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Leave Me Alone

Michael Jackson's Angry Voice

"I have always wanted to believe that Michael was actually one of the most secretly angry Black race-men on the planet," wrote African-American cultural critic Greg Tate in an obituary published a couple of days after the death of Michael Jackson in the early summer of 2009.¹ This remark was one stray thought among many in the article and an opinion about Jackson seldom expressed. Tate's wish concerned Jackson as a representative of African-Americans' deep anger caused by their cultural and political history and present status, thus including him in a long line of illustrious persons beginning maybe with Frederick Douglass. The expression "secretly angry" points towards an interpretation of Michael Jackson the musician, the dancer, the showman, and the media persona as a practitioner of W. E. B. Du Bois' double consciousness,² and it would indeed be fascinating to illuminate coded references to and expressions of the anger of "black race-men" in the polish and virtuosity of Jackson's pop and show tunes, clothes, and dance steps. This would be too huge a task for a short article, so instead I would like to investigate where the two sides of the double consciousness seems to amalgamate—where Jackson transcended the taboo and expressed what was forbidden to (African-American) male pop singers, namely, anger. More specifically, I would like to discuss the aspects of Jackson's voice that may be characterized as angry. After some definitions and historical remarks, I will raise a series of questions of a more descriptive kind: What are the technical means (e.g., screams, shouts, rasp, volume, articulation) and the linguistic means (e.g., curse words, irony, objects of anger)? Does the accompaniment remain neutral, or does it support the voice (e.g., distorted guitars, heavy percussion, marked attacks on notes)?

Music and Anger

Ever since Aristotle anger has been considered among the six primary emotions, the five others being happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, and surprise. Emotions are extremely elusive categories, and so is anger. One relevant definition reads like this: "[Anger is

1 Greg Tate, "Michael Jackson: The Man in Our Mirror. Black America's Eulogies for the King of Pop; also let us Resurrect His Best Self", *Village Voice*, July 1, 2009, accessed 20 February 2011.

2 Du Bois defined double consciousness thus: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." (W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam, 1903/1989), p. 3).

an emotion that results from displeasure at an undesired event, particularly one that is perceived as having resulted from someone's blameworthy action."³ Here, anger as an intersocial phenomenon is stressed, maybe at the expense of the physiological effects of the emotion (threatening body language, violence, or in this case, vocal expression). Anger may be expressed (or suppressed) in many different ways:

Emotions are subject to social shaping in their modes of expression in the sense that most expressions, perhaps even those that are more or less hardwired, are subject to local "display rules," which govern which emotions and which expressions are appropriate in which circumstances. An expression of anger is utterly inappropriate in most public circumstances in Japan, but it is quite to be expected at an urban intersection in the United States. The cultural meaning of an emotion is also (and obviously) socially determined. In Tahiti anger is considered extremely dangerous and is even demonized; in the Mediterranean it is often a sign of virility, suggesting righteousness. This is not to say that the social influences on emotion are limited to their cultural interpretations. The emotions themselves are constituted, at least in part, by such interpretations.⁴

In this context, I am interested in how anger is expressed by occidental popular music singers, and it is thus relevant to move from general definitions and descriptions to performative aspects of anger. Experimental psychology studies like Juslin and Laukka do not seem to offer much help as the descriptors for anger (among them are fast-speech rate, high-voice intensity, much voice intensity, much high-frequency energy, fast-voice onsets, microstructural irregularity) suggest that Mozart's "Queen of the Night" would be the epitome of musical anger.⁵ Given that anger is an elusive concept and that expressions of anger are multifaceted, I would suggest to think of anger as a semantic field which includes near synonyms like fury, rage, hatred, contempt, resentment, loathing, and scorn.⁶ Also, in their study Juslin and Laukka mention a series of relevant words used by the researchers including aggressive, aggressive-excit-able, aggressiveness, anger, anger-hate-rage, angry, cold anger, destruction, frustration, fury, hate, hot anger, irritated, rage, and repressed anger.⁷ Such a semantic field opens up for a range of possible meanings at a verbal level and for a wide range of sounds which might be related to the bodily experience of anger. The point is to listen for such possible verbal descriptors in the sounds and describe in as much detail as possible what leads to such interpretations.

