

Afropessimism in the Aviary

by

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This thesis is an audio work, a conscious turn away from the traditional written thesis form, to sonically trace the conditions of performing and playing with a Black body in the geological epoch of the Anthropocene. The speaker studies her ambivalence about performing, surveying her embraces and refusals of performance as choreographed and chance encounters with hegemonic imaginaries at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, PA. Transiting through self-interrogations, field recordings, direct addresses to the listener, and conversations with loved ones, this experiential audio essay relishes sound as a chronologically flexible container, location, event, and substance. Sampling the artists and scholars Audre Lorde, Frank Wilderson, Sonia Khurana, Neha Choksi, and Kathryn Yusoff, the speaker considers how breath, clowning, play and the erotic are strategies of passing through and disordering anti-black narratives as a Black performer and audience member.

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