes the complexities of Black music production, demonstrating how its multiple modes of valuation—aesthetic, racial, economic, commercial, symbolic—have worked in relation to magnify its ontological character, historically unfolding as a metamorphosis of multiple profits from loss. The book focuses chiefly on the massive labor force that shaped Black music to show how the creation of new expressions of aliveness sustained the music's back-and-forth evolution. Contradictions orienting Black music's dialectical growth—the positive and negative extremes of its stature, the movements that Black music and musicians have performed within and against the entertainment economy—emerge as critical components in the production of value, underlying the music's ironic positioning both at the center and on the margins of popular culture.

Methodologically, *Alive in the Sound* bears certain resemblances to my earlier book, *Lying up a Nation: Race and Black Music*. Both examine the musical constitution of racial difference: how Black music, as sound and idea, emerged historically out of racially asymmetrical power struggles to realize racially distinctive forms. Yet whereas *Lying up a Nation* focuses largely on the US colonial and antebellum periods, *Alive* concentrates on Black music's participation in the modern commercial economy, mapping patterns of growth from the late antebellum era to the turn of

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the twenty-first century. And while *Lying up a Nation* directs its attention to the discursive regimes and notational practices that constrained the production of music knowledge, *Alive* approaches its subject through the lens of political economy, examining the guiding mechanisms of popular entertainment, where the contradiction of race to capital mobilizes the invention of peculiarly inalienable alienable forms.

In pursuing this method, *Alive in the Sound* pushes back on studies of Black music that locate expressivity exclusively within the racial containments of African American culture, arguing that attention to social forces, commercial institutions, and professional performers external to Black domains is critical to comprehending the formation of value. The book interprets racial antagonism not as a transhistorical structuring principle hermetically sealed within Black existence but as something that develops materially out of the conditions of exploited Black labor. From this, Black music's racial distinctiveness takes shape: aliveness is inherent to its cultural form, enacted by musicians performing their putative states of audibility within commercial forums. In fulfilling the expectation of capital's progression through the invention and reinvention of enlivened sound, Black music reaffirms its status as a racialized cultural property. The double movements symptomatic of its contradictory character drive a cyclical motion that directs the progression of popular style while repeatedly tracing back to Black sonic and philosophical pasts. The cycles amount to the creation of a semiotically open performative enactment—a storyless historical structure—bound to the legacies of race and labor. *Alive in the Sound*, then, is less an alternative history of Black music than it is a charting of how the music's distinctively double life-in-the-making presents itself antagonistically as counterhistory.

This is all to say that Black music's distinctiveness is the offspring of an illicit origin, a racial-economic anomaly that perpetuates ongoing struggles of ownership. Structured in the contradiction of race to capital, Black music has flourished, arising as a cultural practice unlike anything heard or experienced before it. As it circulates, the music spreads its sensations of aliveness, its propertied conditions participating in an enduring tug-of-war between Black musician-labor and the legions of consumers who, through their purchase power, claim Black music as their own. Black music's antagonistic relationship to capital is what makes it seem so different, so enduringly enlivened, so valued: it is vital to its emotional intensity and expressions of aesthetic truth. Yet it is also why anachronistic racial

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beliefs, otherwise dismissed over the course of multiple decades of civil struggle and progress, have continued to inform its understanding. *Alive in the Sound* analyzes the complex conditions that have made Black music this way, a form and practice at once cherished and enduringly bound to race and racism's ideational life.

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The idea for this book first began to emerge in 2008, when I was asked by Barbara Weinstein to present a paper on the study of music for a Presidential Panel of the American Historical Association. That paper (subsequently published under the title "On Ownership and Value"), which received incisive responses from Jerma Jackson, Ingrid Monson, and Shane White, set me on a journey to explore what I felt to be the crucial topic in Black music studies—namely, how value is generated. Working for a while in fits and starts, I was ultimately able to give the subject due attention after receiving in 2013 an appointment as a senior fellow at the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research in the Humanities (IRH) on the Madison campus. Benefiting from a reduction in teaching and service responsibilities during those four years, I set the groundwork of this book. I'm deeply indebted to the IRH's late director, Susan Stanford Friedman, whose unflagging support enabled me to move the project forward, and to the community of IRH fellows with whom I had so many enriching conversations.

I'm also grateful to several other Madison colleagues/friends and students who've helped me to think hard about Black music, culture, and musicality more generally. In the School of Music, Lee Blasius and Brian Hyer, my neighbors down the hall, were endlessly provocative and engaging during our many conversations; I have learned so much from them. Same goes for my casual exchanges with Nadia Chana, Pam Potter, and particularly Charlie Dill, who could effortlessly move across a circuit of ideas from Deleuze to Muddy Waters. I am chagrined to think how I took for granted my frequent banter with the late Richard Davis and am dismayed I did not learn enough from him about his extraordinary performance and recording career. Steve Paulson at Wisconsin Public Radio gave me the chance to explore some of the details of this study on the nationally syndicated NPR program "To the Best of Our Knowledge." To other Madison faculty and friends I owe similar thanks: Jerome Camal, Thulani Davis, Suzanne Desan, Nan Enstad, Barbara Forrest, Sara Guyer, Darien Lamen, Toma Longinović, Morgan Luker, Guido Podestá, and Viren

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In 2014, I accepted an invitation from Aliko Songolo and Tejumola Olaniyan to join a newly established initiative to widen attention on campus to global Black cultural studies. What became a year later the Department of African Cultural Studies (ACS) remained my principal home until my retirement. It was in that context that I developed for the department new curriculum in cultural theory and assisted in forging courses of study in music and sound. Working with ACS graduate students was a great reward. I'm particularly grateful to Tolu Akinwole, Unifier Tshimangadzo Dyer, Harry Kiiru, Kimberly Rooney, and Omotola Okunlola for our work together.

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the chance to present research on the early formation of Black music value as part of an essay prepared for "Econophonia: Music, Value, and Forms of Life," their guest-edited issue of *boundary 2*. Other versions or parts of this study were presented at the 2016 Rhythm Changes conference, Amsterdam (Nick Gebhardt, Walter van de Leur, and Tony Whyton; Krin Gabbard provided a thoughtful response); Northwestern (Inna Naroditskaya and E. Patrick Johnson); Columbia University (Ana Ochoa, George Lewis, Harald Kisiedu); University of Michigan (Paul Anderson, Mark Clague, and the late Charles Hiroshi Garrett); University of California, Berkeley (Jocelyne Guilbault, Bonnie Wade, Griff Rollefson); University of Pennsylvania (Jairo Moreno, Guy Ramsey); the Jazz Worlds/World Jazz Conference and the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, both at the University of Chicago (Phil Bohlman, and Travis Jackson and Kenneth Warren, respectively); Duke University (Louise Meintjes, Deonte Harris; thanks to Tsitsi Jaji for her penetrating response); and the aesthetics and popular music workshop, "Network Americana," held at the Institut für Musik und Vermittlung, Technische Universität Braunschweig (Dietmar Elflein, Knut Holtsträter, Sascha Pöhlmann). The Berlin Prize/Mellon Fellowship that brought me to the American Academy in Berlin in 2019 provided the means to present portions of this book while pursuing new research. Berit Ebert, Johana Gallup, and Michael Steinberg were key to making that stay so enriching. The Berlin forums included the Centre for the History of Emotions, Max-Planck Institut für Bildungsforschung and the Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Medienwissenschaft, Humboldt Universität. Thanks go, respectively, to Stephanie Lämmert, Sydney Hutchinson, and Stefanie Alisch for those invitations.

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# BLACK LABOR, VALUE, AND THE ANOMALIES OF ENLIVENED SOUND

## SPECTACULAR AURALITIES

About a hundred pages into his monumental study of Black labor during the time of slavery and Reconstruction, W. E. B. Du Bois takes a sudden turn. He abruptly departs from the sober language of social history that had previously informed his analysis and adopts the intonation of religious prophecy to evoke the experience of liberation. The closing paragraphs of "The Coming of the Lord," the fifth chapter in his 1935 publication, *Black Reconstruction in America*, are where things change, as Du Bois engages the rhapsodic tone of revelation in portraying the hour of the enslaved people's freedom. This moment, Du Bois writes, was nothing less than the heralding of the Apocalypse, when "to most of the four million Black folk emancipated by the civil war, God was real."[1]

What is striking about Du Bois's rhetorical strategy is how it makes use of auditory imagery, describing the many sites of freedom to be, more than anything else, a glorious pageantry of sound. "A great human sob shrieked in the wind, and tossed its tears upon the sea—free, free, free." All that was "Truth" (and "Love" and "Beauty," too) "sang with the stars." "Trumpet tones" blared. Black folk of all ages, shapes, and sizes "raised great voices and shouted to God," and in their collective passion they created something profound, "the loveliest thing born this side the seas." Throughout

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this dramatic commentary—little more than a brief swerve that interrupts the narrative flow for just a few pages—sonic imagery brims with reveries of a lustrous aurality that "swelled and blossomed like incense" and whose "great cadences . . . throbbed and thundered on the world's ears." Here arises a sound-filled humanity that was of the moment, "improvised and born anew," but that was also evocative of another place and time. The celebratory call to freedom wells up "out of an age long past, and weaving into its texture the old and new melodies in word and in thought."[2]

The use of musical imagery to convey what is otherwise difficult to express in conventional prose was not new to Du Bois. He employed a similar technique over thirty years earlier in his celebrated work *The Souls of Black Folk*, the "singing book" in which extravagant claims about the power of the spirituals, or "sorrow songs"—where he introduces the phrase "born this side the seas"—assume their place alongside dramatic prophecy and staid social criticism.[3] But *Black Reconstruction* is a different kind of text, a massive, seven-hundred-page revisionist study of a newly conceived Black proletariat, whose politics of struggle were brought into form through historical analysis performed at a granular level. Du Bois's aim, as David Levering Lewis describes it, was to produce nothing short of "a tour de force of legitimate propaganda for his people," by which he would show, as Du Bois himself put it, "the Black worker as founding stone of a new economic system in the nineteenth century and for the modern world, who brought civil war in America." Given the depth of his materialist commitments, it may seem strange that what otherwise proceeds as a tale of a fateful, asymmetrical battle against the pernicious forces sustaining White-majority rule—forces enabled by the commanding influence of monopolistic capital consumed in "an orgy of theft"—locates a source of hope in the seemingly superfluous sound of the "Negro" worker class. Despite Du Bois's professed love of the sorrow songs, one would think that he might have stayed within the stylistic bounds of scholarly scientific discourse.[4]

For Du Bois, though, Black music and labor were of a piece. In the clamor of "wild orgy and religious frenzy," the "howling and dancing" among "gangs of dirty Negroes," one could hear the living qualities of a working people, an economic class for whom the very act of unpaid labor—the labor on which a nation was built—was deeply and profoundly audible.[5] Music among the enslaved was at once a common, orienting practice and a byproduct of labor, an expression of humanly organized sound constituted within the activity of work, just as its creation beyond the fields and shop floors entered into circulation as a form of entertainment,

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sold to paying customers by slave owners and sometimes by the slaves themselves.[6] "Negro" sound and labor moved together as a resonance of duty-bound flesh, the auditory outpouring of emancipatory aspiration never fully separating from the body as such. Unlike the common portrayal of Euro-Western "Music" as an objectified, autonomous form, the reports by White people who experienced Black sounding practices suggested a different kind of aural sensation in which the strange clamoring of slaves seemed to arise directly from their physicality; slave music put on display the inherently audible character of the Black body.[7] Racialized Black sound was a recognizable sign of the slaves' inferiority, a negative indication of a person-thing that was, from the outset, heard. Nonetheless, this same peculiar phenomenon of embodied sound—consistent with the naming of slavery the "peculiar institution"—routinely drew the attention of White populations who commonly thought of themselves as being less endowed with sonic presence. As a result of an anomaly in the economy of racialized labor, what had been born from the flesh and bones of a reboant people disseminated outwardly via the nascent markets of exchange, introducing listeners to the newly conceived, audible child of southern Black consciousness. Du Bois was keenly aware of Black music's enlivened character and its basis in the productive relations of enslaved labor. The "noise" of voluble Black workers, he writes, betrayed Black sound's animated character: it "lived and grew, always it grew and swelled and lived," as if it were a sentient autonomous form. What it grew from defined its basis in the negative: the beauty of "Negro music" was "distilled from the dross of its dung"—from the living shit of slavery's bare life.[8]

Du Bois's alignment of Black music and the negative conditions of slave labor speaks to economic processes that trace to the heart of value production.[9] In just a few pages, tucked away in an otherwise conventionally crafted political history, he locates the critical aesthetic triumph of the slave era in the invention of a powerful sounding practice developing from the activity of unfree Black workers. This sound-producing labor, enacted within the inherently unjust economic structures of slavery, provided the material ground of a strange and fascinating aurality, the setting from which the racialized auditory expressions named "Negro music," and later "Black music," would be constituted, assembled, and cast. Brought into social understanding as a novel performance for purchase, this racialized sound introduced into everyday exchange practices an aberrant form whose qualities of inalienable humanity proved disruptive of capitalist processes and the norms of ownership. Constituted as a recognizable,

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socioeconomic invention under the rule of White mastery—under the legal claim of Black bodies as forms of human property—Black music came into public knowledge as a contradiction in the process of ownership; it would be conceived as a property claimed by another property, a property-in-slaves, that for all practical purposes had no business owning a property of their own. The emergence of African American sounding practices as an audible property-of-property seemingly animated by the bodies of its owned producers shows how different Negro music was. And because the contradictions of race underlying the production of value have never resolved, so would it continue to be.

