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# Black Scale: Constructing “Haunted” Overpasses as Relational Methodologies

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This article introduces Black scale—a theoretical, conceptual, and methodological gathering of Blackness, music, sound, and locationality—that foregrounds the interdependence of scale and racialization. This framework explores how racial capitalist de|restructuring of space and place and intersectional personhood reshapes a Black sense of place through a “Black sense of scale” and its musical and sonic modalities. Through a geomusicological and geosonicological reading of Beyoncé’s “Haunted,” we add sociosonic textures to notions of “sense” and deepen how we think with individual and communal scales of Black poetic and material sociocultural production. This approach stresses how Black people are shaped by, but also produce a multitude of scales through Black auditory placemaking. Next, we present the overpass—a Black scalar methodology—to think with relational geographic articulations of the corporeal and material that analyze how racialized infrastructure divides space, but fosters communal refutations and the reformatting of these imposed places. Empirically, overpasses cannot be comprehended solely from above; they require multifaceted views that recognize life-worlds in the interstices. By examining the relationality across music, sound, and Blackness, we (re)activate and engage scale as a racialized, evolving, intimately embodied, and subjective interpretation of the world as well as structural, objective descriptions of it. **Key Words:** Blackness, intersectionality, overpass methodologies, relationality, scale.

My wicked tongue ... where will it be?

—Beyoncé (2015)

During a presentation about Black methodologies, McKittrick (2021) asked, “What do songs do to theory?” This evocative prompt transported us to Beyoncé’s song “Haunted,” which deepened our analysis on the relationality between Blackness, geographic scale, music, and sound. McKittrick did not singularize parts of a song by asking what lyrics, beats, or chords do to theory. Instead of diluting the analytical currency of a song by dislodging its parts, she invited us to think with the complexities of this intricate composition. Howitt, who argued for using musical metaphors to understand scale as relational, addressed similar interconnections between the rudiments of a song. He wrote, “In music, analytically discrete elements such as scale, tempo, timbre, rhythm, pitch, melody and harmony construct musical totalities that are greater than the sum of their component parts [much like] the foundational conceptual elements of environment, space, place and scale [that] underpin geographical totalities that are greater than the sum of these component parts” (Howitt 1998, 52).

Collectively, McKittrick and Howitt revealed the importance of each sonic attribute and that the linkages between them have critical meaning. These sonic attributes are intersectional, relational, and from our purview, geographically mediated through scale and the sonics of intersectionality—how music, sound, and materiality collide through listening, hearing, and the

varying identities and multiple geographies within the self. Conceptually, this approach provides an opening for using music and sound to unravel the intricacies of the subjective impacts of racial capitalist development through scalar processes and the audible intersections of Black life. Methodologically, this calls for divergent modes of interpreting the racialization of intimate and structural elements concurrently to reveal how Blackness is constitutive in delineating geographic arenas whether corporeal, global, or in-between.

## Black Scale

We introduce Black scale—a gathering of the geographic, music, and sonic scales of Blackness—to explore the sociogeographic de|restructuring of space, place, and intersectional selves within racial capitalist development and its scalar fixes. We remix the analytical relevance of scale and its multiple meanings across Black geographies, political economy, sound studies, Black feminist thought, and ethnomusicology through geomusicological and geosonicological ruminations. Given the methodological focus of this issue, we attend to overpasses through what we identify as a “Black sense of scale” to foreground multivalent geographies of embodied persons alongside architectural structures buttressing forceful, racialized accumulation.

Many geographers, including Gilmore, Mullings, and Wilson, tend to the confluence of social reproduction, political economy, and the racialized body