3 Gerrod W. Parrott, "Anger", in Antony S. R. Manstead and Miles Hewstone (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, accessed 26 October 2009.

4 Robert C. Solomon, "Emotion", in *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, accessed 27 October, 2009.

5 Patrik N. Juslin and Petri Laukka, "Communication of Emotions in Vocal Expression and Music Performance: Different Channels, Same Code?", *Psychological Bulletin* 129/5 (2003), p. 802.

6 See Morten Michelsen, "Sprog og lyd i analysen af rockmusik" [Language and Sound in the Analysis of Rock Music] (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 1997), p. 80–90.

7 Juslin and Laukka, "Communication of Emotions", p. 776. In one specific vocal tradition (bel canto opera), the queen is of course such an epitome.

Anger in Popular Music

In popular music until the 1960s, “negative” emotions like anger, fear, or disgust may sometimes be found in nonurban genres like blues and folk, but not in music associated with urban entertainment. If there were traces of anger, the crooners controlled them using irony or arrogance. Instead, the lyrics focused on emotions related to happiness or sadness, and the changing styles did not contain musical conventions for anger or the like. The 1950s’ folk revival did bring tales of deceit and death to the top of the charts, but it was Bob Dylan and his likes who introduced the performance of anger to the hit lists in the following decade.⁸ Since then, the angry young white male with a guitar strapped on has become one of the archetypes of rock. And since punk in the late 1970s, angry women have slowly become more common, sometimes also with a guitar strapped on.

In genres associated with African-Americans, anger is a slippery topic. As the semantic field shows, anger may be many slightly different things and vocalisations of anger may also draw on a multitude of slightly different techniques. Richard Middleton hears (probably indirectly) a rage in Charley Patton’s recordings from around 1930 when he states, “The rage this style portrays (an emotion plentifully documented in Patton’s life) delineates a very modern sense of alienation—one encapsulated as well in his deployment of multiple voices.”⁹ Middleton describes Patton’s voice like this:

The harsh, abrasive vocal tone, held vowels often tightening into a rasp, the guttural diction with words sometimes indecipherable, the percussive accompaniments [...] the flexible treatment of chord changes and metre, the guitar figures often running in almost heterophonic parallel with the voice [...]¹⁰

But otherwise, it is hard for me as a nonnative, nonsouthern, and non-African-American to judge to what extent country blues singers express anger. This might be related to the double-voiced nature of most songs, because the public expression of anger was not available to African-American men in the 1920s and 1930s, but it might be there for the ones in the know. It is easier to comment upon later blues singers like John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters, partly because some of their lyrics are expressing anger being directed at (supposedly) African-American women who behave badly, for example, returning home at four o’clock in the morning.¹¹

8 Dylan became the first in a long series of angry protest singers. Before that and at the same time, you could find rather violent emotions expressed in lyric lines like, “I rather see you dead little girl than to be with another man.” The line can be found in both Elvis Presley’s “Baby, Let’s Play House” (Sun 217, 1955) and The Beatles’ “Run for Your Life” (*Rubber Soul*, Parlophone PCS 3075, 1965), but the voices singing do not express such emotions.

9 Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York & London: Routledge, 2006), p. 60.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

11 Examples are John Lee Hooker, “Leave My Wife Alone” (Chess 1467, 1951) and “I’m Mad” (Specialty SP 528, 1954); Muddy Waters, “Still a Fool” (Chess 1480, 1951) and “Just Make Love to Me” (Chess 1571, 1954).

With its roots in religious communities, the civil rights movement did mainly draw on church music and other kinds of participatory music to inspire its members. It was a music of hope, not of anger, and the few popular singers who supported the movement early on (e.g., Harry Belafonte) did not record music in any way associated with anger. Nina Simone, who is hard to categorize generically, was one of the few to give vent to her rage, especially in "Mississippi Goddam."¹² The mid-1960s saw a political radicalisation; and because of its fastness, noisiness, and intensity much free jazz was interpreted as being a musical expression of the anger felt by the African-American population towards apartheid.

