



WANDERING

Philosophical Performances of
Racial and Sexual Freedom

Sarah Jane Cervenak

WANDERING

Duke University Press Durham and London 2014

*WAN
DER
ING*

Philosophical Performances of
Racial and Sexual Freedom

Sarah Jane Cervenak

© 2014 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON ACID-FREE PAPER ∞

DESIGNED BY NATALIE F. SMITH

TYPESET IN GARAMOND PREMIER PRO BY COPPERLINE

Cover art: Carrie Mae Weems, *All That Passes Before You*, 2006.

© Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

CERVENAK, SARAH JANE, 1975 -

Wandering : philosophical performances of racial and sexual freedom / Sarah Jane Cervenak.

pages cm Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8223-5715-5 (CLOTH : ALK. PAPER)

ISBN 978-0-8223-5727-8 (PBK. : ALK. PAPER)

1. RACE—PHILOSOPHY. 2. FEMINIST THEORY. I. TITLE.

HT1523.C47 2014 305.801—DC23 2014006867

for Edison

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

INTRODUCTION I

ONE

Losing Their Heads

Race, Sexuality, and the Perverse Moves
of the European Enlightenment 24

TWO

Crooked Ways and Weak Pens

The Enactment of Enlightenment against Slavery 59

THREE

Writing under a Spell

Adrienne Kennedy's Theater 95

FOUR

"I Am an African American Novel"

Wandering as Noncompliance in
Gayl Jones's *Mosquito* 122

CONCLUSION

"Before I Was Straightened Out" 145

Notes 173 Bibliography 197 Index 209

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has been and continues to be a long trip. Inasmuch as it is a product of private roaming, it is also a site where many have traveled. It is those travelers whom I thank here.

To begin, the book wouldn't be what it is without the loving support of my dissertation advisor, Fred Moten. Fred has been with and for this project from the beginning; in fact, I recall sharing my initial fragments of an idea with him in his office at NYU. Even though I didn't know what *Wandering* would become, what it would care about and what it would leave alone, Fred's faith in the work stayed constant throughout the duration of the project. I have learned what it means to teach from that faith. Indeed, I have benefited from Fred's model, as a teacher, scholar, and ethical person. I love this guy and am tremendously thankful for his presence in my life. I am also deeply blessed to know his wife, Laura Harris, and to have met his awesome kids.

Also during my graduate work at NYU, I am thankful to have learned from professors such as May Joseph, André Lepecki, the late and deeply missed José Muñoz, Kobena Mercer, and Barbara Browning, and from my fellow graduate students as well. They include Alexandra Vazquez, Christine Bacareza Balance, Hypatia Vourloumis, Ayanna Lee, Lauren Cooper, Shane Vogel, Ricardo Montez, Arin Mason, Jennifer Chan, Jo Novelli, Danielle Goldman, Tony Perucci, Cristof Migone, and Sara Jane Bailes. Also, I'm happy to have traveled with some of my old Rutgers comrades at that time as well—Edgar Rivera Colón and Jeremy Glick.

After NYU I continued work on the dissertation as a visiting scholar in the Ethnic Studies Department at UC Berkeley. I thank Jahleezah Eskew,

Norma Alarcón, Rani Neutil, and Karina Cespedes for their support of me and the project during my stay there. I wandered back home and then on to Stanford for a postdoctoral fellowship, and I thank the friends and colleagues I made there: Alice Rayner, Erin Ferris, Mark Sander, Magdalena Barrera, Jenny Barker, Uzma Rivzi, Michael Feola, Michael Hunter, Renu Cappelli, and Nadine Schibile. Kathryn Mathers, in particular, is a good friend I made at Stanford and someone whose kindness fills this book and my life.

Since the postdoctoral fellowship, I've been lucky to move to North Carolina to join the faculties of African American Studies and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. I thank the following people for their support of me and the project: Kathy Jamieson, Leila Villaverde, Gwen Hunnicut, Mark Rifkin, Bill Hart, Shelley Brown-Jeffy, Omar Ali, Tara Green, Frank Woods, Michael Cauthen, Robert Randolph, Demetrius Noble, Sally Deutsch, Logie Meachum, Beth Walker, Carole Lindsey Potter, and Bruce Holland. My colleague Danielle Bouchard has read this book more times than she'd probably care to admit, and it wouldn't be where it is without her commitment, her genius, and her love.

Thanks to Seth Moglen for his rigorous engagement with chapter 2. I also thank Fred Moten, Mercy Romero, and Kathryn Mathers for reading the whole manuscript and for being genuinely awesome.

At Duke University Press, I thank my editor, Courtney Berger, and her assistants, Deborah Guterman and Erin Hanas. Courtney's constant encouragement and guidance has helped my thinking enormously. I also thank the anonymous readers who took the time to read the manuscript and provide rigorous feedback.

Recently I've had the privilege of joining and participating in the Black Performance Theory working group. I've been blessed to meet and learn from Koritha Mitchell, Hershini Bhana, Jayna Brown, Uri McMillian, Rashida Braggs, Christina Knight, Jeffrey McCune, N. Fadeke Castor, Yolanda Covington, Stephanie Batiste, Matt Richardson, Omi Osun Jones, and Tommy DeFrantz.

I also want to acknowledge all of my students at these various institutions. Their genius and good energy make the job worthwhile, and I'm tremendously honored to know them.

