

ARKANSAS

Fred Moten



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Fred Moten

Typset by Daniel Bouchard
Boston, MA 02116

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new trouble man

I come up hard, baby
new edge come up new up
hard, baby nobody taught
up hard, I come
up hard, baby, I come
up hard, baby new edge
yeah all yeah
I come up hard, baby,
mo' daddy taught up
hard, baby come up old
baby like scratches hard, tight
space of skin
up hard, baby come up edge
yeah all yeah

I come apart, baby
and shoot and move
apart rule

to
Laura

new trouble man

I come up hard, baby
new edge come up new up
hard, baby nobody taught
up hard I come
up hard, baby. I come
up hard, baby new edge
yeah aiihyeah
I come up hard, baby
mo' daddy taught up
hard, baby come up cold
baby like scratches hard, sugar
space of skin
up hard, baby come up edge
yeah aiihyeah

I come apart, baby
arm shoot and raise
apart rule

breaks apart, baby I
come apart, baby raise
and move this way, baby
do do do do dooooooh
come come come apart
baby I come
I'm
not just in my way, baby
baby come up hard ain't
gon' let it sweat me, babe
do do do do doooooooooh

new trouble man

I come up hard, baby

new edge come up new up

hard, baby nobody taught

up hard I come

up hard, baby I come

up hard, baby new edge

yeah yeah

I come up hard, baby

no, baby taught up

hard, baby come up cold

baby like stretches hard, yeah

space of skin

up hard, baby come up edge

yeah yeah

I come apart, baby

and shoot and rise

apart into

but on the other hand, baby

you break everything that's made that's
so clear from here, light breaks men hide
tongue circle while we talk a little while

in this full poor cell: Jerome, Robert
Pete Williams, soledad, the vanishing
point blade or black and they anticipate

other meditation and delight of more
than vision but your hand slow hum
while we talk a little while about that

shit last night. when I woke up and you
was on that couch I got so scared. that blanket
fit so snug. key and bars. cell and garden

but you talked with me a while. you brushed
and broke with small flicks like Antonello, like Sonny

could be gone

gandolph ornella emma lucy g
the music of ornella nella
but we gon' meet y'all in
at in the line at in the

line of the horn in museo in

bye

the dance of positions girl

me and laura got engaged in the music
of the names of our babies

the summertime

tensed up long and multiple
she got down and extended;
so we meet you in the click
check y'all in the summer
easy, curl like in the bloom:

start ripping this again freeze
in chill trip and tighten,
hear the lead of that choking
watch that black baton twirl
rub the new leaf and song, said

if you can do, making *bright* the
latin run like the english the hard
flow up smooth to the under it hausa
she move the one drawn
all the way through a brush and space
staircase or a bridge odyssey ayler
so laura, wishing, could feel it,
and hold and what kept on
then the naming, slave
to the image, could be gone

more windows

more windows pie
but that's okay
(how I wished though
another thing

wishing and wish
but fuckass no)
a little stone
to throw it through

we'll be alright
but several
streets there need us
to walk around

pointing at blue
orange and blue
reds and blackness
little puppies

or say hello
to the bridge
the summer wind
subways ribbon

we'll be alright
remember that
time you and me
yeah all the time

tonight I'll see
you tonight pie
I love you bye

echo park and montecito

from gallery by engine gallery by loose window pulled up inside above you witness smooth Los Angeles: step, tangent and brush. empty building till you in it, nobody. and white new connect new spray new squall to move on these steps and pin, rose and draw, circle round the edge of your cruised and inscribed inside city, your citywalk and promenade or palisades, the turning sunset whose people is all you see in pretty mute offramps overflowed hoods dawn malls.

