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# Black Valuation and the Economy of the Cinematic Soundscape

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## Abstract

Hollywood's Classical Era demarcates a significant rise in the prevalence and importance of visual culture in the United States. This period also coincides with a historical period in which the struggles for Black citizenship and visibility began to take a different shape; outside of the obvious political avenues that called for racial equality, the entertainment industry also became a hotbed for concerns about racial representation. The film industry in particular served as a paradoxical arena for Black representation, as it at once provided a means for Black visibility in a mass medium while simultaneously rendering the group metaphorically invisible through nonessential, menial, and subservient onscreen visual representations.

These cinematic representations in turn lent themselves to the creation of a visual value system, which was disseminated racially when looking through a purely visual lens: whites of high value, blacks of low value. However, as sound became more integrated into the visual medium, an alternative lens for which to determine value and presence became available—the sonic lens. Sound created a means by which visually devalued Blacks were able to operate within the hegemonic structure of Classical Era Hollywood while also moving from the background into the foreground, both literally and figuratively. Through evaluating the sonic, value, that the visual value system may have stripped away from Blacks on screen, was able to be reattached to the Black body.

This phenomenon is apparent in many films of Hollywood's Classical Era; however, this article will focus on two of the most iconic films of the period, *Gone With the Wind* (1939) and *Casablanca* (1942), and one of the zaniest, *Hellzapoppin'* (1941). These three films provide a wide spectrum of Black sonic representation, and each reveals an alternative value system at play in which the sonic is able to transcend the visual in a unique manner, proving that the cinematic value system is in fact more dynamic than the constraints of visual culture may allow.

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The era of Hollywood's studio system is an iconic and foundational period in American history that serves as a benchmark for our emergence into a visual culture. Unfortunately, the minimal and often menial visual representation of Black Americans in Hollywood film during this period tends to exclude the group from the history and discourse on the subject. The lack of Blacks in positions of power within the studio system, combined with the Jim Crow politics of the time, caused for a proliferation of Black subservience and negative typecasting in film. As Blacks most often filled the roles of servants, porters, doormen, nannies, and mammies, little cultural value has been identified in the monolithic representations of Blacks in mainstream Classical Era film;<sup>1</sup> instead scholars and historians, such as Donald

Bogle, Edward Mapp, and Thomas Cripps, tend to focus on the proliferation of negative stereotypes portrayed by Black performers in the films in this period.<sup>2</sup> While this observation is important, solely focusing on the negative aspects of Black visibility in the Classical Era is both historically and culturally dangerous, as it threatens to eschew and dismiss the importance of Black performers from early visual history. Jonathan Sterne addresses the faultiness of this reasoning in *The Audible Past*, as he asserts, "There is always more than one map for a territory, and sound provides a particular map through history."<sup>3</sup> Sterne's logic directly applies to the case of Black representation in Classical Hollywood cinema. Despite the visual arena in which film situates itself, it is through the implementation of the sonic in which Blacks are

most often able to establish a visual presence in Studio System Era film. This tactic is present in some of the industry's most iconic films, such as *Casablanca* (dir. Michael Curtiz, 1941) and *Gone with the Wind* (dir. Victor Fleming, 1939), as well as some of the industry's zaniest, like the Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson film *Hellzapoppin'* (dir. H.C. Potter, 1941). This particular utilization of the sonic serves as a vehicle for attaining visual value, while also advancing the Black sonic cultural tradition.<sup>4</sup>

The attempt to assimilate into a mass culture in hopes of conflating Western ideals with one's own primary cultural values and traditions has proven historically problematic for Blacks in the United States. Between negotiating Western value structures that were at first forced and later denied by the hegemony, Black Americans have often found themselves without the ability to adequately participate in American culture. Further, as Blacks themselves have suffered the contradiction of being commodified as valuable *property*, yet continually devalued as *human beings* in American society, Black cultural traditions have been devalued by extension. In her book, *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins explains the Black struggle to balance cultural value while also gaining status within a society's hegemonic value structure: she states that "being black" is a process that "encompasses both experiencing white domination and individual and group valuation of an independent, long-standing Afrocentric consciousness."<sup>5</sup> Maintaining these cultural balances becomes more difficult as the value systems of the dominating culture themselves continue to evolve.

