

BETWEEN SOUND AND IMAGE: THE OTHERWORLDLINESS OF BESSIE SMITH

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A gay nightclub in 1920s Harlem, in *Looking for Langston*.

Speculation is extremely valuable when imaginings of the past are real and the past isn't past at all and we are here but we are not and I am from the future.... All black women are from the future because we are not meant to exist.

—Jillian Walker, "Songs of Speculation"

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The opening sequence of Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1989) is memorable in its dual establishing shot of two interlocking spaces. The first is a black funeral space set in an indeterminate dimension gesturing both to the 1920s and 1960s. Directly "below" it, as implied by a slow pan of the camera downward, is a gay nightclub in 1920s Harlem, men in tuxedos posed in dance. The highly stylized spaces are free-floating and surreal set pieces, as if sacred relics being reconstructed by a contemporary imaginary. Many critics have commented on the way Julien unexpectedly moves into a documentary vernacular by contrasting this imaginary space with a montage of black-and-white archival footage.¹ An old radio broadcast, a memorial of

Langston Hughes's death in 1967, plays over newsreels of Harlem. Julien then resuscitates the dead, cutting to black-and-white television footage of Hughes reciting his poem "Hey!" (1927) with live jazz accompaniment: "I feels de blues a comin' / Wonder what de blues'll bring?"

Hughes's voice then drifts away from the image as Julien cuts to a vintage record player. The cut defies expectation by being paired with a contemporary song, "Blues for Langston," that was recorded in the 1980s but recalls Hughes's 1951 poem "Harlem" as Blackberri croons, "What ever happened to a dream deferred?" In posing these questions vocally and melodically, the opening sequence is relentlessly prognosticating.² These voices and images, which move through multiple moments in the history of Black Atlantic queer life as well as the history of technology, keep gesturing forward to an unknown future, something not yet seen or heard, a question not yet answered, and a desire not yet fulfilled. The images and sounds register the mutability of every image and voice in their reproducibility.

But one fleeting archival fragment in particular invites further consideration. Just after cutting to the fictional character Alex sitting at the bar—a figure whom some critics read as an avatar for Langston Hughes—Julien introduces into the montage a fragment of a cinematic performance by Bessie Smith in *St. Louis Blues* (Dudley Murphy, 1929).³ Leaning against a bar in an uptown club, she sings, "My man's got a heart like a rock cast in the sea," Julien doubling her song in the mix with Blackberri's contemporary meditation on a dream deferred. The audience sees Bessie Smith, whose voice then fades as Blackberri's acousmatic singing rises. Noting the implications of this dual soundtrack, Dagmar Brunow recalls José Muñoz's observation that there is "something uncanny about these voices resonating; this resonance produces a smooth superimposition that is visually impossible."⁴

Why visually impossible? In the acousmatic, the viewer cannot help but disassociate—or disidentify, as Muñoz might say—the supposed symmetry between the body and voice on-screen. The acousmatic is among the chief powers of sound cinema, as Kaja Silverman and Michel Chion have famously argued.⁵ But their formulations, as important as they are, focus almost exclusively on the anxiety surrounding white bodily morphology. What of the utopic, otherworldly aesthetic to be found in a black acousmatics?⁶ Hughes himself plays with the acousmatic in poems like "Mother to Son" and "Lament over Love," where the poet articulates queer desire and capitalizes on the invisible dimension of reading to speak in the voice of Black women's blues ("I hope my child'll / Never love a man"). These

poems are critically regarded as a kind of drag, a vocal ventriloquism that reembodies, among Hughes's favorite singers, Bessie Smith.⁷

In making this restlessly intermedial film that is determined to claim cinema itself for black gay identities, Julien returns to Bessie Smith—as she is situated at the early beginnings of sound cinema. Dudley Murphey's short sound film *St. Louis Blues*—the first made for a preexisting song—is the only known audiovisual recording of Bessie Smith's 1925 eponymous song. Julien describes his discovery of it and of "the Empress of the Blues," who was also known for her scandalous bisexuality, as one creative beginning of *Looking for Langston*. (In 1987, coinciding with attending James Baldwin's funeral, Julien encountered "St. Louis Blues" for the first time.)⁸ Considered a "cinematic emblem of the Jazz Age," *St. Louis Blues* was frequently understood as an after-effect of *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) and as part of the boom of short sound films that ran before features to replace the live acts that originally ran with them.⁹