But by and large, the pop music sung by or produced by African-Americans did not take inspiration from that. There are a few exceptions to the rule of "no anger" in pop on Motown, namely, Edwin Starr's protest song "War" and The Temptations' critique of the state of the nation in "Ball of Confusion."¹³ Hip-hop changed that picture, especially as Public Enemy introduced radical lyrics set to extremely noisy beats to the charts in 1987. But neo soul has held on to the love lyrics, and especially male singers have chosen to appear sexy or sincere rather than expressing anger.

The point of these historical remarks is to underscore that the expression of anger, probably quite unsurprisingly, is quite common to rock but does not belong to pop music. A few women have made vocal performances sounding more or less angry,¹⁴ but to my knowledge, no male pop singers in recent years has done it, apart from Michael Jackson in the 1990s.

The Rasp

Vocally, anger is often expressed by distorting the voice somewhat; and in many instances, this distortion may be described as raspy. But there is not a one-to-one relationship between anger and raspiness. Jacob Smith has pointed to the rasp as a timbral quality, "strongly associated with the African-American voice" and as a vocal tradition complementing *bel canto* (or *chiaroscuro* (i.e., bright-dark) as he suggests to name it) as a basic western, music-cultural sound.¹⁵ Smith is not implying that African-Americans use this all the time or that nobody else uses it, only that African-Americans have brought that quality into popular music when records became a primary medium for popular music. An argument for this relation is that several authors throughout the previous century have related the rasp to the noise aspects of African instrumental timbres and use of paralinguistic features in African-American vernacular speech.¹⁶

12 Nina Simone, "Mississippi Goddam" (*Nina Simone in Concert*, Philips PHM 200-135, 1964).

13 Edwin Starr, "War" (Gordy 7101, 1970); The Temptations, "Ball of Confusion" (Gordy 7099, 1970).

14 Examples are Aretha Franklin, "Respect" (Atlantic 2403, 1967); Gloria Gaynor, "I Will Survive" (*Greatest Hits*, Polydor 833 433-2, 1978/1988); En Vogue, "Lies" (*Born to Sing*, Atlantic A2 82084, 1990); Kelis, "Caught Out There" (*Kaleidoscope*, Virgin LC 03098, 1999).

15 Jacob Smith, *Vocal Tracks. Performance and Sound Media* (Berkeley, London & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 134 and 121.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 134–35.

Smith also points out that early African-American recording artists developed a double-voiced approach related to Du Bois' notion of double consciousness navigating between the two vocal qualities in a time when the conventions of the minstrel show were still very much alive. On the other hand, a few white non-African-American performers used rasping qualities to make the race boundary unclear, although most performers stayed within the safety zone of chiaroscuro. Smith goes on to discuss what he calls the double voice of Louis Armstrong whose raspy voice and chiaroscuro trumpet often entered into dialogue and commented upon each other.

Sam Cooke became another master of this double-voiced approach,¹⁷ i.e., he used both timbral qualities in his singing and apparently he reproduced their racial associations. The chiaroscuro was the basic (but not sole) quality used in his pop studio recordings directed at Anglo-American audiences and the rasp as the basic (but not sole) one used for his gospel recordings and for a 1963 live recording from an African-American club in Florida, recordings which supposedly are closer to African-American audiences.¹⁸ Cooke's use of timbral qualities seems to reproduce the double consciousness, and I would like to proceed and show that rasp may be used for expressing intense emotions ranging from religious passion to anger. This can be studied extensively in some of Michael Jackson's songs. I am *not* implying that rasp inherently has to do with anger, but that some performers may use it in conjunction with other vocal means to express anger. Also, my point of departure is that the lyrics in some way express angry sentiments as well.¹⁹

If rasp is heard as a distortion, we may consider the sound of the distorted guitar (and other distorted sound sources) to carry some of the same meanings as the raspy or distorted voice. Several studies indicate that in the 1990s, the loud, distorted guitar carried connotations of power, aggression, and heaviness—a sound that primarily belonged to heavy metal.²⁰ Beginning with 1982's "Beat It", Jackson has used distorted guitars intermittently, mainly in songs where the lyrics indicate some kind of anger, and he has used both Eddie van Halen (*Thriller*) and Slash (*Dangerous*) as guest performers.²¹

17 Ibid., p. 137.

18 Sam Cooke, *The Man Who Invented Soul* (RCA, 07863 67911-2, 2000 [Recorded 1957–63]); Sam Cooke with the Soul Stirrers, *The Complete Specialty Recordings* (Specialty Records, 35PCD-4437-2, 2002 [Recorded 1951–57]); Sam Cooke, *Live at the Harlem Square Club* (RCA, PCD1-5181, 1985 [Recorded 1963]).