Although the sonic is a foundational element of the orally/aurally-based Black tradition, the evolution of Western ideals has continued to marginalize the sonic's value. The exaltation of the literary in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was one of the first Western cultural systems to directly challenge the value of the Black sonic tradition. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. notes the oppressive impact imposed upon Blacks during this cultural shift, stating, "The urge towards the systemization of human knowledge, led directly to the relegation of Black people to a lower rung on the Great Chain of Being."<sup>6</sup> The increasing valuation of literary culture created a relational

dynamic that operated under the law of inverse proportions with respect to the Black cultural foundation: as the value of the literary culture increased, the value of the sonic culture decreased. At the same time, the push for Blacks to relinquish their connection to their sonic past in exchange for the literary "gateway to humanity" further threatened the strength and existence of sonic culture.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, the assimilation process that occurred as Blacks desired to obtain a sense of Western value, and essentially *humanity*, by adapting themselves into the literary tradition was in fact a specialized cultural transition that managed to salvage the Black sonic foundation. Rather than *replacing* the sonic foundation with the literary present, the oral was instead *incorporated* into this new literary realm. Aside from the extraneous social impediments placed on the upward mobility of Blacks at the time, the mere logistics of the transition from an oral culture to a literary culture were not particularly difficult. Both orality and the literary work within the same linguistic rule set, allowing for the implementation of a simple semiotic structure—the alphabet—to serve as a seamless mechanism of conversion. This resulted in a simple *conversion* of culture in which the original source of culture—the sonic—simply reconfigured itself into a form of culture that gained its cognitive meaning from use of the visual senses.

The presence of the sonic within the Black literary tradition was further referenced in those works' categorical description. Slave "narratives"—literary works that directly suggest a connection to the active process of oral dictation—were the biggest Black literary contributions of the time.<sup>8</sup> Gates notes the cultural infusion of the Black sonic into the emerging literary system as he explains, "Black people could become speaking subjects only by inscribing their voices in the written word."<sup>9</sup> According to Gates, this Black emergence into literary culture was part of a four-part homology consisting of "voice and presence, silence and absence."<sup>10</sup> Through the literary tradition, Blacks were able to begin to establish a sense of being and humanity within the larger American culture—even though their access point was the connection to their oral past.

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The aural makes visible to Olsen and Johnson those who were invisible seconds before.

However, the social value that Blacks were beginning to achieve by operating within the literary tradition was again destabilized as the Western hegemony moved towards embracing yet another cultural phenomenon. With the emergence of technologies that could capture and reproduce visual images, a visual culture began to materialize and dominate in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Both audio and literary value decreased as cultural value was assigned foremost to that which could be “seen”; unfortunately, Black Americans—a group which had largely been rendered socially invisible—were again relegated to a devalued status. Despite the social gains made by incorporating the oral into the literary tradition in efforts to establish a “voice” in American society, *visual* presence was still greatly lacking. When considering Gates’ “four-part homology” in terms of this cultural transition, “voice and presence, silence and absence” shifts to *visibility and presence* (value), *invisibility and absence* (no value). Thus, the emergence of visual culture and the corresponding lack of Black visibility again questioned Black humanity and value within the American landscape.

The cinema’s positioning as *the* mass medium of culture during the first half of the twentieth century only further perpetuated the Black devaluation process through its limited and often dehumanizing visual representation of Blacks on the screen. During Classical Era Hollywood, Blacks were paradoxically infused into this arena of visual culture under the guise of the “visibly invisible.” This confounding representation of visibility led to the emergence of what I refer to as “Atmospheric Blacks”—Black characters cast in roles merely to provide a particular ambiance for a film’s narrative or specific scene. Subjugated to playing the role of an atmospheric prop, these Black characters, though theoretically visible, are rendered narratively invisible, as their mere visual objectification serves no significant importance to the momentum of the plot.