Apart from the traditional debate over the origins of sound cinema, *St. Louis Blues* raises the question of what it means to posit an aesthetic impulse of image toward sound, and sound toward image, both in the story of sound cinema and in its ontology. What is lost by narratives positioning a blackface film and its wish for identity as the most pivotal moment in the move from silent cinema to sound cinema? In part, the story loses what Michael B. Gillespie calls "blackness as the art of being."¹⁰ What would it mean to start otherwise: not with the wish to capture, locate, or represent identity on the screen, but rather with what is otherworldly in cinema and uncapturable about early sound cinema's continued questioning movement between sound and image?

In *Disintegrating the Musical*, Arthur Knight describes an "emphatic" link between music/musical performances and blackness in the cinematic imagination, such that one can hardly think of the sonification of film without black voices and sound.¹¹ Sound cinema as such, in that case, may be seen as a consequence of blackness. The blackness of its ontology ought to be considered aside from any "integration" of sound and image, for this socio-aesthetic integration is tenuous and always on the verge of breaking apart.¹² This verge can be partially understood through the meaningful proliferation of genre and form, but more centrally through the sensory relationship between what is called "image" and what is called "sound" as it pertains to cinema as a black art: the blackness of the aesthetic itself as the place of contact between sensation and world.

At the center of this story is the sound and image of Bessie Smith. W. C. Handy cast her in *St. Louis Blues*, a film

that he coauthored with Murphy and for whose narrative he composed a new arrangement of his original song, which Bessie Smith had made famous in 1925. The two-reel film begins in a working-class boardinghouse where a con artist and showman, Jimmy the Pimp (Jimmy Mordecai), is joking with friends and making overtures to another woman (Isabel Washington). This unnamed woman knows Jimmy to be in a relationship with a woman named Bessie.¹³ Jimmy and the unnamed woman go into a bedroom and laugh, enjoying their two-timing. Bessie first appears in the film when she finds them together and erupts in anger, only to be battered and left forlorn, begging Jimmy not to leave. Lying on the ground, Bessie begins to croon to herself a central refrain of the song—“My man’s got a heart like a rock cast in the sea”—sung a cappella and without any seeming sense of audience. The song, as it tells the story of being left by a man for a richer and lighter-skinned woman, sets up the narrative conceit for the remainder of the film.

The second reel elaborates and continues the song but also conjugates it, creating a second space that is not totally moored to reality. Bessie suddenly appears at the bar of an uptown club, sinking and singing into the sadness of drink. At first, Bessie is isolated. No one in the club hears her except the piano player, played by James P. Johnson (composer of “The Charleston”), who begins to accompany her. The a cappella performance slowly becomes the rendition of the song that Handy had newly arranged for the film, as other instruments join in: the house band also features Thomas Morris and Joe Smith on cornet, and Bernard Addison on guitar and banjo—each important figures of ragtime and early recording.

As the music expands, the clubgoers become completely entranced by Bessie—who perhaps, in this moment, on the imaginary plane, is becoming “Bessie Smith,” not a dejected woman any longer but the star of her own show. Black women blues singers “had broken out of the boundaries of the home and taken their sensuality and sexuality out of the private into the public sphere,” writes Hazel Carby. “For these singers were gorgeous, and their physical presence elevated them to being referred to as Goddesses, as the high priestesses of the blues.”¹⁴ Bessie Smith modulates single phrases, not simply finding consolation but world-building through singing.