I wouldn't try to tell my mama's story and all its edges' rip or field brown purplehull packed rooms and casinos 'cep for that lesting presen moan shell different Monday afternoon. Jerry Doggett fire iron click curl while ma was working. you got to go from Reely Phillips to Lamar LeFebvre every day and quarterly conference to you know you got to cut a motherfucker with delight even if you don't get that edge to get to what ma would tell like reconstruction.

cruising sounds at the truck stop on the bus, get on, get down, ge down get off baby. like marking and box make klinerolls and stick write dive! sound! and in graffiti on the wall and edge. my finger slip and sink inside like stick-writing, came on the inside of my skin dive! sound! broke and hyped ellipse all curled up and flagged. wait after that and write it off to the side thopology of that come on get off dive! sound! get down let's get down let's get down.

I'm extended contraband and longtime release pharmaceutical gift to the english department. range and sky and
aftershift, white circuits double flicker, trip of the future chair. the white circuits deserve a job. communication is
on the 101 and the profession calls for that reduction of signature and they know that, professors of citywalk and
beinecke. through the see-through walls in the absence of even them voices like toy horns: thought you might be
interested, G; worth a read, S.

when I first filled out the application to join the white boy circuit the face of all deletions is still always up under
whatever saves the screen and became the mark of that one time doing what you never want to be doing ever again
just this continual interrupt and taper these precisely broken measurements and displaced hypertones from all the
uptowns you never been to but read about and have some cousins in. now everywhere you go you try'n to run
over one'ese motherfuckers. the shit is sad.

the cadillac of the circuit empire is white, back end like a tank, because it's better for the heat. not strict script but
improvise the melody but not here. cause and white hog, white pig, like that, not here. not here motherfucker not
here goddamn it not here. muhfucker, mawfucka gott dammit, damn, not here. naw, naw, not here. just for a
minute I took my hands off the beam. is the one thing I did right still burning at the heart of this application?

Latrell Sprewell is a shona bird, aggressive bottom lip and long finger and no kinda spruel. absolute SPREEwell, six
foot six, one hundred and ninety-two pounds of man, full grown man. 22 talked about this kinda shit, and the one
that sang on the Alabama chain gang Lomax didn't get to, chopping cotton in Tuscaloosa next to the field house,

field nigger, work song. uncle P. J. Covey's boss gave a library, got served that night at Mussel Shoals by the ones who built the table, the bird cut his tether to reality.

you'd think a nigger would be satisfied with 32 million and act right. Alan Fein would think these agents would act in the best interest of the game and keep bird's foots on the ground, but he got hops. Len Elmore would think that these players would realize that the opportunity to play professional basketball is a privilege and not a right and adjust their attitudes accordingly. Harry Edwards would think that too. you'd think they would give something back. and this ain't to say that anybody can actually play anymore. my braid brush against the bottom of the board softer than me

you'd think Charles Barkley would give something back to Alabama which gave so much to him, but he insists on talking and you know Charles talks a lot. each bird has an individual marking but there's nothing like them in the region surrounding the compound. my compound wraps around the freeway of rivers, bright blue stucco hills and edgy Salvadoran streets curving right into the plain of my television set in Los Angeles helicopter crossfire twenty-twenty 22 bird beautiful word daybreak

move

west side

make repetition free the sun go down
we coming round find me, rider
desert sound
brown mustang, champagne protégé

come round William Dawson
Curtis Mayfield 'Tine Skip Dillard Leo
Smith and André. train scream fade high
desert high shacks high evr'thang

Dorsey

resistance cut and rock that old corner
and starched white. the job of resurrectors
is to wake up the dead. strife of the starched
white and scrapple. sausages. one'nem 'simmons

from that tree in back back home down back hand arc.
Miz Owens start up a chord with no voicing.
her phrase just broke off hand arc/Bruh step keen
toe sprung hand.

would sit right where you are and come to yourself
would fall. can you say you came to yourself tonight?
couldn't you watch just for a little while? I don't
believe you understand what I'm talking bout.