Additionally, the prospective value of the Atmospheric Black is stripped from the Black characters themselves and redistributed to the various White characters who occupy the space. The Atmospheric Black’s consignment to playing a subservient role (such as a maid or doorman) becomes a visual signifier of White prosperity and social value, reinstating a value system upon the Black body that is reminiscent of the days of slavery. This visual commodification of Blackness creates another value system of inverse proportions, in which the visual and narrative devaluation of Blacks results in an increase in narrative and visual value for Whites. Likewise, a shot that exhibits Blacks living in a social condition of squalor and poverty is meant to serve as a visual juxtaposition to the heightened social standing and value of Whiteness. These Atmospheric Blacks become passive signifying *objects* within the scope of the visual realm; thus, by transposing Laura Mulvey’s “gaze theory” to fit the subject of Blackness, it can be purported that the objectified Atmospheric Blacks become “tied to [their] place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”<sup>11</sup> Though these passive visual representations of Blacks assign meaning to White value, there is an utter lack of personified value, causing most Blacks in mainstream Classical Era film to remain independently devalued within the visual economy.

A few ironies exist within the value system of Hollywood film. While the industry generally exemplifies a performer’s value via the presence,

location, and size of a screen credit, a credit in this visual medium is ironically most often afforded to those who have a speaking role. Laura Mulvey instead argues that the visual value in cinema is actually gendered, and thus, visual objectification determines a woman's value in film.<sup>12</sup> Yet, neither of these cinematic value systems applies directly to Black characters in mainstream films during the Classical Period, as countless Black actors were deprived of their rightful onscreen credit,<sup>13</sup> and/or simply played the roles of Atmospheric Blacks—those visually objectified for the signification of White value. Instead, Black characters must rely on sufficient narrative and thematic contributions to establish a valuable visual presence; this “presence” is most often achieved as Black characters variously implement the sonic to emerge into the forefront.

As with literary culture before it, utilizing the sonic becomes essential for Blacks' entry into the cultural hegemony. Paul Gilroy's concept in *The Black Atlantic* of the limitation of Blacks'

“expressive power of language” inversely affecting the rise of the “power and significance of music within the black Atlantic”<sup>14</sup> also transcends to the film screen. By reassigning Gilroy's argument to the visual medium of Classical cinema, it is the limitation of Black visual power (read: presence) that has created a rising significance for Black sonic engagement within the visual medium. Through this inversion—a move that also manages to maintain the importance of the sonic tradition within the visual culture—Black performers (despite their casting in subservient roles) become valued participants in the visual landscape of Classical Hollywood cinema.

The 1941 film *Hellzapoppin'* illustrates a fascinating example of the visibly invisible Atmospheric Blacks using the sonic to gain visual value within the filmic construct. As the film's protagonists, vaudeville team Olsen and Johnson, discuss preparation for their movie, a group of Black characters carrying musical equipment quietly



Through employing the sonic, Black characters move from the background into the foreground in *Hellzapoppin'*.



Sam as the acoustic and narrative centerpiece of *Casablanca*.

cross the frame, largely unnoticed. The physical blocking of the scene establishes the first system of Black visual devaluation, as the foregrounded, medium-shot placement of the White characters visually obstructs the Black characters that pass in the background. This encoded visual devaluation continues within the narrative as the White characters fail to “see” the Black characters as they pass by. In accordance with Mulvey’s “gaze theory,” the gaze, or *lack* of gaze in this circumstance, of the active screen character and audience viewer are “neatly combined” because the character’s gaze is meant to be retranscribed to the viewer.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the screen character’s gaze serves as a directive of visual value; in this case, White characters’ choices to control their gazes away from the Black characters notifies the viewer that the visual presence of the Black characters is of little value.

However, as the Black characters begin to employ the sonic by playing the instruments and making other performative noise behind closed doors, the camera suddenly values their visual presence by focusing on their actions, moving them from the background to the foreground. Similarly,

Olsen, who moments before seemed “unable to see” the Black characters, becomes suddenly visually captivated by their actions as he voyeuristically watches from the doorway. The Black characters create a sense of “acoustic ecology,”<sup>16</sup> which provides a means for intratextual visual value. Moreover, by the extension of Mulvey’s “gaze theory,” Olsen’s gaze becomes the viewer’s gaze, implementing visual value. Therefore, the combination of sonic elements within the scene serves as a catalyst for the Black players’ achievement of value within the visual realm.