The sound of Black folk identified a condition of aurality unlike any before it. Entering public knowledge as a cultural phenomenon in the 1840s and 1850s, it marked the nation's first open recognition of the slaves' ability to produce coherent sonic form. Conceived as an audible externalization of the slave body, of a being that was widely assumed to be less than human, the fleshy sounding practices of Black music would always remain, in one sense, something less than Music, forever inferior to the exalted aesthetic expressions of Europe: the singular and unqualified object form, *Music*, with a capital *M*. Then again, in its extraordinary range of sonorous beauty and diversity of creative invention, Black music also appeared at times not entirely unlike Music. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, it had been informing the genres of American popular music and folk song, as it drew the praise of northern and European visitors to the South, who often spoke admiringly of its strange, exotic qualities. And as it pushed the limits of what Music could be—in all its likenesses and unlikenesses, in all its accumulated identifications and misidentifications by a White majority—Black music gained a peculiarly heightened positivity, its animated qualities, if not fully inalienable, remaining nonetheless under the racial authority and possession of those thought to be an inherently audible species of personhood. Emerging from the negative, thingly resonance of the racialized body, this new cultural phenomenon, Negro music, being less than Music, would gain a magnified hyperpositive value. Through its qualities of embodiment, it would also become something greater than Music, imbued with enlivened character. Such was the social process informing Du Bois's proclamation of Black music as a remarkable invention and which I will identify in this study as the music's double character. Conceived in the negative, "distilled from the dross of its dung," Black music had arisen in the aftermath of civil struggle as "slavery's one redemption," revealing in its animated properties a magnified, hyperpositive

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presence. This negative/hyperpositive relation inherent to the production of value—observable in its concrete manifestations but also as a logic with its own temporality operating at an abstract level—would endure as an unresolvable tension consistent with the racialized, psychic twoness of a racially preoccupied nation.[10]

To be "distilled" conjures the ethers, which, by turns, suggests a physical process of separation and transformation. In its becoming, a Negro music is revealed as a distillation of spirit. The metaphor of distilling appears in "The Coming of the Lord," where Du Bois depicts the music's ascent as an auditory incarnation of Jesus, an apocalyptic, musical rendering that exceeds the limits of the ordinary and "sits today at the right hand of God."[11] In this usage, it might seem as if Du Bois were suggesting that Black music had ultimately extracted itself from the mundane suffering of slave society, its spiritual character having detached from the struggles of the world. Yet Du Bois never loses sight of the importance of the music's constitution within a subjugated class of African American labor; he remains committed to the view that Black music developed dialectically, realizing value as a negative relation to capital. Born from the contradiction of slaves acquiring their own property—a partially inalienable property that would never be fully accessible to its owners—this racially "Negro" music comes into being, its fleshy sensation relationally connected to the status of the slave as an audible property. Out of this strange dynamic, Black music acquires its animated, spectral character, being a distillative demonstration of the forces of injustice producing enlivened sound.

Du Bois is scrupulous in drawing out the process. The ground from which the enslaved bear witness to a sonic miracle in chapter 5, "The Coming of the Lord," is introduced in the preceding chapter, "The General Strike," through a detailed analysis of the slaves' political campaign against their owners, which he portrays as a mass movement of labor activism. "Can we imagine this spectacular revolution?" Du Bois asks, for one might find such active participation dubious, given the desperate attempts by White masters to keep their human property unaware of the impending civil conflict. Yet despite the enormity of their challenge, the slaves persisted, joining the Union's armed forces in their own campaign for freedom, and "the wild truth, the bitter truth, the magic truth, came surging through."[12] Out of the materiality of struggle emerged a new truth, announced in the rapturous "howling and dancing" of Black performance. Du Bois evokes this spectacular incarnation at the conclusion of "The Coming" in his quotation of Friedrich von Schiller's "An die Freude" ("To the Joy"). By aligning the

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animated "howl" of the freed slaves' exclamations with Schiller's poetry, Du Bois alludes to a climactic moment of another masterwork, the "Hymn to Joy" (a.k.a. "Ode to Joy") chorus in Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 in D Minor, op. 125, where the "acoustical shock" of Schiller's very same words disrupting the instrumental norms of symphonic composition are famously featured in the fourth movement. The "miracle, of its production," which had given birth to slave sounding practices, by which the freed people, as Du Bois's described it, "howled the hymn of joy," now stood in comparison with the transcendent character of what many at the time believed to be Europe's greatest musical masterwork. What had been "distilled from the dross of its dung" materialized out of subjugated labor as an equivalent of humanity's greatest beauty. Black music would give to those who could discern it an audible indication of truth cast in the negative.[13]

The miraculous production of "howled" sonic mastery would not have come about had it not been for the tragedy of slave labor and the racism that justified it. Tragedy was the circumstance in which a people could be imagined as things, and living things could seem to resonate sound. Tragedy was the social condition that enabled an enslaving population to perceive their living property as audible bodies rendering a strangely alienable and inalienable "music"; it was the product of a racial economy in which those same person-things were believed to possess sonic properties embedded in their very flesh. Tragedy as an abstract concept would live on within the productive processes of value-making, playing out repetitively as a materialization of asymmetric racial struggle: Black music's contradictory form would be structured as a repetition of unsuccessful attempts on the part of White mastery, and then a broad consumer culture, to claim and control the sounding practices of a subjugated class. The music's entrance into exchange as an alienable commodity meant that its performances would be available for purchase by anyone with the financial means to possess them.

Significantly, however, the tragic conditions that made Black music so easily obtainable and led White southerners to conclude that they were entitled to own the sounds themselves also made it impossible for full expropriation to be realized. The process by which the music entered exchange for the pleasure of White folk and was subjected to a southern version of primitive accumulation would be undone by the nation's own ideological commitment to racism and White supremacy, which precluded the music's complete incorporation into the greater body politic: White populations could not fully claim Black music as their own without also

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giving up their privilege and status as "White." And so, the qualities of an inalienable fleshy sound linked to the racialized "Negroid" body paradoxically increased in proportion to Black music's dissemination into commercial economies. Tragedy-in-the-abstract identified the congealed materiality of slavery's racial contradiction, informing the making of Black music's double character. It structured the negative/hyperpositive form of a racialized music that appeared phenomenally alive.

How precisely did the tragic order of slave labor set in motion the creation of such remarkable forms of enlivened sound? Tellingly, this order was by no means merely a reproduction of the labor typically found in capitalist production. In *The Gift of Black Folk*, a study published eleven years before *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois suggests that the expressive power of Black music ultimately derived not from labor as such but from an unruliness developing out of its relation to labor, from its incorrigible reluctance to accommodate and be at the service of US industry and commerce. Black music provided something beyond mere economic and material gain, giving back to Black folk a precious cultural property as it actively participated in economic production. For that reason, slave populations, as they endured their tragic condition, worked to protect the human essence of their labor from complete exploitation and subsumption. While seated at the very foundation of this late form of US slavery—marking the emergence of a modern global capitalism in which slavery stood at the center, named by recent scholars the "second slavery"—the laboring of unfree people was not simply an abstract force or labor power; it identified a reconfiguring of labor.[14] Although far from unexploited (theoretically, slaves could own nothing, including their ability to work), slave laboring for Du Bois linked to qualities of "Truth" and "Negro spirit," identifying "a tropical product with a sensuous receptivity to the beauty of the world," from which Black music arose. The reluctance on the part of Black workers, judged by many masters and, after slavery, industrial capitalists to be a symptom of torpor and laziness, proposed in actuality an additional inspiration for Black people and the nation: "laziness" marked a refusal by the slave "when he did not find the spiritual returns adequate," offering an orientation to labor and labor time that would enable the United States to grow "economically and spiritually at a rate previously unparalleled anywhere in history." Driving this reluctance to labor's routine exploitation was what typically organized laboring acts themselves. The peculiarly embodied sound of workers' actions gave audible form to a realm of cryptic being resistant to the orders of capitalist production.[15]

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The recognition that Black people had introduced another kind of sound-induced labor, an aesthetically informed and performative version of Marx's "living labor"—something not, in Du Bois's phrasing, "as easily reduced to be the mechanical draft-horse which the northern European labor became"—is critical to the comprehension of Black music value as it emerges in the slaves' performances and carries forward into the post–Civil War United States.[16] Du Bois's insight proposes a readjustment of the universalist equalization of labor as labor power, as a commodity form that is quantifiable, exchangeable, and knowable, as it gestures toward a newly imagined quality and condition, that of being-in-labor: a being whose very existence was tragically defined by and conceived as labor—as "total labor" existing in "racial time," as Michael Hanchard names it—but who, out of this state of abjection, realized a new world responsive to its own time.[17] For Du Bois, one of the great ironies of US slavery was how Black laboring brought about the possibility of a healthier embodied form of living that exceeded capitalist production, a way of being produced by those who had been denied by the heinous power of racism the status of human. In the same way, the emergence of animated Black labor introduced a series of enlivened sounding practices that were constituted within and thus inextricably attached to the slaves' laboring acts, as those practices, by expressing outwardly the sonorousness of the slaves' bodies, also inspired the imagining of new cultural intensities. In the spectacle of animated Black sound, listeners began to embrace a view that runs the gamut of Black music history: they would hear in this strange, recondite music aestheticized expressions of life's certainties, an order of valuation frequently described in terms of a temporally expansive truth.

As we will observe over the course of this analysis, truth, as a reference to the ideological power of music's phenomenal experience, would typically remain partial, an incomplete figurative gesture to an absolute ideal that would then be brought into language and made meaningful.[18] Some versions of truth affirmed the certainty of White supremacy, locating in Black music the unthinking "noise" of Negro inferiority. These are the discourses of ridicule and contempt featured in nineteenth-century minstrelsy that would inform popular characterizations of Black forms. Other truths turned in the opposite direction, seeking to extract Black music from its history of subjugation, anointing the music as the representative, positive "voice of the nation." And still others proposed another kind of positivity, claiming that Black music expressed a singular racial coherence that, depending on interpretation, may or may not be shared across

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racial lines. "Are you getting the spirit?" Aretha Franklin would ask her audiences, leaving it to each listener to ponder. These multiple depictions of truth shared a common conviction—namely, that Black music mattered in profound ways, its importance driving the creation of a veritable lexicon of metaphysical associations mapping extremes of reification and fetishism: if Black music were a ghostly "dead" form, its enlivened character could also quicken the emotions and lift the soul.

These common articulations of truth were true enough for those making and embracing them, their disparate signatures a ready indication of Black music's contested character. As interpretations of value, however, they remain inadequate because they do not explain where Black music's qualities of aliveness come from, nor do they identify the productive processes from which Black music's less-than/greater-than double character developed. As Du Bois shows, what Black music presents most revealingly is not just a set of meanings attached to its phenomenal sonic surface, but a material basis of inspired living arising dialectically from the economic anomalies of sound production. Truth in its primary, negative form—a "truth-content" according to Theodor W. Adorno's negative dialectics—identifies the effect of the racial-economic contradiction orienting the production of value: the paradox of a human property owning an alienable property of sound, whose audible character gains social significance by remaining inalienably connected to Black being.

This primary, structuring truth would typically remain mute while its superficial auditions of aliveness succumbed to the vagaries of representation. As Black music evolved, however, discerning musicians and critics began to echo Du Bois as they too gained a sense of the material processes by which Black music's phenomenal power was made. Across the long modern period, a rich and elaborate commentary developed that variously sought to reproduce in language the music's audible flashes of revelation—as Max Pensky suggests in his elaboration on Adornian truth content, a "nonconceptual mode of aesthetic expression . . . [that] remains off-limits as an option for cognition in a totally administered world"—exposing the singular cultural logic behind the making of Black music's fleshy retentions of animated substance. They help us now to map the various imaginations of truth written over the racial-economic contradictions of valuation.[19]

The sensation of Black music's primary truth, then, begins with the audible recognition of the structural conditions generating value. What is truthful materially is the contradiction immanent in the music's form: the racial-economic relation enabling sounding practices of African American

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performers to leave the body and enter exchange, only to return after having been enriched by musical reinvention and the accumulation of social meaning. In this way, racialized sounding practices intensify Black music's qualities of aliveness, by which listening communities bring sound into meaning, with many perceiving its uncanny animatedness as a profound affective force. Those identifying the productive basis of its enlivening of the sensory array come closest to comprehending the primary basis of truth's structuring: they recognize music's social power developing within and beyond its common mystification. And out of the cycle of production, dissemination, and return—it is a cycle because it never resolves and thus endlessly repeats—Black music's auditory expressions become the focus of a racial struggle of ownership as the dissemination and retention of animated sounding practices inspire the creation of a complex web of claimed meaning. The sound forms of Black music bring into being, as in Fumi Okiji's Adornian formulation (her focus being on jazz), an extension of "black life . . . as critical reflection," the music itself being "capable of reflecting critically on the contradictions from which it arises."[20]

Beneath the audible surfaces of Black enlivened sound has resided a productive process relating to the enduring legacy of White supremacy. According to this process, the music's structural anomalies endlessly repeat the tragedy of slavery as an unfolding of its unresolvable contradictory character. Cast in the negative relations of production, this primary structuring truth, inspiring so many aspirational truths, is why Black music would always remain Black. What Du Bois—in an effort to convey the freed people's own conception of truth "in word and in thought"—called "the wild truth" of emancipated voices spoke to a larger reality, to the ability of an unruly class of labor to create enlivened sound out of "the dross of its dung." The invention of Black music materializes not as a truth solely shaped in meaning but as a truth built on the contradiction of its double character, as an outward manifestation of value. What accumulates in value as part of Black music's nearly two-hundred-year history reveals a truth proceeding doubly, moving forward progressively and backward in contrary motion, having been constituted in the enduring reality of racial injustice.