now some work and fury at the edge
and center. and somebody slid so the floor burned.
but these kinda fingers hold no ring. so rip
pages to song and clasp. get sung, turned,

blown open, through

west side

circle up outside and down.
strugglin over here, fucked up over here
but when ann mo' shut and shed sure
allowed the blurr my atmosphere

don't care whatcha mama don't allow
what more could she withdraw miss
ann nothing but the whole world
we come round and through. twist.

what it is to encircle and pierce
my auntie gave me. and mama
'nem and Clyde 'nem and her.
another flame on my hand

another skin tight at the colony club
and tomorrow at the town tavern.
these hips are more than round
and blue. the ground is dry and burned

theory and song of iowa

differences without opposition

the rain turns snow gray
and it reflects the carpet
as the grass shines under

nothing without the sound.
image won't show me things
I need to hear you talking

but I just see the flatness
(but here the hills. they roll)
with no trill no Jimmy Lyons

so I write Bill. I shoulda called.
I build the institutions but
for someone else's spacing

the old-new language

long water singing flowers
for another green explosion
'cause in the space between

plain and some surface behind me
like if the light's on
walk down the staircase

but the phone was shaken
writing we touch nights
each like if the light's on

circles to thick in any other
cord but the one right in
my ear, Laura, my city

intersection of singularities

curving up Westwinds
bird flew right through me
then the bus curve

or the time I dropped shit
and shook so I moved
down then up the hill

and the breath threw me
on the rolling engine. tell
me bout the Minister in Iowa

but it was nothing outside
the sound won't show me
nothing if the voice throw image

laugh outside the house

lady flew through winter
in the movement where?
the staircase. hinge whisper

but it wouldn't do, what you
won't do, o would you, I would
face crush and pillow do:

much: break window seal,
to warm my hand reach
like if my wedding band

hold my hand like your hand
which is the right song the real
giving me something I can feel

schooltime in iowa

gonna write me a poem about daybreak out
from alabama is a beautiful word about the color of
red sound out from lines that all be slidin out
about writing poems in alabama voice from carolina

high point and how that hamlet move me the way the grammar of the outside
smile and fall the way her hands don't move the door won't turn the cannery fold
window explode floor collapse the way they calls us bitches steel
curve in her throat till you can hear that boy try'na play that horn

make it cry. I don't know if I can do this. I'm trying to get to the essential. I don't
think I can move that quick. I don't know if I can touch her there. I don't know if I can
move that other speech, moving there in the whole other spirit, can't save them
but I think she came from the other carolina in the open of the other meeting.

and no one knew that blackwell died but as I came from the light the set boomed
geschlecht at kiwanis and krupa leaned on the edge of black and gold and there was swing
for the optimists in the field burning corn and trees checking the illinois avant garde
checking big window yesterday, walking up grand staircase yesterday, checking schooltime

eight openings and two moves

to bill my ma keep
herself held fly
like in the forest. wonder
brought sufferings at the
window of sarah the hand.
joe pass sufferings. the
star at midnight's arkansas.
this wet up the wind from
here. it's raining less.
flowing than sacred air from
churches. and gardens praise
softening. the hand is poor as
full as this shit. mama
expand and consume

Mimi

say he wrote one thing
the one he mimi sing
leg erased like words
shattered shoved whispered
laughed strollin like she
couldn't say she can't walk
good slurred would wiship
mimi's garden is smaller

tell laura I love her

go son

lord ha'mercy

flying over Chitown

Gandelsonas light

Robt's house and Michaelsouse and Charlie's

and Al's. Frank's house. I heard

an image got me here I can't
I can't I
can't stop lingrin and my breath
still lives for slurred growl

another long-ass night suite and exercise

violet

pawpaw keep calling den of robins

she don't go we don't save
he keep rubbing on her knee look
like you would try
to come back when a whistle does
and walking up a hill with
you and me for Charlie Jenkins