The trope of garnering Black visual value from Black sonic activity is also firmly in place in two of the film industry’s most notable and revered films: *Casablanca* and *Gone with the Wind*. A key concept for understanding the Black valuation process in these two iconic films is Gilroy’s assertion that there are “battles over the means of cultural representation available to racially subordinated people who are denied access to particular cultural forms [...] while others [...] are developed both as a means of transcendence and as a type of compensation.”<sup>17</sup> For many, the subservient social

posts in which the Black characters (Sam [Dooley Wilson] as an overly faithful employee and Mammy [Hattie McDaniel] as a slave, respectively) within each of these films serve are a structural system of devaluation which in turn causes a depletion of visual value. However, despite the lowered social positioning of both Sam and Mammy, each of these characters obtain both visual and narrative value through the use of an alternate sonological value system as the preliminary value structure.

The sonic value system in which Sam operates in *Casablanca* is established from his first introduction in the film. His first screen appearance could more accurately be described as an “ahearance,” as it is his voice—what R. Murray Schafer would describe as the “keynote sound,”<sup>18</sup> which has been dismembered from Sam’s visual presence—that is transposed over the establishing shot of Rick’s Café Americain. The emanation of Sam’s crisp sonic performance of “It Had to Be You” piques the viewer’s curiosity about its obscured visual source and prescribes an anticipatory status of visual value on that source. The next shot attempts to satisfy this curiosity, as the camera tracks the interior acoustic space of the Café in search of the sound and finally rejoins the sonic element with its visual source by setting its focus upon Sam. Sam’s value within the visual realm is solidified as the camera moves the viewer closer to the sonic source by zooming in on his face; this camera movement quickly transitions Sam from the position of an Atmospheric Black to a character with his own personified visual value.

Within this scene, Sam’s utilization of the sonic also adds visual value to the scene and setting itself. By using Sam’s song as an aural map, the tracking camera simultaneously captures the visual staging of Rick’s club. The upbeat tone and playing of an American standard inform the viewer that, despite the visual representation of various patrons’ despair, the club serves as a bustling American oasis in Morocco—a precursor to their hopeful experiences in the United States if they escape. Thus, Sam’s sonic presence carries further value within the film as the aural encodes the visual.

The tracking of Mammy’s voice exposing the post-Civil War Tara plantation in *Gone with the Wind* serves a similar purpose. Although her mere visual presence is simply an atmospheric

construction meant to create depth within the Southern plantation setting, while also asserting a status of economic value for the O’Haras, Mammy’s utilization of her voice raises her from the role of an Atmospheric Black to that of a valuable character within the visual realm. As Mammy moves around the circumference of the room, which has suddenly become cramped with the bodies that have returned to the Tara plantation, the camera maintains a visual frame on her body by tracking the oral orders that she distributes to the various characters. The presence and power of the sonic in this scene heightens, as Mammy completely fills the acoustic space with sonic material, even if that means resorting to talking to herself. This construction of non-stop orality allows for the visual tracking in the scene to also remain uninterrupted and uncut. Mammy’s incessant use of the sonic establishes her visual value within the frame of the film, while also being the valuable narrative link that is able to communicate a lapse in narrative time.

Unlike Mulvey’s concept of the diegetic gazer directing the viewer towards a visual value system, it is Mammy’s incessant use of the sonic that directs the viewer toward the visual value in the film. Mammy’s scenes seem to be more a battle for “airtime” than visual screen time, as her fussing verbosity manages to challenge the profilmic limits in each of her scenes. As an example, after Mammy scolds Rhett about letting Bonnie ride her pony Western-style, the camera zooms in on Mammy’s face with the viewer’s inscribed anticipation that Mammy will say something else of importance. However, at this moment, Mammy stands completely silent, and the value system, which was activated because of the sonic, has now become entirely visual. Finally, after several moments of silence, and in response to Rhett ignoring her warning, she emphatically restates, “It ain’t fittin’!” At this moment, the limits of the cinematically visual are challenged by the sonic as the next scene begins to fade in. This simple utterance gains tantamount thematic importance, as it foreshadows Bonnie’s horseback-riding related death—the one traumatic event that renders Scarlett and Rhett incapable of making amends. Mammy’s tendency to compress and, at other times, extend a scene through her

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dialogue causes the viewer to place importance on her employment of the sonic, as it often serves as an aural clue for interpreting visual information.