Over the course of Black music's history, America would be repeatedly confronted with the music's truth as a contradiction in form, its anomalies typically translated into positive resolutions that masked what was partial, ambiguous, unresolved. The production of Black music value resides not in positivity but in the paradox of a negative relation by which what seems less becomes ever more. Created from the tragedy of loss, Black music's

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sounding practices introduced a new kind of profit, a new kind of value, its outward and inward cycling within commercial markets accumulating over time as a series of *coalescences* of enlivened sound. Truth's endurance in the negative would drive a cascade of styles, whose perpetual decoupling from the productive processes situated in labor advanced the sensation of a fetishized spectral aurality. If the secondary truths listeners perceived in Black music's aliveness were inevitably partial, commonly playing to the order of the color line and wholly responsive to surface phenomena, so would they reaffirm the underlying generative force of value production: the peculiarity of enlivened sound developed as an enduring symptom of the formal contradictions of race that sustained Black music's back-and-forth circulation and expansion. What was partially true indicated in its falsehood the negative basis of value production, to be discerned beneath the surface appearances of what seemed to be sonorously living.

By the time that Du Bois published *The Gift of Black Folk* and *Black Reconstruction in America*, such claims of truth were being widely celebrated throughout the world. So influential had US Black music become that it inspired Du Bois to describe it as a generous "gift, . . . one of the greatest that the Negro has made to American nationality." This audible gift, given the name "Negro music," was not merely a bestowal of aesthetic pleasure but a reciprocally minded offering carrying the expectation of something in return. It sought back from America a social transformation, an enduring "spectacular revolution" that might someday realize a just and equal world.[21] Brought into being from the tragedy of exploited labor, the gift of Black music proposed, in its material attachment to the superfluity of audible Black bodies, the existence of a different version of productive economy and a different conception of everyday temporal order. It would be a revision of what Marx called "socially necessary labor-time" that consistently challenged the seminal forces of modern capital outlined in *Black Reconstruction*: the South's "organized monarchy of finance" and the "triumphant industry in the North." A lowly worker marked thingly and "lazy" by White property owners had introduced into the United States a productive process whose unresolvable contradictions in form generated phenomenal anomalies of sound: a counterhistory that instigated imaginings of what in life was possible, of what would be right and true.[22] In the reproduction of these anomalies, Black music has continually replayed America's racial contest, the conflicting world perspectives of Black and White cast as a struggle to claim an elusive property according to the symbols and stories that people have attached to it. What appears alive in the sound brings to

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the surface an evolving manifestation of the generative processes of value-making, whose spectral character issues forth into the world as the audible "ghost of modernity."[23]

## PECULIAR ANATOMIES

I've lingered over Du Bois's elaboration on the African American worker at the outset because it calls attention to a vital relation in Black music operating at the deepest logical and structural levels. His observations help us to recognize how the contradiction inherent to Black music's constitution as a contested property was fundamental to its development of value and how that same contradiction continues to play a critical role in the making of American racial identification. Although contemporary scholars routinely acknowledge Black music's significance as a powerful aesthetic expression, and public figures and political leaders champion its national and racial significance, there has been nonetheless a widespread misapprehension of how Black music actually participates in economic processes and how that participation has generated value-based constraints producing the uncanny sensation of aliveness—"uncanny" in the sense of an "intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not."[24] Despite the impassioned claims about Black music's importance in American life, together with the vigorous assertions that it embodies qualities of authenticity and realness—an audible truth depicted as spirit, feeling, soul—the material conditions underlying the source and persistence of its peculiarly enlivened character have remained remarkably underanalyzed. In fact, it seems fair to say that we are still in a kind of guessing game regarding the music's character of aliveness and the many peculiar presences it engenders. Although there is no paucity of claims about why Black music is profoundly important within particular communities—whether they be defined racially, as the "Black community," socially, as listening cultures dedicated to jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, hip-hop, etc., or nationally, according to the broad, deracinated category of (a majority-White) "American society"—these claims rarely seek to consider in an overarching way how the various interpretations of its uncanny qualities relate to each other. By and large, scholars either ignore or fail to recognize the many entangled involvements of valuation operating on multiple levels, which, I will contend, all participate within a dynamic that is at once racial and capitalist, what Cedric Robinson has described as a world economic system of "racial

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capitalism." And because we do not understand how value is generated, we still do not, in a certain way, know what Black music is.[25]

At the heart of the problem is the mistaken assumption, reaching across the ideological spectrum of scholarship and popular criticism, that Black music is simply another version of Music. My own historical research suggests that it is not. By making this assertion, I do not mean to deny Black music's many commonalities with other kinds of music or to downplay its extraordinary importance among diverse populations, both in the United States and worldwide. Rather, I aim to do exactly the opposite: to bring to attention how Black music's affective qualities of aliveness indicate a fundamental difference in its constitution as a cultural practice, which traces to its growth of a double character across wide stretches of time and place. The historical denigration of Black music as an abject, negative form appearing alongside its extravagant celebration as "the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas" gives a pretty good indication that we are dealing with something different from the common, auditory object form named "Music." For what is Music, after all, if not a creation arising from a particular historical moment and set of social circumstances, its prolific articulations cast provincially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries according to an assembly of ideas consistent with what would become Modern Europe's own "enlightened" self-understanding and then transposed outwardly across the hemispheres and into territories of the variously visited, colonized, and conquered?[26] In its exalted status as an art form in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—a status fueled by the heightened capitalization of the arts—Music came to inhabit multiple arenas of public life, its principal identification with the cultural elite extending into the worlds of the popular and the vernacular. During this time, Music has been frequently associated with social and political movements, commonly portrayed in the context of pop as an aesthetic expression antagonistic to institutional forces of domination, particularly those controlling the ownership and distribution of art. Yet the enduring perception of Music as an aestheticized object form has also made it appear to be largely decontextualized from the material conditions of the political-economic. It is indeed in its perceived qualities of absoluteness, as an ineffable entity that does not refer to anything outside itself, that Music is thought to locate its transformative powers of expression.[27]

Black music, by contrast, emerges out of a wholly different social and material environment, having been first constituted within an economic matrix specific to the time and place of US slavery and to the

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slaves' principal status as beings-in-labor. (Despite the prior existence of African sound forms, Black music as Negro music becomes a recognizable social practice—is socially constituted—in the late antebellum South.) It is a unique cultural phenomenon in its own right, a form that, despite its bountiful celebration over the course of its history, consistently assumes the position of the negative; in comparison with Music, it is diminished by its racial qualification as "Black." Yet, as we have seen already with the sorrow songs, it is from its status as a negative outgrowth of an inferior species of humanity that Black music acquired its hyperpositive qualities of aliveness. This ironic double tendency of a negative turning into a hyperpositive, of something less than Music transforming into something greater, developed out of the racial contests of ownership that enabled slave music to acquire economically generated value. In its accumulation, value in Black music became perpetually enriched, the contradictions within its institutional associations and social conception as a doubled aesthetic presence (as a legal property, a racial property, a commodity, a carrier of cultural and aesthetic meaning) linking materially to its anomalies of enlivened form. For this reason, arguments seeking to redirect critical attention in celebration of Black music's putative likeness to European musical inventions—a position commonplace in jazz studies but also pervasive across criticism of nearly all twentieth- and twenty-first-century Black genres—inadvertently undermine the understanding of how Black music's exceptional cultural presence accrues from the anomaly of a slave owning an audible property of its own. Above all, they leave unattended the fundamental matter of how Black music's evolution as a peculiar form of labor is itself indicative of a foundational economic struggle consistent with wider conflicts in the racial production of knowledge in the United States.[28]

Consider, for example, the conventional view of Black music's origins during the antebellum era. While it is not uncommon for historians in various disciplines to acknowledge the music's emergence as an important force of resistance under slavery, they have by and large assumed those qualities to operate principally at the level of the aesthetic, as in the frequently romanticized portrayal of the slave songs as spiritual "songs of protest." Having been granted the elevated status of Music, the songs correspondingly diminish in significance, being denied a purposeful role in political and economic development.[29] Indeed, such evening out of sound-based phenomenological orders—narrating Black music as a purely musical form, whose semiotic potential could only reflect, and thus be contained within, a common, southern experience—has tended to co-opt Black

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musical particularity, narrowly representing it as a minoritarian cultural practice existing largely outside of capitalized processes while also staying comfortably situated within an otherwise stable and coherent social reality. A similar tendency has informed historical studies of Black music as it developed across the twentieth century. When music scholars celebrate Black music's soulful qualities according to the exclusive terms of Music, they sacrifice comprehension of its strange capacities as a value form. While giving important attention to African American musicians and musical achievements, their presumption that Black music is just another kind of Music tends to leave unanswered fundamental questions about how its uncanny sensations of aliveness came into being. Black music accordingly remains burdened by the claims of its equivalence to the unqualified form, Music, even as its qualifying markers, "popular" and "Black," betray enduring public skepticism across the White majority about its status as a wholly legitimate, artistic expression.[30]

Literary and cultural critics, meanwhile, have generally done a better job of analyzing the disruptive performativity of Black music, both as a practice of the enslaved and as a postemancipation cultural expression. Their means of interpretation have opened up new ways of comprehending Black music's processes of creation and its relationship to the precariousness of modern, Black subject formation.[31] And yet there has also been a tendency across Black literary and cultural studies—its influence extending into musicological criticism—to interpret Black music performance from the time of slavery to the present as a kind of static, musical indigeneity, a radical alterity whose aesthetic value, while perhaps arising from the economic conditions of the nation-state, also purportedly remains qualitatively distinguished from the complex social history that brought Black music into public knowledge. Here, at times, too, Black music conforms to an aesthetic object form, even if matters of labor and social context are highlighted. Despite frequently acknowledging its deep connection to the relations of production, and particularly to the struggle of labor against capital, Black music expression in these depictions seems always to abide by the norms of conventional musical understanding. Accordingly, as Black music proceeded to develop, it would appear to endure in its separability, in the consistency of an affirmative sonic blackness. Value, in the end, would seem to arise not because of, but in spite of, Black music's basis in the anomalies of labor. Even in its more precise critical depictions, where, for example, Black music is perceived as a radical performance practice unobservant of conventional fixities in form—the aesthetic phenomenon

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that Fred Moten locates "in the break"—the idea that the accumulation of value could somehow precede the material conditions of racial economy verges on mystification, implying an inviolable alternative that is ironically suggestive of the ineffable qualities associated with the European category of Absolute Music.[32]

The common opinion that Black music is categorically equivalent to Music has given rise to a public understanding that affirms its routine situatedness within the realm of art and encourages explanations of value deriving directly from its phenomenal qualities and character. This returns us once again to the relation of value to listeners' and musicians' deeply held views about what one can actually hear in it, to what may be characterized as a distinction between value and meaning. The comprehension of Black music as a type of Music has created the impression that the affective meanings and indexes that listeners discern (what a music "sounds like") correspond directly to its valuation, despite the lack of an explanation about how these two orders, meaning and value, are formally related. A public-radio guide for broadcasters, for example, suggests that the "qualities of craft" in jazz join with "qualities of heart/spirit" in identifying the music's "core values." The late composer, Olly Wilson, goes further, arguing that "the empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports the notion that there is indeed a distinct set of musical qualities which are an expression of the cultural values of peoples of African descent."[33] It stands to reason that what music is thought to *sound like*, to mean, should be somehow connected to its value. In fact, the idea of locating a macro-level valuative basis for cultural expression operating at the micro-level has been a central aspiration in the study of value across the social sciences for over a hundred years.[34] But a casual consideration of value's relation to meaning may falsely suggest that they are basically the same thing: what is valuable seems meaningful, what is meaningful, valued. Such a posture does not help if, say, we want to unpack the value-meaning complexity that orients Duke Ellington's defiant challenge to the critical category of jazz, "I am not playing jazz, I am trying to play the natural feelings of a people."[35]

If we are to explore potential linkages between the concepts of meaning and value in their relation to Black music, then it seems critical, as a first step, to distinguish the larger valuative claims from the words that listeners put to the musical sounds they hear. For it is, after all (and despite Wilson's claims otherwise), something of a leap of faith to suggest that the way Black music sounds is directly connected to the way value accrues. To address this problem, I'll be making a basic distinction, designating, on

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one hand, what Wilson names the "expression" that listeners recognize as a category of meaning. Value, on the other hand, is a racial-economic structuring built on the unresolvable contests of music ownership that, in involving a complex of auditory and nonauditory dimensions, produces over time an accumulation of seemingly enlivened sounding practices. Grounded in fundamental, social asymmetries underlying racial hierarchy, value in Black music is structured doubly, its negative and hyperpositive axes being consistent with its generative basis in racial contradiction. And in this way, it sets constraints for the making of meaningful musical experiences. Let's look at this distinction more closely, elaborating on the observations introduced earlier.