40

here my partner joe go
he different he don't mean nobody no harm:
my stickawood my
baseball bats went to
the foot doctor bout my callouses
but they didn't do nothin till next week I heard from him

this bus go to e14th? this bus go to san leandro bart?
now joe you been ridin this bus
long as I been drivin

you right that's right you this let me do the 80

go to san leandro bart
thank you thank you very much
yeah the 80
thank you thank you thank you
thank you

long night

next year gon play violet

eat the pretty flower fingers
sweet cold kiss baby goodbye
play it thirtyfour times next year
give the worthy one kiss
and the soft scent to her
black night is falling another

daughter gon play next year
on delmark

play violin like
the no one knew cluster of a
dial tone. the flat sound that
other one at three, door closed.
with this kinda shit abstract,
extreme, string, whine, bottleneck it's
always three o'clock in the
morning soft broke content
and oh how I hate to be alone

another long-ass night suite

cecil's culture

too blooms in linen pins

a trio for fashion

drug the logical shit

too small song dynymite

and night in cold and

arrange it deep

acquisition

grammar and rhythm are

inside rule to

here we make em over

all the way to sing

what you found on telegraph

carved into a rock we found

in period harmony tragedy

Errol's for Geri Allen

anniehgbbiokkkkkk feline cluster)

work and some of them

said what the direction was

and make it come out that

fruit burst in the flats

yellow increment and red.

but we knew the one between

figure and ground is later

Victory Boogie Woogie

fresh plastic box and whoop to get my
sound together. primary swatch and
walk away with rumble I heard.

Felix Mitchell's progress past elementary school

up, an airplane, a diamond mask.
In a shoe, a mechanical boat.
a train and an x curving,
San Pablo whistling at five
and four and three

red cubes holding down the

ponytail, got on with babydoll
and her little sunglass got off on
school street, brush past at twentyseven
with a little babydoll and
milkyway, rose and cocoapocket.

let it be the end
in a fake ride crushed
in a fake house cracked window
velvet open stemming wide Keisha
flicks while the ivory man
pass. The ivory man pass standing

brush past with a trike to jam
the villa got some love leg sad
wind at seventeen window and
fuck the one with the golddest hand
holding down and brushing past

Miz Johnson, Miss Jenny

a tone want to give
marble and clay sounds
do she want to give me
come to tell me sound

and lean from room
to hall passing image
and piglet the prisoners in
white small glass and angels

and bring a long tale in
four space explode like
a black cherry pop give me
hoping that we be sweet hey

miz johnson holding in the corridor
of air above my tongue wheels
cardboard small glass and

seeds from the soft wood

and mimi say they say she killed
her husband in the soft wood.
her smile is pink. the edge
of her smile is black

and be too bright for that
because it rolls too, baby
hoping that we be sweet
hey miss jenny, hee hee

x0

looking right at the sun
but I was all about
biting this song
like it might be
this, you know, or someone

someone at your house.
looked again caught the
light and brown decorations
pictures on a white card
but it started being late.

sense in another hall
see your beat in the
other room touch this
air flew in here
fall in this rain

smelled the fresh water
pulse on the silver roof
a river on that hall above
a dark black bass. some
holding going on paul

in the sound smells
fresh. the long craned
golden body of the
sun in the dark with
red and soft red hair

no
looking right at the sun
but I was all about
biting this song
like it might be
this you know, or someone
someone at your house
looked again caught the
light and brown decorations
picture on a white card
but it started being late
same in another hall
see your best in the
other room touch this
air flew in here
fall in this rain

Laura's alone time

is Laura's alone time my green shade. don't she want me around.
a long line of sadness
I examine it from every gesture
I rub my arm
what have I done to face the other way.
every glass got edge distorted like tape of tape, this phrasing dry laugh
don't she want me around

get the fuck outta my room?
as far off as the channel islands invisible in visible as the haze
as far as that
I guess I should put the car away? I guess I can tolerate?
nothing to do with me
something to hold, a bow, sign for
don't get around much anymore? get the fuck outta my room?