Yet, perhaps what is one of *Gone with the Wind's* most dynamic instances of the sonic serving as an access point for gaining Black visibility is also the subtlest. When Bonnie is first born, an exuberant Rhett prattles away a rather one-sided conversation with Mammy in anticipation of meeting his first born. Although he is dependent on Mammy for information and even shares a celebratory drink with her, her value and visibility within the scene is entirely connected to her position as a nursemaid within the household. For all intents and purposes, her visibility and value in the scene are tightly bound to her occupation on the plantation and not to her individual characterization. It is not until Rhett hears Mammy's petticoat rustling, a gift that he brought her from his travels, that he suddenly snaps out of his ramblings and "sees" Mammy for the first time. As Rhett inquires about Mammy's petticoat and even requests that she lift her skirt so that he can see it, Mammy is humanized: she is an individual who fancies pretty things that make her feel feminine, and she can become quite demure and tongue-tied when recognized by the opposite sex. Mammy's humanity is strangely tied to an arbitrary object—a red petticoat; more telling perhaps, is that this object is obscured by layers of clothing, and would remain unnoticed unless sound gave its presence away. This simple sonic device works to uncover, or *make visible*, a human character that exists below the façade of the stereotypical Mammy image.

As previously mentioned, the Black use of the sonic not only assigns value to the visual content within the screen, but also serves as a valuable device for cinematic conventions themselves. Film relies on a variety of formal conventions that allow for time and space to be condensed and travelled without confusing the audience. In *Gone with the Wind*, the Black sonic serves as the device which seems disjointed scenes together, as well as the machine which can move the narrative between different time periods. While Scarlett's father is rendered mute upon her return to Tara from Atlanta, Mammy's use of the oral enables a compression of narrative time as well as eliminates the need for the conventional use of visual montage.

Mammy's brief explanation of the events that have transpired since Scarlett's departure resituate the viewer within the visual world of the film—despite the change in time and location. Mammy's use of the sonic does not simply complement the visuals, but instead essentially links the narrative and the visuals to create a smooth transition from war-period Atlanta to postwar Tara. Mammy's use of the oral as a cinematic convention within this scene speaks to Walter Benjamin's concept of cultural malleability about which he states, "The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. The tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable."<sup>19</sup> The scene demonstrates that, for Blacks, the foundation of the Black sonic manages to recreate and reinterpret itself in order to retain its relevancy as societal value systems evolve; in this case, the Black sonic tradition is effectively interpolated into the visual culture.

Sam also uses the sonic as a cinematic convention when he performs "As Time Goes By"; however, this sonic element of the film is also foundational to *Casablanca's* thematic structure. The sonic economy of Sam's "As Time Goes By" creates a soundmark which allows both Rick and Ilsa, and the film itself, to move between the visual present and the visual past. The thematic structure of the film relies on the ability to access Rick and Ilsa's romantic past, through emotions and flashbacks, in order to address the conditions in the present. Sam's playing of "As Time Goes By" creates a literal and figurative rupture in the scene at the Café Americain. First, hearing the song angrily stirs Rick's emotions about his past love, Ilsa, whom he discovers, directly through Sam's sound cue, has reemerged in his "juke joint." Secondly, the linear trajectory of the story is immediately interrupted as the sound of the song causes Rick and Ilsa to reminisce, addressing the past in an attempt to figure out the future. Thus, Sam's character becomes invaluable within the thematic as well as conventional structure of the film, as the entire thematic structure becomes dependent on his ability to activate the sonic.

However, it is important to note that the Black sonic is not an immediate inroad to achieving visual value in film; as with the history embedded in the song "As Time Goes By" for Rick and Ilsa,



Mommy's humanity is uncovered via a rustling petticoat in *Gone with the Wind*.