"Meaning," as I employ it here, is the assembly of discourses, broadly construed as metaphorical, that propose a particular signifying capacity attendant in aestheticized, musical expression.[36] Depictions of meaning often imply direct communication and precise symbolism, asserting that Black music possesses the ability to express tangible ideas and qualities of understanding. Commonly, such interpretations respond to surface appearances, to the phenomenal qualities of Black sound, which inspire among the music's listeners a host of associations and emotional responses—stories about themselves or, among those outside the African American community, about Black people. In the 1870s and 1880s, for example, White journalists, in their characterizations of various Black professional performances, noted hearing a gleeful insouciance and effortless virtuosity that was thought to reflect the unthinking natural ability among those of African descent. Reporters writing about jazz in the 1920s frequently employed metaphors conjuring the sensation of chaos as a way of encouraging White consumers to associate Black sound with a debased racial character. As African American observers became more involved in shaping Black music's public discourse, moreover, depictions changed, with new attention paid to how slavery's tragic afterlife affected the perception of "Negro" sound. Thematic references to sorrow and tragedy noted by, among others, Frederick Douglass ("the songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart") and W. E. B. Du Bois ("the soul beauty of a race which [the black artist's] larger audience despised") joined an assembly of conceits, from the lowly (protest, resistance, struggle) to the uplifting (spirit and soul, but also joy, ecstasy, pleasure, freedom), as part of a grand mapping of affect and emotion.[37] The condition of tragedy materialized in Black music's contradictory, double character became the basis for imagining meaning and discerning in its sound qualities of positive truth.

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"Value," in contrast, describes the accumulation of economic, aesthetic, and cultural profit that accrues from abstract, social processes—that is, being largely unrecognized, as a structural causality—and drives the production of anomalous forms. Accumulation begins in economic exchange, when sounding practices performed by Black music laborers enter commercial markets, as those same practices, thought to be racially inalienable, remain inextricably attached to and under the possession of the musicians themselves.[38] This fundamental paradox underlies the racialized sensation of aliveness, driving efforts by White performers, consumers, and institutions to obtain it. The struggle for ownership becomes ideologically bound to the assertion and maintenance of Whiteness: White actors seek to reclaim a cultural and economic property conceived in the national imagination to be legally theirs. Essential, racialized sound inspired efforts to reclaim rather than claim Negro music because Black people never held the legitimate right to own property or to define the culture of a White nation. As a result, the perpetual failure on the part of White musicians, consumers, and institutions to completely incorporate and embody Black sounding practices—perpetual, because for it to succeed would require the end of racial distinction—repeatedly intensified the music's inalienable qualities, driving the production of more value.

The accumulation of value, then, begins with the creation of racially animated sound arising from the forces of injustice, its makers' monetary losses converting into profits measured in the form of an animatedness that would grow as multiple profits-from-loss. This is what realizes "profit" in the negative and inspires positive affirmations of Black music; it is an outcome of Du Bois's "spectacular revolution" appearing against the tragedy of slavery and what he calls the rapaciousness of White society's "orgy of theft." Among its failed possessors and creators alike, profit-from-loss becomes an invitation to explore what may be meaningfully imagined in Black musical sound. Across the music's history, this primary relation would serve as an abstraction of perpetual conflict, a way of conceiving profit from the expropriation of Black music's cumulative body of creation, or "sonic material." In the contradictory process producing value, Black music reveals its racial becoming.[39]

In this sense, Black music value carries materially a moral compass as a form built on the asymmetries of injustice as it also exceeds them. And to this extent, it becomes an orientation for the making of meaning; the structural anomalies of contested ownership producing perceptible qualities of enlivened sound set the constraints of interpretation, even as the actualities of

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meaningful musical experience appear potentially limitless. Analytically, we can separate them this way: in the constitution of Black music, value comes first. Whereas one might think of meaning as a kind of discursive surface or parole consistent with commodity fetishism, Black music value is a labor-generated quality, a material-based langue operating underneath, even as its force as a structure shows up solely in Black music's many concrete appearances. If this underlying "structuring structure" carries in its disjunctive and contradictory form the conditions for aurally imagining tragedy and injustice, it is not in itself a directive on how one listens or an indication of what Black music ultimately signifies. Meaning may articulate to the aspects of form that carry and sustain it, but the phenomenal experience of Black music remains open. In itself, Black music says nothing, being akin to what Nicholas Cook calls in his discussion of meaning in musical works, "unstable aggregates of potential significance."[40]

Making an analytical distinction between meaning and value is not meant to suggest that meaning is unimportant. On the contrary, as it is derived from musical experience, meaning is dialectically involved in value's formation; it would be a mistake to frame meaning outside of value's production or to reduce value to a conventional Marxian understanding of economic base. In fact, the most influential metaphors are what inspire meaningful interpretation across the musical landscape, from spirit communication in Kaluli gisalo singing (the act of "lift-up-over-sounding") to the congregational experience of "sounding sacramentality" in contemporary Black gospel.[41] Meaning and value develop relationally, particularly at the point when Black music enters national markets, the accelerated exchanges reorganizing popular music's stylistic development. For example, around the turn of the twentieth century, a cluster of popular meanings associated with fantasies about the primitive began to articulate to those qualities of Black sound that seemed most peculiar and distinctive: improvisation, deviations from tempered pitch, timbral effects, and above all, consistent use of syncopation propelled by a propulsive beat. The coalescence of sound and idea redirected Black music's commercial production, which in turn fundamentally transformed the larger character of American pop, just as Black music's sonic material also underwent a qualitative change. Music formations coalescing at that moment became associated with fantastic notions about Black people and their thingly appearances on recordings, informing the making of a vast rhythmic-meaning complex, a veritable *beat knowledge*—a way of knowing and responding to new notions of "beat."[42] This knowledge would inform musical performance across the

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racial divide, setting up a meaning-to-value relation generating experiences of multiple, positive truths.

As important as meanings are in comprehending the formation of value, however, they alone cannot determine the character of musical experience, nor can they substitute for the primary material truth that value reveals. Interpretations of meaning typically develop as a response to Black music's enlivened character rather than as an explanation of it. Accordingly, they tend to conflate meaning with value, as Wilson did; they are not adequate analytics in themselves. Meanings alone, for example, do not reveal why Black music, while consistently marginalized from the popular mainstream, has supplied for well over a century the primary aesthetic impulse in the development of American popular style. Nor can meaning tell us why Black forms acquire greater and greater racial coherence as they become more and more available in commercial markets—why they appear progressively *Blacker* over the course of Black music's history. Meanings remain limited in the analysis of Black music value because they are not directly bound to the productive process generating forms that are paradoxically fungible and inalienable. Critics content to focus on meaning in itself often seem to assume that Black music's qualities of aliveness have always existed, naturally and mysteriously animating a music in ways akin to the commodity's fetishized relation to labor-based production. If we are to understand how these uncanny appearances were first constituted and then developed over time, it will require stepping away from the claims about precise signification and becoming attentive to value as an economically driven cultural logic.

There is, ultimately, a bottom-line reason why we can't locate value solely in the meanings attached to musical experience. This has to do with music's limitations as a signifying practice. As a vast body of musicological, philosophical, and linguistic-anthropological scholarship has shown, it is beyond the ability of any kind of music, Black music or otherwise, to sustain precise meaning across a listening community.[43] "Music," Susanne Langer famously writes, "*is an unconsummated symbol*. Articulation is its life, but not assertion; expressiveness, not expression." Musical signs, the music theorist Naomi Cumming explains in her important book *The Sonic Self*, "belong to a class of interpreted relationships, which present an object of signification, without either pointing to a definite state of affairs [i.e., a specifiable meaning], or making a statement about it." As Jairo Moreno puts it succinctly in his illuminating assessment of Cumming's work, "Musical signs require verbal mediation." They are, as Adorno calls them,

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"second hand semiotic objects" from which a kaleidoscope of meaningful experience accrues.[44]

These theoretical insights are instructive. They reveal that listeners do not uniformly share a common aural experience, even if they happen to agree on the same language to describe what they hear. Nor, for that matter, will any single listener consistently discern a set of musical signs in precisely the same way, time after time. Musical experience cannot be rendered consistently; it is not as if listeners can expect to have exactly the same engagement with music, on repeat. The same might be said about any aesthetic experience, but it is doubly so for music. This is because music is not a coherent and reliable semiotic system beyond the workings of its own nonlinguistic grammar; it is not possible to interpret musical meaning as one would read a text. (Herein lies the reason why analyses of lyrics in pop songs routinely fail to convey music's affective power.) On the contrary, it is ironically from music's limitations as a system of signification that its aesthetic and social importance develop. In its nebulous relationship to spoken language, music achieves great communicative effect, its density of ambiguous signs inviting a complex cohering of imagining and feeling. Steven Feld, in a now classic essay, describes musical experience as a "special kind of 'feelingful' activity and engagement" that comes forth for listeners during a performance out of the "generality and multiplicity of possible messages and interpretations." From its phenomenal condensation of affective symbolism, music produces a "form of pleasure that unites the material and mental dimensions of musical experience as fully embodied."[45]

Black music shares with other kinds of music these same capacities and limitations of signification, just as its affective power derives from a condensation of symbolism, producing forms of pleasure. If it conjures imaginations of sorrow, pain, and jubilation, if it inspires the spectacular sensations of ecstasy, belonging, and positive truth, it does so according to the semiotic limitations of music; it can only communicate fleetingly as listeners will their ideas upon its phenomenal surface. What distinguishes Black music from the greater corpus of musical expression, however, is also what enables such extremes of meaning to articulate to sound. Having been constituted under slave capitalism, it brought into the world a contradiction in form, its peculiarly animated sensations setting constraints in the formation of meaning. Over time, as Black music began showing up in popular entertainment markets, listening publics imposed onto its fleshy sounds the norms of conventional Music in an attempt to tame it and

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make it resemble other kinds of popular musical diversion. In the process, Black music assumed its incongruous position as a popular form simultaneously at the center and on the margins of public life.

If Black music had not entered the commercial economy, it would never have developed its vast complex of value; it would never have become available for listeners to imagine it as part of a collective experience. At the same time, the public dissemination of Black music also invited consumers to overwrite its valuative production according to a set of emerging tropes that were thought to explain its racial authenticity and uncanny animated character. These attempts to retrofit Black music into Music's conventional understanding—as part of what Eric Lott has called "a profound White investment in Black culture"—could only bring greater attention to its economically and racially conceived qualities of inalienable labor, which further compromised attempts of incorporation.[46] Distance inspired appeal, driving a broad, ideological commitment in majority-White public contexts to possess the enlivened properties of Black music, while African American communities, newly motivated to embrace an increasingly valuable cultural property, found its embrace publicly affirmed. And so, as Black music would be "condemned to meaning," the underlying productive processes generating value were obscured beyond the surface qualities of aliveness.[47] These surfaces seemed to speak like the commodities to which they were attached, even as Black music itself had nothing directly to say. "Since time immemorial," Adorno writes, "human reactions to artworks have been mediated to their utmost and do not refer immediately to the [art] object. . . . Interest in the social decipherment of art must [therefore] orient itself to production rather than being content with the study and classification of its effects."[48]

Sorting out how Black music sets constraints for the making of meaning begins by becoming attentive to its productive basis as an anomalous labor form. Appearances of aliveness first occur with Black music's constitution as a property-of-property, by which it introduced across public culture sonic substantiations of animated presence: sensations of animatedness were part and parcel of its double character as something less than and greater than Music. And as Black music proceeded to develop over the course of the decades, its peculiar conditions of valuation ultimately revealed its basis in not one, but two, incongruent economies, each with its own temporal orientation. In the first, an economy bound by race, Black music's exchange moved inwardly, intensively, the development of style driven by free music laborers and unpaid musicians performing within

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a diversity of African American lifeworlds. If intensive exchange would always be racially porous because of the many occasions in which Black musicians performed for White people, so would it be perceived as racially specific, as affirmatively Black. In the second, an economy defined by capital, music exchange was transacted extensively, developing according to the function of commercial enterprise and the clock-time efficiencies of the working day. In this circumstance, Black music actively participated in majority-White entertainment markets, circulating freely as it was presented by a new labor force of African American musicians.[49]

The dynamic of race to capital (identified henceforth as race-capital) would set the parameters of Black music's unique progression as a value form. What was learned by Black musicians performing within capitalist exchange subsequently informed the internal, aesthetic workings of Black entertainment economies, as style practices and forms were reconceived and refashioned. These changed dynamics would then cycle back once more into popular markets, where they would undergo further revision. The cyclical pattern regulated the expansion of Black music's sonic material, giving shape to an aurally centered "counterhistory that is born of the story of race. . . . speak[ing] from the side that is in darkness, from within the shadows."[50] It is a storyless story arising from the material truth of value's production. Black music's double economy of race-capital functioned as an incongruent structure involving two profoundly different measures of transaction, two separate spheres of value-making, the music's evolution as a binary relation mirroring not only the fundamental, racial dichotomy of Black and White but also the dual character of the commodity form. In their entanglement—an interplay of use and exchange different from the classical Marxian position that advocates their complete separation—Black music's twin spheres moved ahead as they repeatedly traced back in contrary motion to the music's origin as an anomalous creation of "lazy" slave labor.[51]