As she sings, Bessie is transformed; the on-screen audience, too, is transformed into a chorus that now performs with her, echoing her words. This transformation is among the film’s many otherworldly moments, and to some extent, its power of wish fulfillment meets the generic definition of the film musical.¹⁵ As the clubgoers join Bessie, the film’s viewers cannot be sure whether they are watching her dream



Bessie Smith, star of the show, in a publicity still.

or the film’s reality. Their ecstasy, which also forms part of the film’s prognostic value, turns the clubgoers’ transformation into a conjugating one: their singing is a transformation in space and time. As the chorus, they sing in a different tense than the one in which they, as audience, had watched. Now they accompany Bessie, their voices acting as a threshold between realities (not unlike the slow panning of the establishing shot of *Looking for Langston* through which Julien reveals the nightclub, another world beneath the first one).

In the nightclub, it becomes possible—by virtue of performance—to be elsewhere. In reality, the Hall Johnson Choir were cast to play the clubgoers who harmonize with Bessie Smith in this arrangement, a choice that is stunning for how it redefines what is or can be meant by the “blues.” The choral arrangement counteracts the mythos of the unadulterated solo performer or “lone country bluesman.”¹⁶ As the camera pans around the club, the song plays in its entirety, not merely as extradiegetic soundtrack but as diegetic music.

Yet, the binary quality of film terminology fails to address what is most otherworldly about the song. Since Mary Ann Doane’s pathbreaking reflections, it has become common to think in terms of diegetic and extradiegetic sound—an

approach that limits the discussion to “sounds of and in the filmic world,” writes Justin Horton, instead of asking after “sounds that originate elsewhere.”¹⁷ Something about Bessie Smith’s performance teaches that black cinematic sound restlessly originates elsewhere. Though she sings diegetically, she posits an extradiegetic world that is irreducible to fantasy, in part because Julien will later make it real. In so doing, he retrieves a “place” (however fleeting) for Bessie Smith in the history and future of queer black cinema.

Once the song takes hold of the chorus, Bessie never leaves the corner of the stage, becoming marginalized in the frame. Though they listen to and then sing with her, the community is fickle: they rejoice over Jimmy when he returns and steals the show. Her song’s desire to build a different world has not prevailed; it does not create a world where she can be loved. As Jimmy continues to take center stage, the camera continually pans back to the bar where Bessie stands, forlorn, the camera moored to her face even as the crowd attempts to relegate her to the background. The camera’s attention to her face presents and imagines an interior space of meditation, suggesting a third conjugation of inner space that becomes visible on-screen.

Watching the film today, one has the feeling of seeing something that had not existed before yet was already on the verge of disappearing, a precarious or fragile image. Perhaps this feeling is guided by the sense that *St. Louis Blues* is the only known audiovisual recording of the Empress of the Blues, as well as by the fatality and untimeliness of her violent death.¹⁸ As it is often recounted by critics and Julien, the story of his own archival encounter with the song—posited as an artistic crux of *Looking for Langston*’s coming into being—tracks with a sense of chance, as if Julien’s film itself might not have been made without it.

Cinta Pelejà notes that nearly every account of *St. Louis Blues* begins with the sense that the film was “lost,” that it was “rescued” after having first been protested against and threatened with destruction by the NAACP. Unable to find any evidence that would corroborate these stories (“Where was the film when it was considered lost?”), Pelejà speculates instead on another past for the film.¹⁹ Her speculation retains the possibility of its having been censored: the two-reel film, sometime after its original debut, was perhaps not shown in its entirety,



Bessie and Jimmy share an intimate dance in *St. Louis Blues*.

with the second reel of Bessie Smith singing not always being played once it came under the surveillant view of censors, who would have protested against the intimate dance between Bessie and Jimmy. “Black song and dance contained powerful (if abstract) signifiers of (bodily) rebellion,” as Ellen Scott notes.²⁰ But these stories do not, in themselves, account for why Bessie Smith is the gathering place of such fantasies of loss and recuperation.²¹