there must be value within the sonic information itself for the Black character to achieve visual value via the sonic. As an example, although *Gone with the Wind's* flighty house servant, Prissy, has both a speaking role combined with a brief impact on Scarlett's narrative arc, her sonic contributions never secure her a position outside of the status of the Atmospheric Black. The tonal quality of Prissy's voice—shrill, uneven, weak, and anxiety-ridden—causes little value to be instilled in her employment of the sonic. The viewers' "sonological competence"—a term that Schafer describes as "the implicit knowledge which permits the comprehension of sound formations"<sup>20</sup>—devalues the aural quality of her voice, and thus never allows her to fully transcend into a valued status within the visual realm. Narratively, the undependability of her actions parallel the undependability of her voice: she lies about her midwife abilities, dazedly hums to herself instead of urgently returning to the in-labor Melanie, and whines about being hungry as Scarlett stoically bears the hardship of traveling

the rough terrain back to Tara. Accordingly, because Prissy's voice is more of a nuisance than valuable narrative, structural, or thematic source, as the film progresses, Prissy diminishes back to the role of an Atmospheric Black.

Of course, the issue of agency must also be acknowledged here. While this examination in itself focuses on the lack of visual representation of Blacks in mainstream Classical Hollywood cinema, this lack directly correlates with the lack of Black presence in "above the line" studio positions. While the writing of inarticulate, "Negro-ized" dialogue threatened to devalue Black speaking subjects in many films, the performative control of cadence and inflection—two sonic elements—allowed the Black performers to possess a sense of control in their craft. This performative control was even more apparent outside of the realm of dialogue, as music and tap dance provided a sonic avenue in which little input could be adequately given from outsiders. But importantly, the ephemeral nature of the sonic makes it nearly impossible

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for an outsider to harness, and, therefore, within the sonic construct, there is always a level of agency. For Black actors of the studio system, these minute moments of agency, combined with the tendency of writers to attempt to maintain authenticity by writing Blacks into sonically driven roles, provided a gateway to Black value in visual culture, reasserting Black humanity and evolving foundational Black practices.

Yet, the struggle for Blacks to balance new and old value systems remains an important element in Black culture. Black invisibility continues as a problematic issue in many realms of American culture. However, Sterne calls to attention the fact that “even if sight is in some ways the privileged sense in European philosophical discourse since the Enlightenment, it is fallacious to think that sight alone or on its supposed difference from hearing explains modernity.”<sup>21</sup> This concept underscores

that Black characters gaining access to the visual culture during Hollywood’s Studio System Era did not succumb to a hierarchical value structure by devaluing the sonic, but instead incorporated a foundational Black tradition into a newly evolving hegemonic tradition. Black employment of the sonic was an aural plea that ironically moved these characters into positions to gain value narratively, thematically, and most importantly, visually. This abstracted visual valuation of Blacks during the Classical Era, though perhaps topically degrading and stereotypical, not only provided a means for the continuation of Black sonic culture, but also provided entry for future Blacks to participate in visual culture more easily. Much of Black survival and value in America has been contingent upon exercising our cultural malleability; it is our connection to our sonic past that is time after time the flexible key that allows us entry into the hegemony.

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### End Notes

1 For this paper, I am aligning with Richard B. Jewell’s definition of the Classical Period: 1929–1945. See Richard B. Jewell, *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood, 1929–1945* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

2 See Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 1973); Edward Mapp, *Blacks in American Films: Today and Yesterday* (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972); Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

3 Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.

4 Throughout this paper, I will refer to the “Black oral tradition” as the “Black sonic tradition.” As the “oral” is always dependent on the “aural,” and antiphonal practices are the basis for Black cultural practices, I feel it is more relevant to package these concepts as “the sonic.”

5 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 27.

6 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African–American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 130.

7 Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 127–169.

8 See, for example, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1987); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an African Slave* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993).

9 Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 130.

10 Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 131.

11 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Film Theory and Criticism*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall

Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 838.

12 Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 837-848.

13 As an example, Eddie Rochester Anderson did not receive screen credit for 21 of the 60 films in which he starred during the Classical Era. "Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson," *IMDb.com*, last accessed August 14, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0026655/>.

14 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 7.

15 Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 842.

16 R. Murray Schafer defines "acoustic ecology" as "the study of the effects of the acoustic environment on the physical responses or behavioral characteristics of creatures living within it." There is special attention drawn to imbalances within the soundscape. R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: The Sonic Environment and Our Turning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994), 271.

17 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 123

18 Schafer, *Soundscape*, 272.

19 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 795.

20 Schafer, *Soundscape*, 274.

21 Sterne, *Audible Past*, 3.