19 Expressions of anger may be found in the videos as well. An extreme example is the video for "Black and White" which "falls into two distinct parts: the cheerful singing part and the angry dancing part." The first part has music, the second only dancing, and the climax of the second part consists of Jackson smashing cars with a crowbar (Carol J. Clover, "Dancin' in the Rain", *Critical Inquiry* 21/4, (1995), p. 746).

20 Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), pp. 41–46; Michelsen, *Sprog og lyd*, p. 143–169. Serge Lacasse, "Listen to my Voice. The Evocative Power of Vocal Staging in Recorded Rock Music and Other Forms of Vocal Expression" (PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2000), p. 205–7.

21 The combination of angry lyrics and distorted guitar can be found in "Beat It" (*Thriller*, Epic EPC 85930, 1982), "Why You Wanna Trip on Me" (*Dangerous*, Epic 504424 2, 1991), "Scream," "They Don't Really Care About Us," "D.S.," and "Earth Song" (*HIStory*, Epic EPC 474709 2, 1995). "Dirty Diana" (*Bad*) includes a distorted guitar but not angry lyrics. This goes for "Give in to Me" (*Dangerous*) as well which is a full rock ballad. "She Drives Me Wild" is an example of no-angry lyrics but a raspy voice all the way through.

HIStory

The title of Michael Jackson's fifth album after his breakthrough as a solo performer in 1979, *HIStory: Past, Present and Future, Book 1*, reflects the concept of the unusual double CD: one disc is reserved for a collection of greatest hits and one for new recordings. It was released in 1995 four years after *Dangerous*. In the following, I will only consider the second CD which is quite remarkable because seven of the fifteen songs have lyrics and are performed in such a way that they can be considered more or less angry. The anger is pointed towards several instances; first and foremost, the written or televised gutter press and the justice system, but also anyone making demands on him.²² It is difficult not to listen to the songs as autobiographical statements and as a defence for himself. The cover art and the booklet lead the listener in that direction as well, and maybe the greatest hits CD is presented as evidence for his innocence (saying, "Listen, I have done all this. I can't be that bad") and against accusations of child abuse and being weird in general.

Even though the autobiographical element is strong, the "I" of the lyrics sometimes turns into a "we."²³ It is not underscored who this "we" is. Of course they are people persecuted, victimized, and (maybe wrongly) accused like Michael Jackson; and it lies near to conclude that he is singing of African-Americans as well,²⁴ thus making the album into some sort of political statement as well. In general, the mood is quite paranoid. Sampled media voices commenting on the doings of Jackson are found all over the record, and the narrating "I" is followed and spied on. In some songs ("Scream," "Childhood"), the narrator is simply the victim; in other songs, the victim fights back ("2 Bad") but does not stand victorious after the battle. The lyrics for "This Time Around" are good examples of this in between. It is not quite a victim song as he manages to stay abreast of the villains who are both "you," "they," and "somebody," but only just as the central line, "They thought they really had control of me," indicates.

The lyrics of the "not-angry" songs are concerned with either complete victimization ("Childhood"), altruistic themes (saving nature, the world, etc.), or the smiling-through-tears of Charles Chaplin's "Smile." Here, he does not use a raspy quality but goes for the chiaroscuro quality. In some of the other songs, he uses both: in "Stranger in Moscow," rasp is used in the refrain to indicate depth of feeling (from 4:00 onwards); in "Earth Song's" gospel (apotheosis) context (from 4:20 onwards), there might be anger of an indignant kind (including a heavy metal guitar); the whole vo-

22 In "Tabloid Junkie," which is a quite articulate critique of the media, and in "Scream" respectively. These themes run through his lyrics from *Thriller* onward: "Beat It," "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" (*Thriller*), "Bad," "Leave Me Alone" (*Bad*), "Jam," "Why You Wanna Trip on Me," "Black or White," (*Dangerous*), "Scream," "They Don't Care about Us," "This Time Around," "D.S.," "Money," "Tabloid Junkie," "2 Bad," "HIStory" (*HIStory*), "Ghosts," "Is It Scary" (*Blood on the Dance Floor* (Epic, 487500 2, 1997)).