Even while present at the beginning of sound cinema, Bessie Smith was already predicting something else. *St. Louis Blues* is an early manifestation of the lineage of the music video genre, as a film devoted to a song that attempts to create an extended narrative in which the song lives. Of course, other mediums participate in this genealogy, such as the Panoram machine of the 1940s or Color-Sonics jukeboxes of the 1960s. But such generic or medium considerations are meaningful for an ontology of sound cinema only when they also reframe, as Alessandra Raengo and Lauren McLeod Cramer do, the status of music video as an archive of black arts. Black music video, they suggest, constitutes an ongoing “investigation of the sound-image relation.”²²

Bessie’s performance is a conjugation in space and time, in genre and form. The song recognizes that a momentary departure or waywardness can be found in the act of performance itself.²³ The song is an incantation of some other reality, a way of being other than what is demanded by violent, social fact. Notably, Bessie Smith was known to sing ahead of the beat.²⁴ Her “blue” or worried notes fall just below the pitch, a dissonance at the heart of the given order of things. Such bending allows the note to be heard just below expectation and just above the paucity of the literal. Through these notes, the film tracks her internal state until she reaches the final frame: “Or else he wouldn’t have gone so far from me,” she sings. The travel imagined by the song (“I’m gonna pack my trunk and make my getaway”) will not take place—until it does, decades later, in the dreamscapes of *Looking for Langston*, which bears this travel as a future image.²⁵ Something about the performance is untimely, prescient.

The formal ingenuity of *St. Louis Blues* lies in its being centrifugally organized around the musicality of Bessie Smith. Murphy’s recording of her performance essentially creates a new set of formal cinematic conventions, according to which the soundtrack runs continuously, with the image edited against the sound, rather than the reverse.²⁶ The integrity of Bessie Smith’s performance demanded a cinematic vocabulary that had not yet existed. It was the first film to be made for a preexisting song.

Though Handy modifies the song from the version that had already been popularized by Smith, the song and its

performance constrain the image: Murphy cuts the image to the song. In retrospect, the kind of backward-looking glance cast by Julien can be seen as a salute to a film that is conspicuous for marking a moment just before the ossification of the sound–image relation into filmic language took place, a moment within the still-nascent promise of cinema’s otherworldliness.

Most descriptions of the film concentrate on its art of the fade:

The opening few bars are sung in her room. The image fades to black as the sound track plays across the cut, fading up as she continues to sing without a break, standing at the bar of the saloon. Such techniques have long since become standard, but in 1929 few musical performances were edited with such assurance or sense of narrative flow.²⁷

The fade presents (makes visible and audible) the “dispersive sensuality” of black sound and aurality.²⁸ In that dispersion, sound becomes image and image becomes sound: the fundamental movement that is the aesthetic.

In the fade, Bessie Smith’s voice floats in the image as a purely imaginary, nonexistent space. Her voice is ultrasensual in its capacity to make space. After the next cut, she is in an uptown club in Harlem, with no explanation of how she got there. She has been propelled by the force of her song, which has made it visible, as if by fiat. The film narrative becomes difficult to place in space and time, for in the dreaminess of cinematic space, there comes a feeling of contradictions overcome and thresholds overleaped—including, improbably, the color line itself. Smith’s singing moves between “a series of moods, rather than a developing storyline.”²⁹ And the film predates the Hollywood system of continuity editing, “which first organizes and edits disparate shots together to create the suggestion of seamless space and time.”³⁰ Four decades later, Julien will turn the convention of continuity editing against itself, panning between worlds and dreams as if they were inhabiting one unified space.

The “realism” that white critics attribute to Murphy’s film—seeing and hearing a black life from a time when those acts were separated as a result of segregation—is part of the film’s phantasmagoria, its obscuring of cinematic (and historical) operation. The all-Black cast on-screen claims to achieve the impossible by providing white people a view into black life but without any visible white people on-screen, for they have been obscured behind the

operations of the camera. Many discussions note that it is difficult to reconstruct what Black audiences thought about the film or to what extent they had access to it.³¹

This fetishism of the lacuna, however, disavows the ongoing reception of Bessie Smith by Black writers, artists, and filmmakers. In her transmedial approach to black arts, Emily Lordi persuasively argues that Bessie Smith's music is a kind of punctum, continuing to capture—well after her death—the imagination of Richard Wright and James Baldwin. Wright had Bessie Smith in mind when he wrote that the blues “have poured into them ... a degree of that over-emphasis that lifts them out of their everyday context and exalts them to a plane of vividness that strikes one with wonderment”³²