as a scale of analysis. We, however, focus on the “scale debates”: a series of articles debating the construction of scale and capitalist development among Marxist geographers. These debates overlooked the significance of embodiment and the body outside of labor as variable capital, its multiple positionalities including its racialization, and how the production of scale is inextricably linked to the corporeal. We draw from Marston, who argued that gender, social reproduction, and consumption shape the social construction of scale and that geographers examining how scale is produced must address this analytical gap. Next, we turn to McKittrick’s “Black sense of place,” which recognizes how Black placemaking mitigates the distinct ways Blackness is foundational to racialized economies, accumulation, and the (re)production of space. For us, this includes how racialization as a sociogeographic process is critical to the construction of scale. Racialization delineates the ways space and place are racially attributed and (re)produced through the flows of capital, the de|restructuring of capitalist development, and the fixed and shifting configurations of Black geographical life (Brenner 1998; McKittrick 2011). We also draw from this framework to explore how Black people rely on scale to mobilize poetics, create and transmit geographic knowledge, and (re)produce Black locales through a racialized sense of place. Deeper engagement with this “sense” through the geographical, music, and sonics of Blackness texturizes this framing through a “Black sense of scale.” Black people amplify their presence through scalar production, auditory placemaking, and poetic and material forms of Black sociocultural production. Adding scalar analysis to a Black sense of place diagrams racialized geographical re- and de|structuring and Black people’s varied experiences of capitalist development. This also reconceptualizes the ways they (re)produce, rely on, and reconfigure scale to (re)shape a Black sense of place and the everyday rhythms of Black life.

To conceptualize a Black sense of scale, we conduct a geomusical and geosonic reading of Beyoncé’s “Haunted,” which narrates her embodiment as intersectional across intimate, global, and in-between scales. Beyoncé methodologically directs us to overpasses, which emphasize how Black New Orleanians’ sonic strategies with architecture sharpen critiques of racialization as a concurrent structural and corporeal scalar process. Overpasses remind us that the scales of embodied evidence and systemic considerations are coconstituted and have long relied on Blackness for legibility. They also broaden our understanding of the reproduction of a multitude of Black places through racial economic models that reference, reformat, and go beyond the plantation. Attention to this architectural instance shows how these forms adjust to various periods of de|restructuring stressing the ways personal and structural elements elucidate racial capitalism as a scalar, territorializing project.

Deepening our attention to scale through racialization and Black sociocultural production foregrounds relationally linked geographic articulations of personhood and the material world simultaneously.

## Constructing | Sensing

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During the scale debates, Marxist geographers offered critical interventions into the production of space, but overlooked the multiplicity of the body. They insisted that geographers contend with the ways political economy informs the uneven development of our material worlds and how space as a commodity is reorganized through scalar processes and capitalist development. We were cautioned against treating scale as static, obsolete, a presumed analytic and methodological approach, or overdetermined attribute of space like the global. In explicating large-scale capitalist development, these insights bypassed the significance of the body intersecting in a myriad of ways with political economy. Marston (2000), in “The Social Construction of Scale,” disrupted the overrepresentation of assumed scales like the global through an examination of gender relations, social reproduction, and consumption.

Marston (2000) argued that gender was fundamental to the social construction of scale through public and private divisions and differing scales of capitalism. Her study centered white, urban, middle-class women during the Progressive movement and explored how social reproduction and consumption transformed their socioeconomic agency and cultural identities. Their social reproduction through consumption affixed the private and public spaces of the home and broader community, stressing the intrinsic exploitative convergence of patriarchy and capitalism. Marston identified these scale-making practices through the specificities of gender within an analysis of political economy attesting to the interdependencies of scale and the social self. By challenging the analytical limits of scalar determinants like the nation-state over the home that disregard how people (re)scale themselves and their geographies, Marston demonstrated how scalar configurations of capitalism are gendered and tied to the body through the market, consumerism, and sociospatial production. Marston identified how gender functions as a mode for scalemaking; however, she neglected the role of whiteness and interconnected identities within the self in the production of scale.

In her work on racialized violence and its attempts to destroy Black place through colonialism, uneven capitalist development, and “enforced placelessness,” McKittrick pinpointed how Black people develop “alternative” ways of situating themselves within and beyond the struggles over place, cartographic representation, and everyday encounters with capitalist violence. She wrote:

A black sense of place is not a steady, focused, and homogeneous way of seeing and being in place, but rather a set of changing and differential perspectives that are illustrative of, and therefore remark upon, legacies of normalized racial violence that calcify, but do not guarantee, the denigration of black geographies and their inhabitants. (McKittrick 2011, 950)