In his influential theory of the "changing same," initially formulated as part of his groundbreaking history *Blues People*, Amiri Baraka described a similar kind of double-sided cyclicity by which value emerged. For Baraka, Black music value developed out of an unresolvable struggle for ownership between capital and labor, between White-controlled institutions and the creative lives of Black working poor: those free people of color who forever carried the enslaved's burden as an unsovereign subject, as "Non-American." The history of Black music, Baraka contended, followed the logic of this struggle, progressing as a series of "definite stages" whose

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stylistic "transmutation" represented "in microcosm . . . the Negro's transmutation from Africa" to the "Negro American."[52]

Unlike the status of race in the relation of race-capital, however, sameness in Baraka's conception—which for him established the basis of the music's value—was neither consistently dialectical nor racial. Despite its presence in the ongoing struggle between Black and White, what was the "same"—congruent with the intellectual currency of the moment—remained monolithically African in spirit, having undergone initial transformations in early slave culture. In musical terms, even as the "same" evolved stylistically, or "formally," as Baraka described it, it stayed fixed in substance, being an essential, African "vitality, . . . [a] nonmaterial . . . value . . . the one vector out of African culture impossible to eradicate."[53] In working from this position, Baraka paid little attention to how the intensive economy within African American communities continually remade Black music practices as part of its dialectical relation to capital. He disregarded how the sameness of Black-generated stylistic practices representing the purportedly stable portion of the "changing same" was itself a product of a prior relational development. In retaining their putative sameness, stylistic practices repeatedly cycled outward into the world, where they gained new social and economic value. From there, they traveled inward, bringing back home a style enriched with new value, the back-and-forth movements reaffirming racial intensity while also reshaping Black music and the greater character of US popular music.[54]

The perpetual returns of Black music practices into Black-centered intensive economies were critical to the formation of value. What returned reinforced the music's racialized appearance as an inalienable possession, which enabled African Americans to assert and reassert their claims of ownership.[55] To this extent, rather than entirely compromising Black music value, as Baraka assumed, the unresolvable, dialectical interplay of race-capital paradoxically intensified the music's enlivened appearance, even as its sonic material routinely evolved, drawing from the language and forms of White-majority popular and vernacular musics.[56] Yet at the same time, public valuation of Black sound also had an economically devaluing effect, its increased availability making it subject to claim by White musicians and consumers who sought to possess—to make alienable—what was thought to be Black music's inalienable qualities of enlivened spirit. The repeated efforts on the part of White musicians and White-dominated entertainment institutions to control Black music, to shift monetary value away from Black-owned capital, would compromise Black people's own assertions of

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exclusive ownership, affirming the tragic tendency of profit-from-loss running across the history of Black music's valuation.

For Black musicians and communities, value has accrued from the repetition of botched attempts by White-controlled institutions to claim from Black music that which is never fully claimable. Such attempts, which must always fail, nonetheless create for White capital an accumulation of commercial profit, which heightens Black music's tragic status in exchange markets. What Black musicians ultimately gain is a profit in the negative: the continual losses of economic and aesthetic control and capital-driven profit generate another kind of profit in the intensification of what in Black music is deemed inalienable, alive, true. The repetition of profit-from-loss reveals a primary tendency in Black music's productive growth, which drives a process of unfolding and infolding of sonic material as part of the relational interplay of race-capital. In the asymmetrical involvements of Black to White, a property-in-difference is obtained. If the conflict were somehow to resolve, the music's unique cultural status would collapse.

It is not, then, in an exclusive ontological separability where Black music's value develops but in its anomalous constitution as the original cultural property of a property-in-slaves. Here, Black music reveals its epistemic radicalism based in the racial-economic: it produces a qualitatively different kind of auditory knowledge and temporal experience arising contestably out of the structures of capitalism itself. This inner radicalism developed directly out of the contradictory relation of race-capital, whereby Black music acquired its strange public presence. As a result of the unresolved social and economic contradictions originally introduced into exchange under slavery, Black music repeatedly realized its exceptional qualities of embodied aliveness, its fetishized appearances motivating White consumers' incessant attempts to claim what was inalienable and racially bound to Black ownership. Aliveness in Black sound would emerge as African America's dialectically generated, creative engine, a contradictory, negative center consistent with Du Bois's portrayal of Black labor. In its accumulation of contradictory properties, Black music proposed a contentless shadow story, a "mute music" of contest and becoming, its primary truth materialized in forms cast in the negative. The centrality of music performance in the affirmation and assertion of African American culture would become so powerful, so everlasting, that it would rewrite the conventions of US history, bringing into public knowledge proletarian-centered sensibilities informed by the double character of Black music.[57]

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Celebrating the political force of Black sound at the moment of slavery's defeat, Du Bois draws our attention to the social and aesthetic implications of an insider culture dubiously interacting with a greater world economy. He shows us how the seminal conflict between White capital and Black labor brought about new aesthetic forms conceived in the contradiction of a double relation, "distilled from the dross of its dung." If Du Bois, in upholding a nineteenth-century understanding of art and aesthetics, believed music to directly express meaning, he was also the first to identify how value accrued, recognizing how the qualities of "Negro spirit" that were thought to be alive in the sound of Black music developed from the material conditions of economic struggle, producing an unresolvable form to which meanings adhered.[58] Steadfast in his critique of Black popular entertainment, Du Bois remained nonetheless committed to modern social thought, the virtuosity of his dialectical materialism (above all, his conception of a Black proletariat and famous theory of "double consciousness") inspiring later critics—Baraka, Ralph Ellison, Houston A. Baker Jr., and Paul Gilroy, among them—to fashion their own views of Black music's evolution.[59]

But Du Bois also helps us to recognize another dimension that is critical to the generation of Black music value. For this, recall from the opening of this introduction his discussion of the unruly character of southern Black work life, where slave sounding practices evolved as part of a labor form "not as easily reduced to be the mechanical draft-horse which the northern European labor became." This is the point at which he locates the inspiration for Black labor not only in the work relations among slaves, but also arising from somewhere external to US slave society, "out of an age long past." For Du Bois, for whom "a sense of history informs nearly everything [he] wrote," the slaves' inspiration derived from another place, from where they inherited a "tropical, . . . sensuous receptivity to the beauty of the world" that sustained them in finding "spiritual returns adequate."[60] Du Bois's words are suggestive of a different locus of value accumulating in the production of "Negro" sound that, while participating and changing in the dueling economies of race-capital, did not require full interaction with that economic relation to sustain an informing presence. Instead, it enriched the sensation of enlivened sound by imparting qualities tracing from a recessive knowledge, from what may be thought of as an affective way of knowing that reaches back before and outside the time of capitalism,

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which, in its dialectically bound participation within the economy of slavery, frequently coupled with metaphysical beliefs in the spirit world or in Christianity. Conspicuous in southern Black life at the end of the slave era, this back-leaning affective relation assumed a presence in Du Bois's vivid metaphorical display in which he sought to capture the sensation of the Apocalypse heard in "the loveliest thing born this side the seas."

As it emerged from the depths of slavery as a supplemental energy attached to Black music, this third valuative relation born in the past would intensify the temporal and spatial energies sustaining the music's enlivened character. It enabled Black southerners to claim possession of Black music's fleshy qualities by which they conceived connections between racialized sound and a broadly imagined realm, otherworldly and "long past." Into the modern, this same quality would be subjected to economically driven fetishisms, as Black music entered the universe of racialized symbolism and participated in interpretations sustaining institutional efforts to incorporate Black music into a mythic national whole. Yet, this sensation also articulated to another kind of fetishism drawn from the first European encounters with Africa, which upheld Black music's incongruent character. These latter fetishisms inspired listeners to recognize how aliveness was not part of a common whole but rather structured negatively in contradiction to capitalism's incorporating tendencies. It is these mediated attachments to the past that affirmed Black music's enlivened character and enabled means of contemplating a variety of imaginings in line with the structural contradictions underlying valuation. We may think of this temporally disruptive sensation as past-time and its fetishized renderings and misreadings as diverting pastimes to which past-time remained dialectically connected.[61]

Past-time, as a sensation, comes about from a backward turn, an about-face imagining of an order of cultural knowledge antecedent to capitalism—"imagining," because its access is changing, dynamic, depending necessarily on its mediation and fetishization—that was first constituted under capitalism as part of the slaves' reinvention of labor. In its refusal of what Marx called "real subsumption" by capital, past-time identified within the field of the enslaved people's sounding practices a conceptualizing territory, a means of calling beyond to prior worlds that became influential in the affective complexities of Black secular and Christian musical performance.[62] Past-time afforded a way of comprehending what many performers and listeners during the time of slavery and into the modern era believed to be historically, socially, and metaphysically

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expansive in the sonic substance of Black music. The sounds aligning with Black pasts, while participating in commercial markets, introduced a disjunctively heightened feeling, seemingly anterior to and beyond the present day and connecting to a realm of knowledge that exceeded economic constraints otherwise generating audible property. As a phenomenological terrain, moreover, past-time aligns with Baraka's conception of Black music as something conceptually "Non-American": it is at once epistemically external to the norms of American Music and critical to Black music's racial character.[63] Musically evocative of an incongruous temporality, past-time brought forward "the form of a figure from the past now activated in the present that confers historical status on it but also announces the 'presence' of the past in the present." Its historical disjunctiveness would be available for African Americans to claim and possess and for all listeners across racial category to discern. Past-time proposed during slavery and, in its continual metamorphoses, still proposes today an understanding of Black music as an accumulation of affective knowledge residing in the material production of enlivened sound. It interlinks contested pasts and presents as part of the music's counterhistory, consistent with Harry Harootunian's sense of "the present [as] the crowding of differing historical times, which marks the modern from the presents of prior pasts."[64]

Past-time accordingly identifies an affective orientation first existing within the auditory cultures of the enslaved that proceeded to develop incongruently in relation to White power. Phenomenologically, it is consistent with what Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler characterized as the "archaic" nature of listening in the way that "the human ear has not adapted itself to the bourgeois rational and, ultimately highly industrialized order as readily as the eye, which has become accustomed to conceiving reality as made up of separate things, commodities."[65] As an analytical tool, moreover, past-time offers a way of comprehending the sonically induced sensation of divergent pasts and temporal realms in excess of everyday experience, all cohering, unfolding, and infolding as part of a dynamic, audible present. In this respect it participates in the formation of value and meaning by intensifying qualities of aliveness. Evoking prior sensory realms, past-time imparts an affect that is at once distensible and disjunctive: it invites uncanny experiences constituted under capitalism that carry power to simultaneously expand and disrupt conventional sensations of time and place. In its accumulation, it magnifies the spectral immediacy of Black sound, revealing multiple, embodied past presences.[66]

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Past-time is not a literal transposition from one time to another, nor is it a directive on how to read meaning in Black music. Rather it provides analytical specification of a socially contrary condition evolving over the course of Black music's development, having first emerged as part of a grand ideological refiguring in late-antebellum slave culture. In this way, past-time aligns with a Black Atlantic temporality that "specifies the boundaries not of community but of sameness by introducing a syncopated temporality—a different rhythm of living and being."[67] Recorded reminiscences by former slaves indicate that they routinely recognized the role of soundmaking in the imagination of a shared heritage, suggesting that pastness was part and parcel of Black music's racial coalescence. Although the actual practice of music was specific to the locations of southern culture they inhabited, many slaves acknowledged the conceptual presence of "Africa" in its performance. The works of Lawrence Levine, Roger Abrahams, Sterling Stuckey, and Michael A. Gomez, moreover, have shown that slaves' conceptualizations of the African past fostered metaphysical linkages that impacted the temporal character of everyday experience. These imagined pasts, in turn, routinely aligned with the sounding practices that slaves performed during labor, ritual, and leisure, the correspondences contributing to the making of a greater sonic ontology. In this circumstance, Black music acquired material qualities of embodied *history* that subsequently evolved across the eras of Reconstruction and Jim Crow.[68]

Although sensations of past-time developed as part of the economic transactions producing slave music, its coherences did not exist apart from slave music's formal qualities and was not initially commodified. Instead, a sense of pastness was available conceptually to those slaves who recognized and claimed it as part of their own meaningful experience. Among those for whom the past was important to their understanding of a shared sensory knowledge, past-time enabled the perception of performance as an intensity populating the auditory world with a sensuous accumulation of older affects drawn into new imaginings and memories.[69] These intensities of the past in the present gave to Black music greater intersocial complexity and ontological depth, its expression of "posthumous" temporal qualities—a laying out of the time of labor against the intrusions of capital time—being Black-owned and Black-purposed. Together, the concept of past-time and the enslaved peoples' economically driven properties of enlivened sound joined in the situation of performance, enabling them to aurally take possession of imagined pasts, and in doing so, to bring those pasts into their own sound ecology.