As Bessie is joined by the chorus, the conjugating resonances of the Hall Johnson Choir lift the filmic text, as an individual document of the color line, into an exalted plane of cinematic history itself. The choir will go on to occupy a crucial place in the history of sound cinema's iterative capacities in the development of both soundtrack music and animated voices. The Hall Johnson Choir can be heard in the famous soundtracks for both Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (William Cottrell, David Hand, and Wilfred Jackson, 1937) and *Dumbo* (Samuel Armstrong, Norman Ferguson, Wilfred Jackson, et al., 1941). As one performance conjugates into another, it becomes retroactively possible to “see” in the chorus's singing bodies on the screen a visualization of later voices that will go unseen, their blackness obscured but not removed without a trace, as Racquel Gates argues in her essay “Representation and Resonance: *Dumbo* as Black Allegory,” in this issue.

The voices of *St. Louis Blues* hold a place in the history of what it means for sound to encounter and reencounter image, and what it means to conduct film historical work in a conjugated sense, approaching it not as linear but as resonant and prognostic. The choir is both itself and not itself, just as Bessie is both film image and the embodied Bessie Smith. The acousmatic implications of *St. Louis Blues*—the conjugating play between what is heard but unseen and what is permitted to be seen or heard—is part of its prognostic value.

After Bessie croons the opening line of the song from within the narrative, the image fades to black to introduce the next space and the next narrative (also the second reel). It is a playing across the fade that is also the sensorial threshold between sound and image. This song is unmoored from circumstance and “exalted.” Bessie Smith is not meant to exist: she did not survive the color line (of segregation) and was prevented by her untimely death from entering

another phase of her music. The color line foreclosed such possibility, but she nonetheless survives the color line in its sensorial prerogative: as the place where bodies become visible and audible in their race. There is instead a transformative impulse by which seeing becomes hearing and sound becomes sight. It is there that Bessie Smith sings.

Notes

1. See, for example, Chi-Yun Shin, “Reclaiming the Corporeal: The Black Male Body and the ‘Racial’ Mountain in ‘Looking for Langston,’” *Paragraph* 26, nos. 1/2 (2003): 201–12. For a discussion of “remediation” in the opening montage and throughout the film, see Dagmar Brunow, *Remediating Transcultural Memory: Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). Brunow also provides a helpful summary of the wealth of scholarship on this film's relationship to temporality and the archival. In the funeral sequence, Julien includes on the soundtrack an audio recording of Toni Morrison speaking at James Baldwin's 1987 funeral, thus crisscrossing a Black Atlantic past.
2. Just as Walter Benjamin insists upon the “prognostic value” of reproducibility, here, too, each new medium prefaces or predicts another. See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 217.
3. For a discussion of the character Alex, especially in relation to a black male gaze, see Shin, “Reclaiming the Corporeal,” 207.
4. Quoted in Brunow, *Remediating Transcultural Memory*, 180.
5. See Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); and Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
6. For a discussion of “acousmatic blackness,” see Mendi Obadike, “Low Fidelity: Stereotyped Blackness in the Field of Sound” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2005). I was led to this work by its reference in Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 228–29n26. For a discussion of this topic at length, see Julie Beth Napolin, *The Fact of Resonance: Modernist Acoustics and Narrative Form* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020).
7. See Sam See, “‘Spectacles in Color’: The Primitive Drag of Langston Hughes,” *PMLA* 124, no. 3 (2009): 798–816.
8. Teaching at NYU at the time, Julien's partner (now husband), Mark Nash, went to MoMA at his request to search in its archive for moving images on the Harlem Renaissance. As Julien narrates his archival encounter with Bessie Smith,