McKittrick offered an opening for thinking about the racialization of scale through the persistent de|reterritorialization of Black geographies linked to capitalist development. Black people’s “hyper-awhereness” to “seeing and being in place” and “changing and differential perspectives” exists across historical and contemporary boundaries contoured to Black people’s multiple senses and reconfigurations of their emplacement, including the plantation, the ghetto, and the urban. To that end, scale dialogues nimbly with intersectionality confronting the relationality of the body, geographical identities, our material worlds, and the processes producing subjective empirical experiences alongside abstract global systems. Sayre (2009) argued, “Scales are produced, whether by human-social, geophysical or biological processes. They have an ontological moment, insofar as they are integral to the constitution of material processes; they have an epistemological moment, insofar as one’s scale of observation determines the patterns (or lack thereof) that one observes” (105). Adopting a scalar analysis through a Black sense of place pinpoints with greater precision the embodied, multidimensional senses of geographic Blackness and the placemaking practices of Black people alongside shifting processes buttressing the “differential forms of capitalist territorial organization” (Brenner 1998, 467). Blackness links the observational and operational moments of scale through the functionality of racialized bodies and how racialization is fundamental to all forms of capitalism and its scalar fixes.

Likewise, a Black sense of scale accentuates the sociosonic materialities of lyrics, reverb, syncopation, and aural tangibilities framing Black life and how Blackness produces places that are sensed and made sense of by way of music, sound, and racialized locationality. Listening to, hearing, and engaging other modalities of cross-sensory Blackness locates complex similarities and differences of Black experiences across numerous locales. Placemaking does not happen without scale allowing us to further diagram the process of Black placemaking in addition to the result through attunement to the geographies of what is audible and beyond. What is “outside” and “in between” shapes a Black sense of scale, which for us, Beyoncé demonstrates through the sociosonic textures of “Haunted.” This “sense” is not essentialist or fixed, but constantly shifting, linking shared histories of racialized spatialization and

poetic expressions through a multitude of relational territorializations.

## Body | Structure

Turning to Beyoncé’s “Haunted,” which opens with “Ghost,” we encounter a two-part acoustemological map about erotic immersion within a domineering system capturing the material and poetics of a Black sense of scale (Feld 2015). Sonically, “Haunted” is a melodic kaleidoscope of tempestuous sounds with a phantom-like effervescence situating the music, sonic, and geographical scales of Beyoncé’s frame. Lyrically, it narrates her haunted livingness as a Southern Black woman who is everywhere and nowhere due to her global commodification. Cowriter and producer Jordan “BOOTS” Asher affirms how “Haunted” reflects Beyoncé’s sonic and visual omnipresence:

The song was originally titled “Ghost Around,” a term I made up for something always being there, always being around and nobody knows it. It can be something on your mind, a feeling you can’t shake, or an artist like Beyoncé. She is always around even if she isn’t always in your face because she has completely permeated pop music and pop culture. (Asher 2021)

“Ghost” begins with a young Beyoncé relocating herself to her hometown of Houston before her universality materialized. She does this through an old recorded acceptance speech that ends with her saying, “I love you Houston!” (Beyoncé 2015). Houston is a Black place, but also a lived scale through a set of place-based processes (re)shaping the city and its residents. As the sonic and lyrical transitions between “Ghost” and “Haunted” evolve, she accentuates these socioscalar shifts:

What goes up, ghosts around, ghosts around, around, around ... (Beyoncé 2015)

As a global superstar, Beyoncé could have made “Haunted” the focal point, which narrates how universality anguishes her existence. Instead, through an interior dialogue with the ghosts of her past, she redirects us to her hometown because her “wheres” are everywhere and nowhere, but always Houston bound. Her Black feminist theorizations frame the geographies orchestrated through her body as her Black, gendered, and Southern self expressed across objective intimate places and abstract spaces. Beyoncé alludes to a broader experiential framework reflecting the coconstitution of corporeal interactions with scalar processes and lived materialities that she experiences, embodies, and contours. She evokes a hyper-“a-where-ness” of her intersectional self coexisting as her “wheres” become inescapable.

When she evocatively sings, “It’s what you do ... it’s what you see,” she evidences how actively listening to the sociosonic haunts informs our perceptions of “being onto her” through observational scale making. The geographical exhibitionism of her body (“It’s where we go, it’s where we’ll be”) is a relationally linked spectacle that is disturbingly engulfing, planetary, and demonstrative of the collective scales that she articulates and produces. Beyoncé reframes the archipelago of her identity by refusing to pick herself or the range within her sonic landscape apart. She partakes in this refusal because the geography of her hauntings is reflective of and critical to her positionalities as immersive, transitional, and complex from the domestic to the global.