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Past-time as a phenomenal condition first develops as part of the oblique, backdoor engagements with African systems of thought that were common on the African continent before the time of European colonization and were brought by enslaved people to the Americas. This was a world where, as Achille Mbembe succinctly puts it, "humans did not entertain a competitive relationship with objects . . . [and where] objects were part of us, and we were part of objects." Spirit and being, person and thing, temporalities of past and present routinely inhabited inanimate forms, as part of a greater "network of knowledge" tracing back centuries, the many versions of this deep relationality carrying forward well into the African colonial era, when they became the subject of Euro-Western scholarship.[70] Translated into anthropological theory as "animism," this African order of relation, though not exclusively auditory, frequently involved sound as one of the objective materialities participating in animated world-making, particularly in the multiple regions on the African continent where sound-producing instruments and even sounding practices themselves could be inhabited as "spirited things."[71] Whether in ritual, healing practices, or everyday life, the broad variety of African performed sound, together with the voices and instruments generating it, played a critical role in shaping a larger ecology of self in collaboration with exterior forms and realms: among people, animals, plants, and inanimate objects; between the living and the "voices of the dead"; between the greater present and the ancestral past. Humanly organized sound brought forward and condensed worlds in ways consistent with Wole Soyinka's comprehension of Yoruba temporality, where "life, present life, contains within it manifestations of the ancestral, the living and the unborn. All are vitally within the intimations and affectiveness of life, beyond mere abstract conceptualization." Performed sound cohered and condensed these multiple past, present, and future presences, moving them forward as they became connected to collective imaginings of a relational ecology—a vast cultural biome populated with the living, the undead, and animated things, all active in the making of new, aesthetically energized socialities.[72]

As African philosophical systems were introduced into colonial North America and the slave communities of the US South, similar coalescences of ontologically heightened sound routinely developed. In a diverse assembly of otherworldly references—spells, charms, spirits, ghosts, haints, witches, magic, goofer, toby, mojo, hoodoers, conjurers, zombis, superstition, second sight—writers across the nineteenth century documented the presence within everyday slave experiences of a temporally nebulous

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aliveness inhabiting Negro music.[73] The representations, typically written by White observers, were in most cases meant to demonstrate the primitive character of the African disposition. What they revealed instead—confirmed in the suggestive writings and recorded reflections of former slaves—was the presence of a powerful, sensory Africanity supplementing the economic production of the slaves' new properties of sound, their wraith-like peculiarities cohering, at times tenuously, at others tenaciously, to a temporally expansive ecology of Black living. This broad sphere of affect enjoining slaves to their present, past, and future worlds was a relational interface that established profound intimacies and wide ecological imagining, linking person to person, person to thing, and person and thing to other, temporally diffuse, metaphysical realms. What eventually coalesced as Negro music in the 1840s and 1850s introduced into the new economies of southern entertainment a temporal intensity, a racially animated gravitas that held the capacity to draw slaves into close relation to a sense of the past. As the enlivened presences of an "undead," ancestral world congealed retrospectively, posthumously as part of Black music's conceptualization, the music's qualities of past-time sustained the intersocial, person-to-object ecology of a distinctively African sentience. Out of the archive of slavery's history, sonically motivated sensations of pastness and otherworldliness would become common to evolving self-identifications as "slave," "Negro," "Black," "African," "Christian."

Past-time is neither an appeal to unsubstantiated claims of an essential Black nature nor a reaffirmation of formalist arguments regarding African retentions. It is, rather, a critical extrapolation from the historical record that helps us to comprehend the phenomenal effect of Black music's aliveness as it played out over the course of two hundred years. First observable as part of the slave era, it identifies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—after continuous, dialectically generated transformations—slavery's insistent place as a philosophical and audible "founding stone," the source base and afterlife of an affective order crucial in the making of Black music. As an interpretive strategy, moreover, the concept of past-time develops from the premise that what were perceived as Black music's "peculiar" qualities of aliveness could not have materialized as they did had it not been for the full-frontal presence of Africa in the American South—as a realm of knowledge, as an ontologically expansive ecology, as a tradition of sounding practices and performance learning.[74] A force associated with Africa's legacy of animism, it locates the existence of a fetish character different from commodity fetishism, one developing from African systems of

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thought, being aligned with what William Pietz, in a classic set of essays, called the "irreducible materiality" of animated things.[75] What is conveyed in Black music as past would always seem to exceed the compass of the alienable, being suggestive of a multidimensional new-world ancestry participating within the grand historicality of US slavery. Yet past-time is not pure form; it imparts no essential African sensibility. Indeed, the audible sensation of an African pastness would appear increasingly oblique as Black music carried forward, becoming refashioned within the productive and affective orders of popular entertainment. Past-time does not, then, prescribe meaning, nor does it disarm the dual interplay of race-capital as a structuring force. Rather it introduces an additional analytical concept to explain the temporal and affective incongruities associated with aliveness as a call to something beyond the here and now. As such, sensations of past-time would ultimately participate in the processes of commodification as part of the racial contest of ownership.

The enduring struggle over music ownership sets the contours of the past itself. What coheres as a seminal claim of Black music under slavery is then subjected to further challenge as sounding practices proliferate and expand as a new sonic knowledge during the interregnum commencing at the end of the Civil War. At this point, free Black musicians were actively participating in a wide variety of performance situations in which disruptive temporalities contoured the character of musical experience. These ranged from Christian communities seeking spiritual truth in Jesus to Pentecostal worshippers involving practices clearly linked to Africa; from "colored minstrels" engaging in parodies of White people in blackface to secular gatherings of Black people enjoying the pleasure of new commercial styles. As Black music penetrated national markets, however, its expressive capacities inspired a series of reimaginings of it as a historical form. The dynamic relation of race-capital accelerated the growth of White-driven sentimental portraits of African American music's past, proliferating tales of happy "darkies" singing and playing on the plantation, maudlin stories of mournful slaves suffering in labored chant, sensationalistic reports of clamorous Africans alternatively expressive of nature's utopia and dystopic horror. As a result, a new sense of the audible past aligned with, as it informed, the increasingly controversial, stylistic features coalescing as Negro music. If these new articulations, generated chiefly in markets controlled by White institutions, were ideologically invested in incorporating Black music into a singular conception of American popular expression—conceived in this study as diverting "pastimes"—they nonetheless brought

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into racially specified affective orders new disruptive intensities of past-time, affirming the peculiarity of Black-generated sound's ontological character.

By the first three decades of the twentieth century, the continuing fascination with Black music heightened the sense of wonder among White consumers about where these strange sounds were coming from. Commentaries grew ever more frequent and sensational, affirming the view of the music's origin in the primal pasts of Africa and the plantation South. The depictions typically served to demean and ridicule, to encourage once more the negative perception of African Americans as a "repetitious" people. But these same narratives had the unintentional effect of supplying the perceptible character of Black music with greater temporal coherence, inspiring among African American musicians and their audiences new attention to peculiarities in sounding practices that were thought to trace back to realms prior to the music's entry into popular entertainment markets. Into the twentieth century, as Black music underwent public translation—its odd-sounding commercial labels, "blues," "ragtime," and "jazz," evocative of the southern past—so did the music's pastness confront the forces of exchange to influence the production of style. Commonly bound to practices centering around propulsive, asymmetrical rhythm—the aforementioned assembly of performance practices expressing a greater *beat knowledge*—the disruptive sonic material conjuring sensations of past-time reaffirmed Black music's double character. It would become in the arena of pop an alienable commodity form, consumed as a playfully animated and diverting *pastime*, and a racially inalienable possession, an inspirited *past-time*, caught fleetingly in its discursive translations as something incongruently alive.

Across the late nineteenth century and into the time of popular music's commercial institutionalization—identifying in this study Black music's long modern era—listening communities would typically be aware of how Black music's formal anomalies gestured backward in time. The music's qualities of aliveness frequently sounded old in their strange newness, as popular discourses gave stress to bygone places and eras: to plantation slavery and songs of frivolity and sorrow; to New Orleans's Storyville, the putative birthplace of jazz; to the Mississippi Delta, the mythic place of origin of the blues; to a monolithic, primal Africa. What was alive in the sound would remain temporally out of joint; it is what made Black music sound uncanny—different from Music. Over the course, Black music would be once more "condemned to meaning," as listeners across the color line sought to capture in words what they heard as a recessive knowledge conveyed in aesthetic qualities of truth.

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As explored earlier, truth as a positive condition would always remain partial, being caught up in the idealizations of people and powers, the aspirational and the imagined. According to the ideology sustaining White power, Black music's truth commonly depended on failed attempts to possess an unpossessable, racialized property; among African Americans, inversely, the experience of truth frequently involved the music's paradoxical growth of value through the botched attempts by White capital to expropriate it. And hidden away in the structuring processes generating enlivened sound, Black music tenaciously revealed an enduring, unspoken truth arising out of racial contradiction: a truth residing materially in forms that remained open to reception and meaning. The structures that brought forward audible qualities of aliveness provided ways of listening critically beyond fetishism to comprehend fetishism's powers and discovering why Black music appeared so enchanting—they enabled one to discern the interplay of pastimes and past-times in the making of spectacular sound. This version of truth suggests one most in line with Black music's productive processes and the temporal incongruities they fostered. Recognizing this version of truth requires confronting the fetishisms of meaning that Black music enabled.

Past-time thus turns always to the present, to a repetition of new relations, to the witnessing of Black music's emergence out of conditions of alienation. As a disjunctive possibility it corresponds to what Nathaniel Mackey, in his glorious critical portrait of Black sound, poses as "an otherwise unavailable Heaven . . . [a] utopic insinuation of an accretional 'yes' which annexes the trace of its historical loss."[76] Past-time's complex expression within the greater economies of race-capital would play out as part of the contrapuntal cultural production of Black music as an impure pure form composed in the negative. The conceptual sum of its double-sided productive processes—property-of-property, being-in-labor, meaning and value, profit-from-loss, race-capital, past-time and pastime—would collectively bring into view a sense of Black music as a dynamic, accretional complex continually in the making: a seemingly enlivened sonic entity that grew and regressed, at once structured in and incongruently related to the greater productive tendencies of American entertainment capitalism. Black music's intricate relations to race, the economic, and the African past show it to be something more than an aesthetic form in the conventional sense, something different from Music. It stands as a catalyst of African American culture's becoming as it assumes a principal position in the production of a greater American social knowledge. In its double-sided

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interplay, Black music would arise across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as the critical shadow force in the evolution of pop, identifying the nation's principal aesthetic means of difference-making and the primary cultural influence sustaining Blackness and Whiteness as social categories.

Here, then, in this never-ending contest of economized, racial struggle, developed the fundamental dynamic structures at work in the making of Black music's value. To employ Du Bois's own Hegelian language, it revealed a negatively rendered "spirit" consistent with its place in the expansion of capital, arising as an ontological sonic entity seated at the right hand of "God." Listeners would come to hear in its audible sentience charges of profound meaning, brought into understanding by the many narrations accompanying the music's rise to power. If, in the end, Black music directly communicates no consistent assembly of signs, it nonetheless achieved what Adorno called music's cognitive character: a nonsentient complexity suggestive of being, which in this instance would be structured as part of a long slave era that has repeatedly spoken and still speaks today.[77] Black music reveals in its double form a contrary manifestation of America, a counterhistory materialized in sound that repeats as a primary truth the nation's unresolved conditions of race.

## BLACK MUSIC AS COUNTERHISTORY: METAMORPHOSES OF A VALUE FORM

Thinking about Black music as counterhistory develops directly from its initial form as a property-of-property and the outward-inward, forward-backward movements of its historical progression. What is counter in the music's pattern of growth maps on a grand scale the contradictions orienting performances of enlivened sound. These structural parallels between the abstract movements in Black music's cyclical progression and the concrete musical qualities of aliveness not only call for a different approach to chronicling the development of style but also prompt a rethinking of the way that race in America is musically felt and imagined.

Just as Black music has openly participated in the world of capitalized entertainment, so have its incongruities of form repeatedly troubled that participation. Ascending as an afterlife of slavery, it has in its historical accretions lived up to its tragic character: protected as an inalienable property Black music is perpetually beset by the relentless forces of commodification. What sustains the music's accumulation of value are its tenacious

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embodiments, which insist on the primacy of blackness in American life. In this way, Black music asserts the negative dimension of its double character. Demeaned by fetishization, it gains value in its formal refusal of its complete absorption into capital. The music's spectral qualities are aesthetic indications of an insistent "Negro" past guiding its contrapuntal development and informing its temporal feeling.

Black music's counterhistory begins with slavery because slavery is its founding stone, the tragic beginning of an ongoing, asymmetrical struggle that initiates and then perpetuates the invention of form. Because this struggle never resolves, the contradiction inherent to the music's production repeats, recovering multiple pasts into newly performed presents: the contradiction of race persists in the anomaly of the music's double character. Black music's refusal to conform to consensus, moreover, is consistent with the way it gestures backward as it evolves; gesturing backward is a fundamental part of its forward progression. What disseminates outwardly cycles back, intensifying and expanding to bring into public listening an aesthetic immediacy—the racial particularism of enlivened blackness, which casts its ghostly presence over the entirety of pop.