23 This is most obvious in "They Don't Care about Us" where verses concern an "I" and the choruses a "we" (cf. the title).

24 Cf. the news report in the contrast part of "Scream" and in "They Don't Care about Us" ("Black man, black mail/Throw your brother in jail").

cal line in “Come Together” is raspy but not openly angry; in “HIStory,” he effectively contrasts the two timbres by letting the raspy verses depict the struggle to stand tall and the chiaroscuro bridge/chorus to present prayer and comfort:

Example 1: “HIStory” (*HIStory*) (first verse and chorus, 1:05–2:05)

He got kicked in the back
 He say that he needed that
 He hot willed in the face
 Keep daring to motivate
 He say one day you will see
 His place in world history
 He dares to be recognized
 The fires deep in his eyes

How many victims must there be
 Slaughtered in vain across the land
 And how many struggles must there be
 Before we choose to live the prophet’s plan
 Everybody sing
 Every day create your history
 Every path you take you’re leaving your legacy
 Every soldier dies in his glory
 Every legend tells of conquest and liberty

“Scream”

The disc’s opening song, “Scream,” is a good example for discussing Jackson’s expression of anger in more detail. The lyrics concern a person being angry because somebody does not play by the rules. It includes lies, abuse, collusion, and it results in the narrator being close to breaking down, asking for mercy, and “stop pressuring me.” Jackson even uses four-letter words (fucking). In the contrast section, the accused seems to become more clearly defined as television and institutional racism (black man beaten to death by the police), but due to the intertextual relations between this text and others (and to the videos), there is not much doubt that the villain of the rest of the text is the tabloid press.

The two-part intro ignores the stereo age sound production conventions of the illusionary, three-dimensional space.²⁵ It is extremely congested, and single unconnected sound sources appear in random places almost as a sound montage. The first part of the intro (the first twenty seconds) is dominated by a low frequency distorted sound. An explosion and a guitar feedback contribute to the impression of chaos. On top of

25 See Morten Michelsen, “Michael Jackson’s Sound Stages”, *Sound Effects* 2/1 (2012), accessed 4 April, 2012.

Part	Lyrics	Michael Jackson vocals	Janet Jackson vocals	Track
<i>Intro I</i>	-	A hoarse shout (a male scream?), a cry of pain	-	Low frequency distorted sound, explosion, guitar feedback -> chaotic, Shattering of glass, Cup against plate
<i>Intro II</i>	-	Shout repeated thrice	-	Main groove established, Glass sound integrated, Police siren
<i>Verse I (and II)</i>	Tired of injustice Tired of the schemes The lies are disgusting So what does it mean Kicking me down I got to get up As jacked as it sounds The whole system sucks	Clenched teeth, some syllables swallowed (-ing), Sharp plosives (t, d) and especially implosives (g) (i.e., sharp attacks). Very short vocal phrases (two beats), Very raspy, Sings as forcefully as possible at a high sound level	Verse II: Almost shouting, Next to no rasp, Articulate, Three- or faour-beat phrases, Vowels more important than consonants	Main groove: heavy upbeat for the one-strokes (low bass), marked snare on two and four, "cheap" organ sound, noises (glass)
<i>Bridge</i>	With such confusions don't it make you wanna scream Your bash abusin' victimize within the scheme You try to cope with every lie they scrutinize Somebody please have mercy 'cause I just can't take it	More articulate, Long vocal phrases (six beats), A bit less raspy	Seven beat vocal phrases	Main groove combined with ooh-la-la choir, extremely legato
<i>Chorus</i>	Stop pressurin' me Just stop pressurin' me Stop pressurin' me Stop pressurin' me Just stop pressurin' me Stop pressurin' me Make you just wanna scream	Clenched teeth again, Four-beat phrases, Hard to decide if rasp, Sings softly (almost hissing?) ²⁶	The same as Michael (apart from clenched teeth)	Main groove is repeated throughout the chorus while more and more M) and J) exclamations are added together with bass and middle-range synth sounds

26 Probably two voices blended using a sort of "harmonizer" which results in a softer vocal timbre than verse and bridge.

that, Jackson utters a hoarse shout (a male scream?) closely followed by the sound of shattering glass. The shout is a cry of pain, and the glass sound might be a consequence of the shout, i.e., shattering glass as a physical expression of the pain. In the second part of the intro, the chaos is diminished by introducing the song's main groove which includes (and neutralises) the glass sound. The cry is repeated thrice and a siren is heard.