Beyoncé potently diagrams the systems of identity abstraction and commodification constitutive of global capital through the depths of “Haunted.” “Ghost” sketches the mundane repetitiveness of labor and racial capitalist exploitation through the looping of the drum beat and the flatness of Beyoncé’s voice as she reminds us of her boredom repeating “... working nine to five to stay alive.” Then, the sonic energy shifts as “Haunted” changes musical scales and speeds up, exemplifying how “scalar fixes” reformat the spaces of racial capitalism and acoustic environments through de|restructuring. Reverb—acoustic dimensions and vibrations of a song (or sound) through a sense of locationality—adds depth to the various places where Beyoncé and the listener are found based on the proximity to where the sound is and where it is going that reformats the sonic presence between the notes and lyrics. Consequently, we become “onto” her through the conflicting haunts of her hometown and universality accentuated by ghost-like reverb and multidirectional sound waves. These sonic fingerprints articulate the omnipresence of her celebrity and its subjective impacts within domineering systems. Yet, she returns to her sheets and relies on her lungs as she references (like Marston) the simultaneity of the intimate scales of her bedroom with corporate media notoriety. When she foregrounds her lungs, she insists on the coincidence of this present pop composition and her earlier childhood conjuration of Houston. Her lungs force us to consider the effervescence of her image and voice refracted through global capital circuits alongside her hometown as an inescapable imprint. Her international presence is so ubiquitous that Australian architect Elenberg Fraser modeled the Premier Tower—a skyscraper in Melbourne—after Beyoncé’s “curvaceous form” in the music video for “Ghost” (Frearson 2015). The usage of a Black woman’s body as an architectural design necessitates deeper critiques, but “Ghost” as inspiration uncovers explicit scalar connections between individual and structure within which Beyoncé is situated. Her architectural manifestation ambiguously but literally indicates corporeal

entanglements of space, capitalist development, and de|restructuring.

To that end, geomusicological and geosonicological approaches to Black scale outline the enmeshment of corporeality and spatialization, which in Western epistemology is built on the bedrock of Blackness. We must consider how Beyoncé’s evocation of her lungs as a literal body part calls out to Houston through lyrics and sound, reiterating the simultaneity of her body, the impact of her neighborhood, and her multiplicity as an icon. She offers a theoretical blueprint to the elasticity of scale and how it elucidates the complexities and operations of Blackness, gender, and regionalism beyond a mere notation of their concurrence. Beyoncé’s approach to Black scale making through geosonic fibers encapsulates a Black sense of scale as an epistemological, experiential, and material dialectic tending to the scalar attributes of the body and the bodily attributes of scale, including the various places within the self. Scale enables political economic de|restructuring and brackets how society comprehends its own reproduction as Blackness operates as the benchmark for both.

## Relational | Overpasses

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Hearing Beyoncé’s auditory scale making demands attention to Houston—the locale from which she hails—as a product of the twentieth-century oil boom structured by highway interchanges. Black scale requires immersive thinking from and with spaces and places reflecting the materiality of our metaphors. Instead of abstracting sites to indicate the mechanisms of racial capitalism, we ask how we might think with these structures, including interstates necessitating new scalar approaches. The enabling of white flight requires Blackness as unstated referent for both modern subjectivities and territorializations. Connolly’s (2014) *A World More Concrete* contends with a literal structure illustrating how concrete frames Black city life questioning the delineation of personal pleasure and communal displacement. Connolly presented a conflicted image of the false promises of urban renewal and the impacts of commerce passing over a Black community in Miami. In his reading of a playground built underneath an I-95 overpass meant to serve Miami’s “Central Negro District,” Connolly critiqued “a park that effectively rendered children invisible [and silent] to travelers whisking above the region’s airports, beaches, and suburbs. Below the freeway, the future of Black Miami looked up at a concrete sky” (Connolly 2014, 2). Connolly contemplated the negotiation of Jim Crow by Black Miamians struggling to care for their community only to be given land deemed worthless enough to literally pass over.

He poetically evokes the concrete sky inverting omnipresent satellite imagery of freeways.

For these children, the highway was not a roadbed supporting their movement through a modern economy; it was constructed to limit their perspective. Jim Crow systems of segregated land valuation cast a metaphorical shadow and material shade over processes of leisure and play, muffling the children’s laughter underneath. The roadbed as a horizon orients a person to their neighborhood even when they are above the asphalt rescaling Black places into abstract spaces. “Haunted” coproducer and writer BOOTS relied on one of these highways for private shelter in his hometown of Miami during a period of houselessness before his success (Horner 2015). Listening to the juxtaposition between BOOTS feeling concealed beneath the highway and his omnipresence through Beyoncé’s celebrity illustrates how the heavy reverb in “Haunted” operates as a scalar transition and perspectival shift. BOOTS experiences offer a unique vantage point for listening to Beyoncé and thinking with Connolly’s analysis of these overpasses.