In many histories of American music, Black music's various expressions organize into genres that trace a steady progression of style. They are the components of a development rendering Black music as a category of Music. Having been imposed from above, however, genres have tended to be reluctantly acknowledged by musicians, some of whom have equated them with slave names.[78] Although genre categories are essential to the greater understanding of how value developed, they can tell only part of the story, for they disregard the give-and-take of Black music's distinctive evolution. Thinking about Black music as counterhistory, in contrast, redirects attention to the ironic tendencies of the music's productive processes, seeing its key transformations as part of a struggle to define Black worlds. Black music evolves neither as a singular, coherent Music nor as a neat sequence of styles, but as something more akin to a species in metamorphosis. As it advances and retreats and advances again, it changes in quality and character, with each stage carrying forward aspects of the past as it enacts transformations into something new: new coalescences that affirm the paradox of economically generated inalienable form.[79]

*Alive in the Sound* proceeds as an ontological mapping, a charting of the music's growth as a series of coalescences that bring forth multiple versions of sensational, animated presences. Although the coalescences of a given moment are what identify historical periods, all coalescences share

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as their basis the racial contests of ownership central to popular musical innovation. The book examines how Black music's various coalescences participated in the making of four larger transformations, or metamorphoses: the anomalies of enlivened sound arising from slave labor; the scabrous inventions of free Black performers working after the Civil War; new formations given the commercial names ragtime and jazz that developed as part of the first networks of modern popular entertainment; the innovations of swing, modern jazz, boogie, rhythm and blues, and free that oriented the greater musical and affective design of mid-to-late twentieth-century American pop. Each metamorphosis identifies a particular aesthetic organization emerging out of transactions between Black music labor and the constraining forces of commerce: at every phase, performative *sounding practices* give way to more stable coherences (*sound formations*) that contribute to the growth of a historically evolving body of *sonic material*. The market's tendency to incorporate innovation inspires variation, with subsequent music incorporations motivating advances yet again. Through the process, Black music continually transforms, becoming more and more expansive, as its orientations to the past also deepen.

Transactions commenced with the entry of the slaves' sound world into public forums, marking Black music's first metamorphosis. This is the point when enslaved people began to present their audible labor before White audiences, triggering the conceptualization of the cultural phenomenon, Negro music. A tracing of the second metamorphosis turns to the world of free-Black music labor that organized directly after the Civil War as part of what Thulani Davis powerfully describes as the Black South's "Emancipation Circuit."[80] From the 1870s to the first decade of the 1900s, a population of itinerant Black musicians living and working on the edge of southern society—many performing in blackface as "colored minstrels"—introduced into commercial markets forms of enlivened sound that accelerated the exchange of a racially inalienable property. This second metamorphosis was less the result of rebellion than a manifestation of a powerful auditory dissensus: a vagrant proletariat engaging in the production of socially irritable, "scabrous" sound.

"Contests of Ownership in Early National Markets" charts the expansion of Black music's third metamorphosis as it enters national entertainment markets during the first three decades of the twentieth century. It begins in chapter 4 with an analysis of the commercial transactions giving rise to seminal versions of Black popular music. The entrance of these embodied forms into the circuits of capital resulted in massive economic

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and psychic losses among a new urban-professional labor class. But they also generated a substantial symbolic profit, taking the form of a transformative beat knowledge that led to a qualitative shift in the magnitude of Black music's temporal complexities and historical depth; these manifold changes fueled the growth of value. As it reared on its hind legs—in Zora Neale Hurston's evocative rendering at the conclusion of chapter 6—Black music assumed the posture of an occupying force that overwhelmed modern musical culture with its peculiar spectral presences.[81]

The three chapters that compose the final section examine Black music's fourth metamorphosis. They focus on the fifty-year period (ca. 1930–1980) when a late-modern manifestation of musical aliveness comes into being. The move begins when a community of savvy musician-professionals bring their ongoing struggle of ownership into public view. The continuous interplay of Black innovation and its translation into the procrustean categories of a White-controlled music industry—as swing, rhythm and blues, bop, urban blues, commercial gospel, cool, etc.—drives Black music's ontological expansion as a spectacularly enlivened expressivity. Its dual stand as a hyperpositive and negative form establishes it as both the primary influence and a shadow presence in popular music. An afterword considers the consequences of these developments as Black music moves into a new phase of development.

Through the many stagings of profit-from-loss, Black music has ascended, harnessing the past to move forward, evolving according to its now familiar two-step motion. Through these means, it has realized an expressive capacity that defies the subsumptive power of capital: overtaking American sonic culture, Black music—a music widely acknowledged as the production of Black people—has disseminated into the world, reorganizing popular sensibilities on a global scale. Rhythmic revolutions led by swing and boogie set the stage for a cumulative advancement that carried forward across the decades and into the twenty-first century. With the coalescence of what Amiri Baraka named New Black Music, it organized as a late-modern apotheosis, its animatedness reaching outwardly to form a musical version of Du Bois's "color line [that] belts the world."[82] Out of the complex evolutionary biology of enlivened sound, New Black Music extends its global reach, its late-stage metamorphosis realizing illicit truths-in-form that repeat the tragic, racial struggle at its core. *Alive in the Sound* examines this process, showing how through multiple unfoldings Black music has endured as the phantom center of American musical expressivity.

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# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

Parts of the introduction and chapter 1 appeared as "Black Music Labor and the Animated Properties of Slave Sound," *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture* 43, no. 1 (February 2016): 173–208.

1 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 124.

2 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 124.

3 For "singing book," see Baker, *Modernism*, 68. Du Bois writes of the sorrow songs as "the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas." See Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 186.

4 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, xiii, 580. In this instance, "economic" refers to exchange in capitalist markets. My own use of the term will be broader, involving the multiple systems of productive exchange that realize forms of value.

5 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 124.

6 Although Marx defines *labor* as a free worker's commodified contribution to the means of production, I am employing the term, as Du Bois does, to describe the kinds of work common among both free and unfree Black workers participating in the social relations of capitalism. The ambiguity of labor within slavery is consistent with slavery's ambiguous relationship to capitalism itself. "Humanly organized sound" is a concept and phrase introduced into music anthropology and ethnomusicology by John Blacking in his book *How Musical Is Man?*

7 I capitalize "Music" throughout this study to identify European-based conceptions of an autonomous art form, recognizing that the distinction between elite forms of "Music" and lower forms called "music" have been contested since at least the 1940s. The term, "music" in "Negro" and then "Black" music remains uncapitalized to underscore how its status always remains suspect.

8 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 124–25. (The depiction of slaves and Africans as "noisy" was common to the era.) The oppositional relation of negative to positive, Black to White, also forms the key dynamic of labor to capital driving repetition in Du Bois's thought and in this study.

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9 Across this study, I avoid the possessive case (as in "Black music's value"), seeking to avoid the implication that Black music possesses an autonomous value.

10 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 124–25.

11 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 125.

12 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*. For "Can we imagine," 121; "wild truth," 122. For informing literature, see Singh, *Black Is a Country*, 90–96; Hughes, "Can We Imagine," 179–210.

13 For "miracle, of its production," see Johnson and Johnson, *Books of American Negro Spirituals*, 12. For "acoustical shock," see Steinberg, *Listening to Reason*, 86, 88. For "howled the hymn of joy," see Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 126. For Du Bois's interests in Schiller and Beethoven, see Bilbija, "Democracy's New Song," 64–77. See also Bertholf, "Listening."

14 Du Bois, *Gift of Black Folk*. Laviña and Zeuske, *Second Slavery*.

15 Du Bois, *Gift of Black Folk*, 9–10, 19, 105. Du Bois writes, "Music is always back of this gay, Negro spirit and the folk song which the Negro brought to America was developed not simply by White men but by the Negro himself" (105).

16 Marx famously employs the expression "living labor" in Choat, *Marx's Grundrisse*. See, for example, 299. For a genealogy of the concept, see Sáenz, "Living Labor in Marx." For "draft-horse," Du Bois, *Gift of Black Folk*, 9. Performative expressions that we can analytically identify as "Black music" (sound-based performance practices derived from or informed by people of the African continent) reach back before slavery and European contact. I'm proposing, though, that the social recognition of a strange form of musicality, most commonly known at the time among White southerners as "slave music" or "Negro music," did not come into being—was not socially constituted and conceptualized—until the last decades of the antebellum era. I've outlined this position previously in my book *Lying up a Nation*.

17 Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity," 256.

18 I'm making a distinction here at the outset (and over the course of the analysis) between partial truths aligned with meaning and a primary, structural truth located in the contradiction underlying Black music value. The latter conception of truth is informed by Theodor W. Adorno's idea of truth content, as he explores it in his book, *Aesthetic Theory*. For elaboration, see Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*; Jarvis, *Adorno*; Pensky, "Natural History," 23–41.

19 Pensky, "Natural History," 37.

20 Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, 5.

21 Du Bois, *Gift of Black Folk*, chap. 2. On the celebration of Black music as spirit and truth, see Sorett, *Spirit in the Dark*.

22 Du Bois, *Gift of Black Folk*, 9–10. Later, in the same text, Du Bois elaborates: "While the gift of the White laborer made America rich, or at

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least made many Americans rich, it will take the psychology of the Black man to make it happy" (19). On socially necessary labor time, see Marx, *Capital*, 129. For a study that brings these historical anomalies of work into the present, see Arzuaga, "Socially Necessary Superfluity," 819–43. For "organized monarchy" and "triumphant industry," see Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 580.

23 Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 129.

24 Describing slavery as the "peculiar institution" was widespread during the antebellum period. See Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*. Brown, "Reification, Reanimation," 197. Brown is quoting Ernst Jentsch. The term gains traction in psychanalytic theory through its application by Sigmund Freud; see chapter 5 in this volume.

25 Robinson, *Black Marxism*. In the context of Black music, the relation of race to capitalism is formally incommensurable, as discussed ahead. For a series of essays dedicated to Robinson's major work, see Johnson and Kelley, *Forum 1*.

26 Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 186. The matter of Music's social constructedness was central to debates in musicology in the 1990s. See, for example, the exchange between Lawrence Kramer and Tomlinson that begins with Kramer's "The Musicology of the Future," *Repercussions* (Spring 1992): 5–18, and carries forward in *Current Musicology* 53 (1993). For an elaboration on the "Music" concept in the context of the postcolonial critique, see Radano and Olaniyan, "Hearing Empire—Imperial Listening," in *Audible Empire*, 1–24.

27 Gallope, *Deep Refrains*.

28 My focus here is on Black music as it has been produced and appeared in commercial markets during slavery and in the popular entertainment industry. The participation of African American composers in the history of art music in the United States is another story. Although it is an important one, it has had little impact on the larger question of Black music value. In fact, I would argue that Black music in its commercial forms has had a determining influence on the entirety of music created by African Americans.

29 Perhaps the closest a historian comes to such a material-based reading is Lawrence Levine's magisterial *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, a book written at a moment when cultural and social historians were vigorously advocating "bottom up" approaches. More recently, slave music has received thoughtful, if passing, discussion in a variety of historical accounts. See, for example, Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*; Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told*.

30 A new order of musicological scholarship has pushed hard against this uncritical tendency in American music history. See, for example, Garcia, *Listening for Africa*; Eidsheim, *Race of Sound*.

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31 For example, Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*; Weheliye, *Phonographies*; Lordi, *Meaning of Soul*; and Reed, *Soundworks*. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, remains a foundational study.

32 Moten, *In the Break*, 10–11. Moten proposes a comprehension of slave music as a tear or break in the conception of the commodity form resulting from the slave's expressive terror—as a "thing" that actually speaks. This is a rather loose reading of the commodity form, observing it solely in terms of exchange value—an "inspirited materiality" (11)—with little attention to its dual (concrete and abstract) character or to its fundamental basis in labor and production. I'm seeking here a more specific grounding of Black musicality in a racial economy.

33 "Core Values for Jazz"; Wilson, "Black Music," 2. Later in the essay, when analyzing Miles Davis's performance of "Green Dolphin Street," Wilson similarly unites the two terms, suggesting that a "meaningful musical statement . . . is based on an imaginative usage of the values associated with Afro-American music" (21).

34 On this background, see Graeber, "Three Ways." On the attempt to link micro and macro events, see Graeber's discussion of the work of Clyde Kluckholn. Such a conception was fundamental to nineteenth-century dialectical thought.

35 Porter, *Thing Called Jazz*, 37. The close proximity of meaning to value appears in philosophical studies. See, for example, Metz, "Meaning of Life."

36 For background, see Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought*; Kramer, *Musical Meaning*. Steven Feld's *Sound and Sentiment* is foundational in the study of music and human communication.

37 Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, chap. 2; Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," chap. 1 of *Souls of Black Folk*, 79.

38 "Structural causality" was introduced into contemporary criticism by Louis Althusser in his collaborative study with Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*. It refers to the way in which structure may be immanent in its concrete manifestations, akin to the relation between abstract labor and concrete labor. In this sense, it is also an "absent cause" since there is no actual structure fully present in concrete forms. Moreover, Jerrold Levinson's analysis of value with respect to European art music offers a contrast to my definition. See "Values in Music," the sixth chapter of his book *Musical Concerns*.

39 "Sonic material" is derived from Adorno's concept of "musical material," which, as Samuel Wilson elaborates—developing an interpretation first proposed by Carl Dahlhaus—"crystallizes aspects found in his thought more generally. . . . Musical material, for Adorno, is all that faces the composer in the present as inherited from the past." I prefer "sonic" to "musical" because "Negro sound" was frequently not understood as "music" by Black and White alike. Moreover, my use of "sonic" extends

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what is implied in Adorno's conception of history in its relation to production: a production involving a general musicality, not one specific to the concept of the composer. For Wilson's discussion, see "Notes on Adorno's 'Musical Material,'" 248–49. For Dahlhaus's discussion, see Dahlhaus, "Form." The concept of "musical material" is integral to Paddison's interpretation in *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*.

40 "Structuring structure" is part of Pierre Bourdieu's formulation of habitus. See Bourdieu, *Outline* and *Distinction*. For a discussion of articulation as a linking of unrelated forms and practices, see Grossberg, "On Postmodernism," especially 141–43; Cook, "Theorizing Musical Meaning," 188.