Michael Jackson sings the very short phrases (only two beats each) of the first verse through clenched teeth and swallows some of the syllables (especially the *-ing* endings). Plosives (*t*, *d*) and especially implosives (*g*) are very sharp, and the overall timbral quality is very raspy. This indicates a persona short of breath and with so much pent-up rage that he can barely contain it anymore—the whole body is extremely tense. Janet Jackson sings the second verse using many of the same effects but without clenched teeth, thus releasing the tension somewhat. In the bridge, the phrases are much longer, and Michael Jackson is a bit less raspy. This does release the tension somewhat as well.

The anger expressed is grounded; the vocal line does not move upwards, and there is eye contact so to speak. Apart from being grounded, the anger is somewhat suppressed and controlled because of the clenched teeth. Even the intro shouts do not flood out into pure expression or incomprehension, they are contained or dissolved by the shattering of glass. But the shouts do not dissolve the angry tension in the actual song. Throughout the song, the levels of tension within the anger shift, verses being the most tense and bridges the least. In the choruses, the voices' timbral quality changes a bit as the rasp is to some extent electronically removed, and the rising amount of vocal exclamations (Jackson's trademark "uhs" and "ohs") as the chorus is repeated through the song indicates at least some bodily action in contrast to the locked body of the clenched teeth.

The heavy groove, the claustrophobic and diffuse recording space, and the track's noises support the lyrics and the vocal expression. It still has the drive of a great dancing track, but its massiveness encapsulates the dancer. The intro's distorted bass sound and guitar fits well with the rock cliché of distortion as an expression of aggression or at least tenseness, and the four-bar distorted solo later on does as well. But curiously, the latter is followed by another four bars of nondistorted guitar soloing; maybe it has the same function as the contrast section which is to point towards a (sonically) better world.

Conclusions

At least in the recording era, African-American male singers have continually crossed the borders between *chiaroscuro* and rasp infusing the two timbral qualities with an extremely wide range of possible meanings. Angriness is but one of them and a possibility seldom used. Nevertheless, it is central to Michael Jackson's oeuvre, especially *HIStory*. But what are the consequences of an African-American man displaying anger in public pop songs? In this case, probably not many. By 1995, Jackson was considered a member of a circus or a freak show—not even of a minstrel show any longer.

The album's emotional extremes (anger in contrast to the sentimental and even the maudlin) and its launch did not help either. It was an African-American man who was not quite black any longer, and it was a man posing as androgynous or even asexual (but with a tabloid history of child abuse), thus losing some of the basic markers of identity and becoming a freak—but you could still dance to it! In this situation, it was possible to ignore that there were at least some political implications in the anger displayed, in the protestations against police brutality from the top of the charts, and in the many catchy choruses which in themselves could be understood within a racial discourse (“stop pressuring me,” “they don’t care about us”).

In pop music, the expression of anger is seldom found; and when it is, it is done by women. The vocal display of extreme emotions including anger does probably still belong to the feminine area, although many rock singers have challenged that. When Jackson moved away from being a song-and-dance man and became *HIStory's* suffering saviour, his vocals became more feminized because of the always-present strong emotions. And this emotionalization might be yet another—and specifically musical—reason for not taking him seriously.

Another consequence of the marked emotionalization of the music and the singing voice in Jackson's mid-1990s music is that the question of double consciousness became irrelevant in this specific context because there is nothing to hide away anymore; even the rage caused by racial injustice may be paraded. Jackson still used the traditional musical signifiers for race—the rasp and the chiaroscuro—but he changed their meanings and made them more general. The chiaroscuro came to signify in the area of emotional stability, light, and hope while rasp came to signify on the opposite. Jackson was extremely virtuosic at both timbral qualities, and he contrasted them effectively and dramatically, but there seems to be no hidden discourse any longer; it is all up front.