Overpasses necessitate the horizontal view of the observer whether framed by concrete pylons or lane markers. Individuals cruising the interstate remain blissfully unaware of the interstitial life continuing below them despite their reliance on the spatial restructuring of the freeway. The overpass literally and figuratively elevates the highway, but the roadways of an overpass cannot be viewed solely from above as an overdetermined expressway negating the local surface street. The architecture of the overpass—the way it shifts wind patterns, redistributes sunlight, demands constant repair—serves as boundary accentuated by particular cartographic representations, but also as a canvas. This perspective allows us to reimagine an intersectional identity as mediated by apprehensible geographical infrastructures. Guthman (2019) noted how highways and the overpasses they necessitate affect personal appetites through food shipments, concurrently reshaping ecologies and markets. The scale of the highway affects embodied chemical processes as increased demand instantiates more pesticide use, affecting communities of color disproportionately (Guthman 2019). This analysis underscores how the expanse of infrastructure influences the most intimate decisions and simultaneously rescales networks of distribution and consumption. We sharpen this insight, arguing that racialization is a perpetual process linking the political economic and subjective aspects of scale. Scale outlines these distinct geographical impacts; race ensures their cooperability.

Strands of Black geographies clarify the relative significance of structural versus subjective impacts within racial capitalist dispossession. Using Marxian critique and the Black radical tradition, theorists delineate the fundamental anti-Black character of

racial capitalist accumulative structures. Bledsoe and Wright (2019) demonstrated this line of inquiry explicating capitalism’s tendency toward “leaving locations associated with Blackness open to the presumably ‘rational’ agendas of dominant spatial actors. Black populations, then, serve as the guarantor of capitalism’s need to constantly find new spaces of accumulation” (12). This materialist schematic differs from a poetic focus on expressive or epistemological reorientations of place challenging restricted geographical access. This paradigm analyzes how African diasporic communities stretch the heuristic of landscape to reimagine belonging and survival. Similarly, Allen, Lawhon, and Pierce (2019) note how “Marginalized groups, limited in their capacity to use landscape as a mode of claiming and defining space, often utilize different spatial strategies” (8). One method of excavating “different spatial strategies” is diagramming the interplay between the expressive and concrete that undergirds Black placemaking. James-Wilson (2018) emphasized this dialectic as “black infrastructure ... not statically ‘set in place,’ but instead a set of revolutionary place-making practices with ‘unknowable’ and (im)possible contours” (James-Wilson 2018). Strategic use of scale to claim or redefine a neighborhood or region underscores the geographic potential of Black placemaking beyond white supremacist boundaries while not precluding systematic critique of global, physical traces of dispossession.

Attention to overpasses as Black infrastructure reframes scalar methodologies to integrate humanistic and social scientific foci tethered by racial differentiation. Connolly (2014) observed that mid-twentieth-century urban planning derived legitimacy from and further instantiated racial stratification. Woods (2017) clarified the transcalar implementation of segregation through the role of infrastructure in the dialectic between Bourbonism—the evisceration of life for profit—and blues epistemology concerned with the inherent dignity of life. Woods situated the political economic origin of highway overpasses as central to the unfurling of urban renewal’s white backlash meeting Black demands for expansive economic justice, social equality, and self-determination. The architectural and infrastructural force of city planning defined “a period in which several local Black communities were sealed in concrete” (Woods 2017, 202). In New Orleans, segregationists opposed the blues vision of Black liberation. Emergent blues and Bourbon subjectivities formed alongside architectural reengineering of urban space designed to keep Black people in place as a hybrid form of racial capitalist redevelopment. The unfurling of Black scalar methodologies begins with material traces of dispossession epitomized by but not limited to highway overpasses. It diagrams multiscale dimensions of perceptual placemaking evident in acoustics and other seemingly

invisible phenomena that resist capitalist accumulation. Black scalar methodologies deepen the sensing of structural oppression through a somatic and epistemological reorientation of everyday architecture crucial to placemaking perspectives that counter concrete violence.