- it's unclear if Nash found the entire film or only the second reel with the song and dance; see "Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston*," *MoMA Magazine*, June 15, 2022, www.moma.org/magazine/articles/747. Though the film was "found" in the archive, it was not "lost": it was available in the 1970s on the 16 mm circuit via Blackhawk Films (thanks to B. Ruby Rich and Ronald Gregg for their assistance with this history).
9. Cinta Pelejà, "The Film Image of Bessie Smith: *St. Louis Blues* (1929) in the Post-WWII Era and its Speculative Afterlives," *Feminist Media Histories* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2022): 88. Also see Susan B. Delson, *Dudley Murphy, Hollywood Wild Card* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 84.
 10. Michael Boyce Gillespie, *Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 9.
 11. Arthur Knight, *Disintegrating the Musical: Black Performance and American Musical Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 3.
 12. On displaced desire, see Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Ellen Scott has usefully pointed out that it is common in discussions of the formal qualities of sound cinema for the social to migrate to the aesthetic, film being said to have "integrated" sound and image. See Ellen Scott, *Cinema Civil Rights: Regulation, Repression, and Race in the Classical Hollywood Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015). For a counterimaginary, see Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). Moten writes of "the undifferentiated but unfixed ensemble ... a spatial representation ... become dispersive sensuality" (47).
 13. Isabel Washington, the first wife of Adam Clayton Powell Jr., was uncredited. Here, and throughout the rest of the essay, I will refer to "Bessie" when discussing the character, who is only ever addressed by her first name in the film, and "Bessie Smith" when discussing the biographical person. Though the film credits Bessie Smith as "playing herself," my aim is to preserve the aesthetic movement between the real and the discursive, or what Michael B. Gillespie calls "embodied being" and the "author function." Gillespie, *Film Blackness*, 1.
 14. Quoted in Kimberly Mack, *Fictional Blues: Narrative Self-Invention from Bessie Smith to Jack White* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), 78.
 15. See Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993), 371–81.
 16. Mack, *Fictional Blues*, 72.
 17. Justin Horton, "The Building and Blurring of Worlds: Sound, Space, and Complex Narrative Cinema," in *World Building*, ed. Marta Boni (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 194. For Doane's reflections, see Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 33–50.
 18. Bessie Smith died after a car wreck near Memphis after a whites-only hospital would not treat or admit her. It is one of the most reproduced stories about Bessie Smith and the subject of a one-act Edward Albee play, *The Death of Bessie Smith*. See Pelejà, "The Film Image of Bessie Smith," 105n11.
 19. Pelejà, 101.
 20. Scott, *Cinema Civil Rights*, 86.
 21. On black femme ontology in cinema, see Rizvana Bradley, "Vestiges of Black Motherhood," *Film Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (2017): 46–52. Bradley writes, "[T]he ontological position of the black femme (whom [Kara] Keeling understands to be both visually impossible and interdicted yet full of cinematic possibility) has long been a point of interrogation in Black Studies with an extensive critical genealogy" (46). This genealogy includes Saidiya Hartman and Hortense Spillers's reflections on "the loss of the black mother [that] animates the historical imagination of transatlantic slavery" (46).
 22. Alessandra Raengo and Lauren McLeod Cramer, "The Unruly Archives of Black Music Videos," *JCMS* 59, no. 2 (Winter 2020): 139.
 23. For an elaboration of waywardness, see Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (New York: Norton, 2019).
 24. Emily Lordi, *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 63.
 25. This bearing of future images is one role of photography in the film, where its various angels hold up large photos of deceased Black icons, such as James Baldwin, who wrote of his great love of Bessie Smith.
 26. Delson, *Dudley Murphy*, 90.
 27. Delson, 90.
 28. Moten, *In the Break*, 47.
 29. Lordi, *Black Resonance*, 36.
 30. Horton, "The Building and Blurring of Worlds," 189.
 31. See, for example, Delson, *Dudley Murphy*, 91. In a similar vein, Knight notes "the elusiveness of the archive" of black reception more generally and the necessity of working with what is there to get glimpses of what is possible. Knight, *Disintegrating the Musical*, 20.
 32. Quoted in Lordi, *Black Resonance*, 30–31.