41 Feld, "Flow Like a Waterfall," 22–47; Shelley, "Holy Ghost Chord"; "Analyzing Gospel," 181–242.

42 Debates over distinctions between meter, beat, and pulse have informed theories of African music since the middle of the twentieth century. I am not seeking to enter those discussions but rather am working from conventional popular notions of musical time as they are commonly conveyed in journalistic writing. To this extent, I'm more interested in phenomenological conceptions of "beat" rather than "pulse," the latter indicating an underlying time marker that may be recognized but is not necessarily consistently expressed. A good place to begin exploring the debates is Agawu, "Structural Analysis," 1–46. For elaborations on these distinctions, see also Cheyne, Hamilton, and Paddison, *Philosophy of Rhythm*.

43 Scholarly studies of the relationship between music and language stretch across European music history, finding a modern beginning in nineteenth-century theories of absolute music and the claims of European music's universal character and transcendental power. They have routinely informed music-theoretical and ethnomusicological thought since the mid-twentieth century, the matter of music communication becoming a point of attention with the turn to semiotics in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the subject has been vigorously debated, there is now a loose, consensus opinion that, as Lawrence Kramer puts it, "Music cannot 'speak' with its own 'voice' until it finds a voice, or voices, among a multiplicity of others that constantly blend with music and chafe against the rest." *Musical Meaning*, 6.

44 Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 240; emphasis in the original. Cumming, *Sonic Self*, 100–101; Moreno, "Review Essay," 286. For Adorno's use of "second hand" mediations, see Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 175.

45 Feld, "Communication, Music," 91. In the same essay, Feld offers a valuable elaboration, anticipating views later articulated by Cumming and Moreno, stressing that musical experience cannot be fully specified. Music, as linguistic anthropologists would say, is "a primary modeling system," which means that, in its primacy as a nonverbal grammar, it

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is made up of "unique and irreducible symbolic properties. These must be experienced and approached in their own right, . . . freed from any notion that they simply translate or copy the speech mode." What is "primary" and "irreducible"—what in its ambiguity as a sign system does not conform to a precise linguistic analog—is also what enables music's remarkable breadth of meaningfulness (94).

46 Lott, *Love and Theft*, 18. On the idea of racialized investment, see Lipsitz, *Progressive Investment*.

47 Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 1. Paddison attributes "condemned to meaning" to Adorno. In fact, it derives from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. See Ivanova, "Twelve-Tone Identity," 34.

48 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 228.

49 I borrow the intensive/extensive dynamic from Sewell, "Temporalities of Capitalism."

50 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* 70.

51 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* 70. More generally informing the theorization I'm mapping out here is Postone, *Time, Labor*.

52 Baraka, *Blues People*, x, 8. Although Baraka doesn't employ the expression "changing same" in print until 1967, *Blues People* is already an elaboration on the concept. "The Negro's music," he writes, "changed as he changed, reflecting shifting attitudes or (and this is equally important) *consistent attitudes within changed contexts*. And it is *why* the music changed that seems most important to me" (153; emphases in the original).

53 Baraka, *Blues People*, 16, 131. For Baraka, Black music's essential Africanity develops not simply from a direct African transmission but from a kind of cultural distillation arising out of Africans' subjugation under slavery. Its original, African basis was already exceptional, being expressive of "some of the most complex and complicated ideas about the world imaginable" (7). At times, he locates this intensified African essence in actual musical practice. Quoting Ernest Borneman, he suggests that in the "African tradition," excellent performance appears in the quality of phrasing, in the improviser's "tendency towards obliquity and ellipsis. . . . No note is attacked straight." Yet he also makes an effort to distinguish the accumulation of meaning from value. Performance strategies of obliquity appear "without ever having committed to a single meaning" (31). For more on value, see Baraka, "Black Value System," 54–60.

54 Baraka introduces his theory of value as "changing same" in "The Changing Same: R&B and New Black Music," which appears as a chapter in his second book, *Black Music*. The concept becomes particularly influential from the 1990s after being revived by Paul Gilroy in his essay "Sounds Authentic" and then in his book *Black Atlantic*. For an example of its application to Black dance—"the *changing-same* of collective movement"—see Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, 306. See also McDowell, *"Changing Same."*

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55 I'm elaborating here on a conception of formal development that pushes against widespread mechanistic views of an African musical origin "surviving" despite its mutation and evolution. While such opinions have been largely discredited when discussing culture at large, they still hold considerable currency when discussions turn to music. My disagreements with this position were put forward previously in *Lying up a Nation* and in my exchange with the late Samuel A. Floyd Jr. See Floyd and Radano, "African-American Musical Past," 1–10. Levine proposes a more useful portrait of stylistic evolution, being particularly insightful in recognizing how White practices had become informed by African American ones, suggesting a greater "mulatto" character to American music at the moment when Black styles entered free markets. But he ultimately falls back on a mechanistic argument to explain why subsequent interracial musical exchanges took place. See Levine, *Black Culture*, 195–96.

56 Although Baraka recognizes how Black music developed dialectically, he is ultimately dismissive of those African American forms created outside of the cultures of slavery and the Black poor, and that appear openly indebted to European musical traditions and aesthetics. Yet if "the constant and willful dilutions" of Black music by "mainstream" society and the Black middle class challenged musical "form," they could not disturb the "emotional significance and vitality at its core, [which] remains, to this day, unaltered" (131). It is unclear how one locates undiluted form. Nonetheless, value seems to grow not from interracial musical interaction, but as the result of racial struggle, its "core" intensifying and remaining unchanged.

57 I borrow "mute music" from Adorno's characterization of a unique temporality and truth content embedded in the form of a phonograph record: "It is not the time in which music happens, nor is it the time which music monumentalizes by means of its 'style.' It is time as evanescence, enduring in mute music." See Adorno, "Phonograph Record," 279. I reintroduce and develop the concept in chapter 8.

58 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 125; *Gift of Black Folk*, 105.

59 It is interesting to note how Du Bois contemplates meaning directly when, in chapter 14 of *Souls of Black Folk*, he asks, "What are these songs, and what do they mean?" (187). He proceeds to write movingly about musical power, revealing the effect of value's production in its relation to meaningful musical imagining. For a discussion of the relationship of Du Bois's dialectics to Hegelian phenomenology, see Shaw, *Du Bois*.

60 Du Bois, *Gift of Black Folk*, 9, 10, 19, 105. Blight, "Du Bois," 49.

61 My conception of phenomenological shifts at once constituted within and outside of capitalism is indebted to Dipesh Chakrabarty's discussion of History 1 and 2. See *Provincializing Europe*, 47–71. I develop this

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conception across the study. Also important to my thinking about past-time is Guha, *History at the Limit*.

62 As Massimiliano Tomba explains it, "Formal subsumption is the basis of capitalist production insofar as the production of surplus-value is a process aiming at the production of commodities for sale; real subsumption is presented, instead, as specifically capitalist because it not [*sic*] longer tolerates the existence of previous social relations, but revolutionises the technical processes of production and social groupings." See Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 148–49.

63 "The Negro as Non-American: Some Backgrounds" is the title of the first chapter of Baraka's *Blues People*.

64 Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 26; Liu et al., "Exigency of Time," 25. Earlier, Harootunian states, "One of the major functions of the modern state has been to synchronize the various temporalities of capital, smooth the discordant rhythms of capitalist time" (15). Narrative emplotments contribute to this synchronization.

65 Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, 20–21.

66 This corresponds to Harootunian's depiction of capitalism's evening-out and making sense of the order of everyday experience: "One of the major functions of the modern state has been to synchronize the various temporalities of capital, smooth the discordant rhythms of capitalist time." See Liu et al., "Exigency of Time," 15.

67 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 202. Gilroy's conceptualization of the "Black Atlantic" as a temporality rather than as a spatiality mutes somewhat Brent Edwards's critique of Gilroy's study, particularly when we read Gilroy against more recent elaborations by David Scott and Bayo Helsey. See Edwards, "Uses of Diaspora"; Scott, "That Event, This Memory"; Holsey, "Embodying Africa." For a fascinating elaboration on syncopated temporality as a condition of modernity writ large, see Moreno, *Sounding Latin Music*.

68 "For most slaves," Levine observed in his analysis of Christian and African-based folk beliefs, "there was no unbridgeable gulf between [them]." *Black Culture*, 56. References to Africa appear frequently in the WPA narratives. The interviews have been published as part of the digital collections of the Library of Congress as *Born in Slavery*. See also Abrahams, *Singing the Master*; Stuckey, *Slave Culture*; Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*.

69 Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* is especially helpful in this regard. See also my book *Lying up the Nation*.

70 Mbembe, "People and Things." For knowledge networks, see Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*, 20–26; Schoenbrun, "Pythons Worked," 216–46. Europe's colonization of Africa inspired a flurry of studies of indigenous cultural practices. See, for example, Kingsley, *West African Studies*, and, in German, the works of Karl Weule and Leo Frobenius.

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71 As an anthropological concept, "animism" is commonly attributed to E. B. Tylor, who borrowed the term from a seventeenth-century alchemist. See Bird-David, "'Animism' Revisited," S67–S91, and with specific reference to the African diaspora, Johnson, *Spirited Things*. For historical discussions of sound, instruments, and animated forces, see Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*, 155; Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest*, 151; MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, 88–92; Stoller, *Embodying Colonial Memories*, 34–35; Matory, *Fetish Revisited*, 236–48.

72 For "voices of the dead," see MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, 88. Soyinka, "Appendix: The Fourth Stage," 144, in *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Soyinka's comment is consistent with MacGaffey's depiction of Kongo political culture at the turn of the twentieth century: "There are no good answers to the question whether the rocks 'represent' or 'contain' the spirits. The 'otherworld' of Kongo thought, the land of the dead (*nsi a bafwa*), is as it were in the next room, around the corner, or even right here, for those who have eyes to see" (57). See also Friedson, *Remains of Ritual*, and Jane I. Guyer's discussion of "real person" in "Wealth in People," 246.

73 Levine, *Black Culture*, 56–61. For "zombi," see Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told*, 146.

74 Levine gives us particularly strong insight into the conspicuous presence of Africanity in Christian beliefs, writing that "there existed as well a network of beliefs and practices independent of yet strongly related to the slaves' formal religion"; "Africa," one slave reported, "was a land of magic power. . . . The descendants of Africans have the same gift to do unnatural things." Levine, *Black Culture*, 55, 57. I've revised the original text, which appeared in minstrelized dialect.

75 Pietz, "Problem of the Fetish." The second and third installments appeared in subsequent issues of *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*. See also Tsing, "Sorting Commodities," 21–43.

76 Mackey, *Bedouin Hornbook*, 20.

77 Paddison, *Adorno's Philosophy of Music*, 1. Jarvis discusses "cognitive character" in chapter 5 of *Adorno*.

78 Baskerville, "Free Jazz," 484–97. In rejecting the term *jazz*, Beaver Harris, in a conversation with Valerie Wilmer, proposes something akin to sonic material: "Jazz itself is only a mixture of all the music before your time. This is the reason why I prefer calling it Black Music" (qtd. on 486). Challenges to the term *jazz* reach back to Ellington's notion of "beyond category" and carry forward to the philosophical views of Anthony Braxton and other experimentalists working today.

79 On James Reese Europe's characterization of *ragtime* as a term invented by the music industry, see chapter 4 in this volume. Du Bois's reference to the songs of the enslaved as "sorrow songs" appeared to be an attempt to revise minstrelized conceptions of them.

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80 Davis, *Emancipation Circuit*. I wish I could say more about this remarkable book, which appeared after chapters 2 and 3 of my book were drafted and revised.

81 Hurston, "How It Feels," 215–16.

82 Baraka, *Digging*. Baraka's states in his introduction that his book draws inspiration from Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*. Simone White offers a compelling critique of Baraka's execution in *Dear Angel of Death*. Du Bois, "Color Line," 30.

## CHAPTER 1. SLAVE LABOR AND THE EMERGENCE OF A PECULIAR MUSIC

1 Northup's approach to fiddling was probably informed by British Isle performance traditions, with possible intersections with Africanized intonations and beat organization.

2 Julia Kristeva's theorization of abjection as a repression of ambiguities in subject-object relations carries important implications when thinking about the legal form of the slave body and, particularly, when coupled with notions of the acoustic. One might begin such a pairing with Erlmann, "Acoustic Abject." See also Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

3 On the fiddler as precious commodity—"Negro fiddlers were scarce among the plantation hands, except the 'professionals' who were free negroes"—see "Negro Superstition," 329–30.

4 There is an extensive literature on inalienable possessions. For background, see Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*.

5 Hesse, "Symptomatically Black."

6 "Species of property" was commonly employed in primary historical sources. For a modern, secondary reference, see Hahn, *Nation Under Our Feet*, 71. Locke continues, "The Labor of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his." Locke, "Property." For "Attached to the soil," see Schweninger, *Black Property Owners*, 146. For "recoordination," see Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 162.

7 Johnson, *Soul by Soul*. Berry, *Their Pound of Flesh*.

8 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*. For "natal alienation," see Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 17.

9 "Organized whole" appears in Bastiat, "Social Order." See also Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 791; Foner, "Meaning of Freedom"; Huston, *Calculating Value*; Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery*.

10 McCord, "Slavery and Political Economy," 435. Hegel, *Philosophy of World History*.

11 Arendt, *Human Condition*; Martin, "Mortgaging Human Property."

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