Considering the sociogeographic impact of auditory resonance on landscapes, Sakakeeny (2010) noted through soundwalking—actively centering the sensory experiences of listening and hearing the everyday sounds of our environments—how brass bands in New Orleans recast the interstate into a communal expression of joy and sociosonic agency. This exemplifies a necessary emphasis within Black geographies on displacement alongside Black peoples' strategic reformatting of enclosure. Thomas (2014) interrogated this dynamic by analyzing "the 'shadowy and thunderously noisy' Claiborne Avenue where Interstate 10 had physically and spiritually scarred the Tremé" where "black New Orleanians congregated beneath the overpass ... to shop at local markets, join in second line parades, celebrate Mardi Gras, and sing and chant" (173). Black New Orleanians' infrastructural intervention illustrates subjective engagement with poetics as individuals recognize the scalar extent of capitalist development's violence while joining voices to refute its presence and reimagine its possibilities. Sakakeeny (2010) recounted this transformation, noting how the same overpasses that penned in Black New Orleans' library strivings became "contested landmark[s], ... integrated into contemporary funerals and parades [which] helps us understand why the combination of instruments and voices careening off the bridge has achieved iconic status as a soundmark" (6). Soundmarks or "sonic landmarks"—community sounds reflecting distinctive sonic characteristics of a place—capture the relationality between racialization, our material worlds, and the Black music and soundings of Black New Orleans.

Soundmarking does not happen without scale. As a scalar process, soundmarking diagrams the sonic landscape shaped by Black New Orleanians and how they refute the interstate as the sole paradigm of circulation and abstract space while drawing attention to its undeniable presence. The band commemorates the oversized impact of the roadway—sealing in the community's liveliness—and reimagines it as an amplifier for their revelry. The materiality of their soundwaves infuses new poetics into the abstraction and logistical sensibility of the overpass. Through acoustic attention, Sakakeeny (2010) redirected our viewpoint to what is audible in submerged spaces otherwise obscured. By turning to the concrete contested infrastructure of modernity, we find vibrant refusals of silencing. What the sonic reverberations of the band underscore is that the brass band is "taking place," but is also a mobile and lively procession holding in tension the legacy of urban renewal

and the resilience of a community. The band relies on Black acoustemologies—how Black people know their environments through sound and racial positioning—to engage the process of rescaling. This uncovers the racialization inherent in territorial precepts organized around accumulation. Hearing the negotiation between the overpass and band as a scalar drama, in which interstates constrain bodies that then drown out these highways, showcases the suturing of landscapes and people through racialized understandings.

Connolly's subterranean playground, Woods's condemnation of communal life's concrete encasement, and Sakakeeny's resonant celebration bring the surface and depths of overpasses into our multi-sensory purview. Balancing these multiple foci through attention to how Black folks use music and sound to rescale dispossessed spaces deepens our critique of the racialized scalar logics of capitalist valuation. Methodological attention to Black scale—highlighted by critical, ambivalent resoundings and cross-sensory recontextualization—reorients understandings of normalized, unremarked-upon, and modern spatial patterns, revealing the extent of racial capitalist linkages in everyday landscapes. Racial capitalist space is modulated through questions of Blackness as scalar concerns organizing economies, commodities, and bodies. Scale teaches us that ubiquitous social forces require local interiorization and that the materiality of cloverleafs must be analyzed vertically, but also with horizontal, embodied comprehension. Overpasses as methodology amend Marston's (2000) "social construction" foregrounding the fundamental, programmatic, and habitual impact of expansive globalized racialism. Race is inextricable from familiar, intimate scales like the domestic. Black scale considers the personal and quotidian aspects of state power, market ubiquity, and structural racism, including highways.

The conceptualization of territorial arenas also affects how we link or decouple material economic processes. The dispersed impacts of infrastructure—urban and subjective—testify to the ways territorialization relies on racial metaphors scripted onto landscapes and bodies. Metropolitan development in Houston might seem distant and distinct from the incarnated concerns of gender, race, and geographic identity in Beyoncé's "Haunted." We argue, however, that you can understand spaces and places through the people that live in and carry them and inversely can only comprehend subjectivity through its numerous emplacements. Geographical specificity disrupts easy parallelisms of given subjective categorizations assumed to exist across scales. There are shared legacies and experiences within race and gender, but Black women in Houston must not always be read as entirely analogous to Black women in Chicago simply because they are Black women. Black scale cautions against too much emphasis on

Blackness or gender as universal analytics and subjectivities, ignoring particular facets of geographic identity inflected by territorialization within capitalism. By acknowledging these facets as scaled, we recognize the multifaceted differences contained in any categorical similarity.

