

Fred Moten

THE  
LITTLE  
EDGES





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wesleyan poetry

*Also by Fred Moten*

POETRY

*The Feel Trio*

*B Jenkins*

*Hughson's Tavern*

*I ran from it and was still in it.*

(with collages by Theodore Harris)

*Poems (with Jim Behrle)*

*Arkansas*

NONFICTION

*In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*

*The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*

(with Stefano Harney)

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the  
little  
edges

with an introduction by Michael B. Smith

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to frequent,  
to gather,  
to solemnize in joy,  
to enjoy,  
to sing praise,  
to practice,  
to assemble in disassembly,  
to be quietly populous,  
to publish intimately,  
to repeat this often,  
to José Esteban Muñoz,  
originally of the mass.



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**fortrd.fortrn**



---

that's what rodney asked about,  
can you make what we already (do  
you remember/how did the people)  
have? let it get around and get on in

ar.                    complicity,  
                          in scar city,  
                          complexcity

in complicita, la.      here go a box with a lid on it. if you open it you can come into our world.

up in here you look  
like cutty do. house  
look like he up. if so,  
don't you wanna go?

---

live, remote, preoccupied  
with breathing and black  
as machine ecology, iron  
man, all over the pan, all over the basin,

duone, chant carry pauses and actually live inside 'em, gift  
double, to see things and say can hear them vary, pearl,  
from then beginning all gone inside, remember, threshold,  
surround her separateness with bands but if I were a bell?

exhaustion makes life ever  
lasting. when I dance with

you I am the moved mover.

baby, you're a solid sender.

we pound plenty, baby, softened in our program, our transubstantial fade and crossfade bodies, baby.

take this and think about  
me in the first place. begin  
in the real presence of my  
skin, baby. you shook me!

---

your hand is my pocket.

I'm a pocket man. your  
hand is in my pocket. I  
fix broken rockets. you

are my starship. you're

all I need. you send for

me and I can't keep my  
self from coming, baby,

as I am, I have what I already have, I'm yours.



---

precision and humility in the experiment  
is written on the way you customize your

uniform, a ritual of lotion and stillness in  
the morning, 'fore you make it in to work

on the  
edge of  
your  
train

on the edge because you're driven to the edge in your violent correctness,  
over the edge of what you're listening to like somebody listening to you.

you might  
be one.

you might be someone that needs listening to. you might need somebody, too.  
a lot of this is found in what we have. almost all of this belongs to you. are you  
gon' gimme some? naw, you on your way to work,  
little sister. that's alright, young man. bye, baby.

---

the unspeakable tower is what they did.  
our shit has some names and sometimes  
they sound good at the bottom of it, therefore proceed  
against that little pill-head fucker that correct people's pronunciation.

fotrad.fotran ain't really got to where we got somewhere to go,  
premature precepts dripped from deferred foreskins,  
brought out from nowhere with forecepts with no receptacle,  
but early on my grammar cleft my palette with okras

and blues. mimi said don't listen to them blues.

she knew she should because her shoe moved. she knew  
the man playing ray charles was ray charles. she put the jazz-cri  
on an early stove, cooked it down to a low gravy,

(with this trade, these little fours, your dirty palette, a savory train between in blood sorbet)

let it dry and made a vase out of it. we poured what was in it  
on our greens and blues and ochres, our loud flavors  
and the tree we danced around, the tree we made a movie around,  
against that little pill-head fucker that correct people's predestination.

---

fo fo fo  
four four four  
fore fore fore  
foe foe foe

semper fe, semper fi, motherfucker,

fume instead of kill. the incident in  
crosshatch is a burst of whispers. a  
mouthpiece and burred air. in need  
turned out to be our desire. a video

of the archive in play. it's some indelicate  
news on the wall. something in silence for  
everything that everybody ever wanted. cri  
sis for everything that ever burned inside.

---

my baby's black representational space is another world.

black workers of the other world unite up in there, one  
named peanut the other named bush, making shit up in  
chance theater, which is a truck farm in exploded rows.

my baby's black representational space is the south  
dakota hills. you like the comfortable surprise of its  
location? see how it travels? it's other than itself and

it sells itself that way. whose little self are you? mine.

my baby's black representational space is all over the

place so he got to move his body. body cut the neuro

typical field with a razor in the shape of a basketball.  
somebody sing give me body you can hear it bounce.

my baby's black representational space is a black head on

some black skin. in the city of the blemish on the blemish  
of delivery the mayor's name is da mayor; but you can call  
her woody or few or mole in the ground or at your service.

---

## hand up to your ear

(for you to find a way to sound and move, dont rhymes with robert's selmer like a plastic fuse, to blow out the emperor's  
ambience with shouting in the theological desert of the city. you bring with you to galleries an echo of shipping, an avenue  
warehouse, a river bea, and the prendergast machine is discipline against an echo of shopping, too much arrangement in  
the head, susan's sound through store-bought power. that show of shows is a bill of lading, a business pleasure, and the  
auctioneer's nervous run is overtaken by worn shadow, homeless ware is walking, the armory is walking away, some nervous  
agent in the air)

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*You are a base community*

Apprehend before the sound. The cargo, the brutalized openings, which also surround it, but only for a time that can't be measured, in permeance. It's an imprecision bordering on invasion to call this context, that

rapturous silence, shouting, composed in listening so we discompose ourselves in one another. Lose your

composure in repose, at rest, in descent, in the general murmur, a general antagonism of noise, the fugue of the absolutely poor, her gift of diving, her depressive largesse of lifting, in study, in series, her overlapped

happenings of attendance, lapsed concentricities, submerged cyphers, like a bunch of little churches and ballrooms with open doors.

---

*You are the bottom*

We care about each other so militantly, with such softness, that we exhaust ourselves, and then record, in the resonance of our slightly opened mouths, the sound of that, in the absence of the enemy that we keep making.

A disconnected movement, as if preoccupied, held already in the beautiful gathering afternoon, carried by one

another as one another's play mamas. Listen to the sound through one another's skin. Preserve the sound through membrane and water, to find our form in corresponding.

---

*Your body is a mixing board*

Come take a listening walk and admire your hand twisting. The listening is in watching how you move to touch in sounding, brushing up against your friend, to see how his position sounds to make the music we are making by moving the people moving around. Make soundworks out of rustling to notice the material that comes up on us, that we come upon, do something with. Do something with the sound like it's your friend, like you met her at the quadrophenic playground.



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