Arkansas

Cubie and Mt. Tabor

all the house is curved, all the sisters work at sonic, everybody talk like this:
I'm getting ready to tell you something; I know you ain't gon' like it: you remind me of a white man.
Where is your wife? I heard she was Anglo-Saxon. Bad as you used to talk about white folks. Naw, for
real, what is she? Eyetalian?
all the branch is curved green outside garden

Bukka neutral had a white woman in pine bluff
where it's past midnight for every every engine
but you know I'm so thankful Mr. Pascal
so thankful

like someone sanded the box of your voice
like a brass button

all the pink is gray some faded alpha bullshit and unpolished silver.
take a camcorder to this shit like some dynamite
blow that goddamn church up too
and let the hedge grow

Cash and Bryant

all the white folks mimi loves
have sunk into the moro bottom
they say to say hello
we just think she's precious

saline, pale ouchitah. panther.
fragments of airport, silent wine
Mississippi red table wine chilled
Temperance Hill and this pillhead

fucker named Steve uglyass
Miz Rogers cross-eyed cow
and that Elmer Fudd looking
principal. various Parkers and

Klappenbachs, Spearses, Matthews
and Gills

a cricket

at midnight on reserve screen dim
bottom is dry and the guild of softwood
is sad. she know the cut is another rub
and the sound of that: whine and ring
scrawl. that same dark as before make
the window a background. the shelf
is full of animals. there's Jeffrey Wright.
and it ain't no turn no moose no buck
this mug has played on top of me
since Mama got that cake out the oven.
I was gon' say I know what art is; I know
how the world works: but the snows
came and my power is low. call Laura:
all you can do is go back to Arkansas.

Arkansas

St. John

brother don't try'an set me down
and then up under her breath
I'll be lookin for you later on
and on the telephone say
see if you know who this is!
Reggie look like Bill Russell in
61. Reggie say we live
on the east side. Warren is dangerous
and it ain't dry and that story 'bout him
and that hummingbird. paw paw in the
trees in the curve of the house
and road a squirrel we caught and footprint

Edinburgh

Aunt Bertha say what do the
united methodist mean: I'm sho gon
ask him. brother don't you try
an set me down now. get you some o'
them peppers. she say sometime
she can walk without this stick.
brother say you got to be strong
she pointed at herself and smiled.
we live over there where the
white folks live, he just walked
right into the train, hey when ya'll
gon jump them dogs, her and her
mama got into it, just get that there
and I'll bring you some more tomorrow

Hebron

he kep' flickin' his hand, driving
his wrist down and out till
the fingers snapped dat!dacious
got dammit but the beak was stuck aw! I can
see him. Aunt Laura was gone when
I came skirts tall as my trees boots thin I
can see her turn. Reggie's head twist a little
checking for the pulse and content, fir
brush angle cheek soft sharp see
see if they add enough try and let the story grow
never set em down. house curved
tomorrow skylark is silent but
"come on" brought back turn back road
and green hedge, canal and Piney Grove

MICHAEL PALMER on *Arkansas*:

With probing urgency, Fred Moten engages a cultural lineage steeped in blues, R & B and improvisatory music in search of "that other speech," "the old-new language," the one that will help us discover who and how and what we are—and what "we" is. Arkansas is no one thing, no one place, rather a site of dynamic intersections. It is at once personal and public, a quick, razor-edged and open-ended conversation with multiple voicings. The work reminds us that no vital sense of community can be separated from its confusions and contentions and its ardent affirmations, just as no poetry of worth can settle for the easy assuagements of the given. It reminds us as well that in poetry the orial and the textural interweave to create a new language, a personal grammar ("grammar of the outside") illuminating the actual. Perhaps this is no more—and no less—than mimesis in its true, radical sense, the body at thought, now inside, now outside the changes. Whitman termed it "the projective," while helping us to found an American counter-tradition to which Moten and others are presently adding welcome new dimensions.

FRED MOTEN is from Las Vegas, Nevada and Kingsland, Arkansas. He currently lives in New York City and teaches in the Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

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