Furthermore, this viewpoint gathers the corporeal impacts of racial capitalism—from the intimate to the abstract—to recenter the people that make geographies. Shelton’s (2017) assessment of automotive planning agendas in Houston documents how infrastructure is not simply an abstract force imposed hierarchically on communities. His work opens with a debate about an overpass for Houston’s light rail, which the East End neighborhood successfully suspended by advocating for its burial to mitigate harmful environmental impacts. Shelton noted multivalent scalar processes involved in attempts to shape the land insisting that “irreplaceable elements of the urban landscape” like highways “installed simultaneous proximity and distance between city and suburbs. The routes shrunk the temporal distance between central city office buildings and suburban homes, but they also lengthened the social, economic, and racial space between metropolitan residents” (Shelton 2017, 16). Overpasses sliced up urban space in new inequitable patterns while defining new vantage points for racialized positioning. Where people rest, work, and think matters; who surrounds them or is absent has a definitional, ontological impact on their identities. The vantage from an office building versus the view from a vacant lot shifts the perspective toward the suburbs significantly despite both outlooks emerging from the operations of a freeway.

Scale signifies a geographical frame and act of balancing. Conceptual maneuvers like transcalar analysis can couple social elements like logistical abstraction with quotidian corporeal existence. Thus, we situate Black scalar methodologies within the pathbreaking theorizations of Gilmore (2017), who earmarked structural oppression as a corporeal negotiation. She advanced “through the politics of scale” an “understanding [of] bodies as places” to note processes like “criminalization [that transform] individuals into tiny territories primed for extractive activity to unfold” (Gilmore 2017, 227). Black scalar approaches highlight racialized architectural forms alongside interpersonal, domestic negotiations. This allows for recognition of the extraction of communal, corporeal life achieved by opaque satellite imagery of expansive blacktops, but does not take domination for granted. Our methodology addresses the structural and intimate aspects of the project of modernity while the “concrete sky” under the overpass emphasizes its contradiction. We contend that the cars above and the children below rely on each other to make sense of the complex structures that we all move through. Our challenge is to index that

movement and contemplate the roadbed alongside individuals considering its weight.

## Conclusion

Like an expressway, scale offers a recognizable and efficient way to reveal the hidden processes of racial capitalist landscape formation. Feminist geographers consistently index the methodological necessity of analyzing the impacts of these processes at the corporeal level. Black geographies demand understanding Blackness (and racialization) as the constitutive dynamic linking political economy and embodied experience in colonial modernity. We offer Black scale for collective development by interweaving Blackness and scale to more fully consider our interventions:

- Black scale identifies the central functionality of Blackness as a scalar fix for the racialization of all forms of capitalism and the production of space and place.
- Scalar processes shape a multitude of Black places and people through capitalist development, the de/reorganization of space and place, and Black placemaking. Black scalar interventions reconfigure a Black sense of place to reimagine and reshape subjective and objective impacts of scalar fixes.
- A focus on overpasses as a relational Black scalar methodology foregrounds the corporeal elements of racialized geographical, musical, and sonic scales that instantiate and reformulate infrastructure’s global economic circuits.

Grounding our understanding of Black scale in its material iterations such as infrastructure highlights how physical overpasses affect political economic operations; they make commodities, markets, and new sites of accumulation. Highways simultaneously influence subjectivities; they orient any subject to themselves and their geographies. Blackness has been the most consequential linkage between these two functions of scale in the wake of colonialism and modernity. We cannot understand how scale affects our landscapes and ourselves without approaching its racialist precepts influencing both. We enliven scale as a geographical, music, and sonic analytic revealing the dialectic between intimate “senses” and structural geographical phenomenon. Diagramming scale through race links disparate phenomena like global celebrity from Houston, sonic echoes of Black New Orleans, and a playground in Miami providing shared evidence of the cacophony of capitalism and how it might sound otherwise. Scales inform racialization and achieve

saliency within capitalism through race. By turning overpasses onto themselves through cross-sensory encounters, we consider how the operations of the freeway lay bare the relational linkages between identities and social wholes. ■

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