Lastly, my family. I begin by thanking someone who might as well be family, my best friend, Mercy Romero. Mercy and I share a brain and heart;

her wisdom and love have helped me be the kind of person and writer I want to be, and for that I'm truly thankful. To my sisters, Maryellen and Lizzie, I love you more than anything and thank you for putting up with my craziness. Also, thanks for smiling and making fun of my nerdiness when I talked about the project. Thanks to my dad, who reminds me not to burn the candle at both ends every time we talk. Finally, thanks to my mother, my best friend, the person who saves my life on a daily basis and reminds me who I am and can be every day.

In the end, I close by thanking the two halves of my heart. To my love, Marc Derro, thank you for being the kindest, most supportive person in town and for loving me the way you do. Oh, and for agonizing (along with me) over that first paragraph of my introduction. And to my baby son, Edison, who is named after the town in New Jersey that I'm from. You are the love of my life and the reason I write. Your kicks and giggles are all over this book, making you in some ways its coauthor. I love you forever and more.

An earlier version of chapter 2 was published in *Palimpsest: Women, Gender, and the Black International* 1, no. 1 (2012). An earlier version of chapter 4 was published in Lovalerie King and Linda Selzer's *New Essays on the African American Novel: From Hurston and Ellison to Morrison and Whitehead* (Palgrave, 2008). An earlier version of the conclusion was published in *Spectator* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2010).

Finally, thanks to the artists Carrie Mae Weems, Yinka Shonibare, William Pope.L, and Adrian Piper for letting me feature their art.

INTRODUCTION

I leaned against the seat and closed my eyes. Then, suddenly, it was like I was remembering something out of a long past. I was a child, drowsy, thinking I was sleeping or dreaming.

GAYL JONES, *CORREGIDORA*

Ursa's bus ride inspired this book. The bus ride transpires quietly in the middle of Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* (1975), a story about the haunted life of a Southern blues singer. It is during this ride that Ursa Corregidora wanders to recover a lost privacy and, with it, a grip on a landscape that cannot be encroached: a locale where she might roam without surveillance, out of harm's way.

The novel indeed begins in harm's way and shuttles between private pain and public trespass. It starts with Ursa's hospitalization. While fighting with her husband, he pushes Ursa down the stairs; she suffers a miscarriage and eventual hysterectomy as a result. The novel tells that story, of private harm and recovery. The sips of chicken soup and nightly singing that bring her through. At the same time, Ursa's private story suffers from endless trespass. The novel moves quickly from a single-occupancy hospital room to an overcrowded main character. As Ursa slowly heals, the voices of family and lovers form a noisy traffic that she must amble through. This traffic consists of stories of Old Man Corregidora, her family's Portuguese slave owner, now deceased, alongside familial injunctions to reproduce, to pass down, and to not forget what he did. Joining this traffic too are the needs of lovers, impatient with the time and form of Ursa's return. All of which result in a heavily encroached upon main char-

acter. She is someone who rarely gets to move by herself, as she is subjected to racial slavery's enduring whims and the confining scripts of its survivors.

Against these competing scripts and choreographies, Ursa's yearning for anonymous and solitary comportment takes form; fleeting drifts of philosophical possibility hover in the opaque terrain next to the visible word. Such drifts can happen on bus rides. The bus ride in *Corregidora* is a tiny moment at the end of a chapter. It follows the scene where Ursa asks her mother about the other past, the one not shredded by Old Man Corregidora's phantasmatic wandering. In *Corregidora* such questions and their answers are thick with individual and collective need, making unremarkable bus rides (un)remarkable. It's on the bus that Ursa finally achieves some privacy, a rare occasion to wander and dream without interruption. To imagine the possibilities for her "own life," beyond the push and pull of other people's memories, other people's desires.¹

This is where my idea for this book came from: my elusive recollection of Ursa's ride. A ride without narration, where the main character drifts off someplace else, just beneath the text, and off its page. A rare moment of privacy for someone whose experience of the world is never free from the trespassive enactments of others. Even though the voices of a man and woman come to her in a dream, Ursa wakes up and shifts to thinking about something else; the details of that dream are never disclosed. Further, while the broken speech of the man and woman lingers on a readable surface, Ursa contemplates "what [she had] done about [her] own life."² The traveling engendered by such an inquiry also remains unnarrated—the philosophical meaning and nature of that life are not contingent upon its availability to prose.

This absence of description doesn't necessarily indicate an absence of movement. More broadly, wandering—daydreaming, mental and rhetorical ramblings—offers new pathways for the enactment of black female philosophical desire. Because a scene of unremarkable travel, a barely described philosophical movement, inspired this book, I begin by inquiring into whether such movement should be engaged at all. This is not to say that what happens on the bus for Ursa isn't important, but its importance is not contingent on its interpretation (or interpretative availability) as such.

In many ways such contingencies form a troubling tendency within performance studies, where the presumed philosophical capacities of performances and gestures are inextricable from their readability. What is more, as a scholar trained in this field, I also struggle with the discipline's

tendency to privilege the philosophical capacities of purportedly legible acts over unseen drifts and dreams. For example, in a textbook on the field, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002), Richard Schechner argues that “performance studies scholars are able to ‘read’ popular culture.”³ In another major performance studies anthology, *Critical Theory and Performance* (2007), the editors Joseph Roach and Janelle Reinelt advance the notion that “performance can be articulated in terms of politics.”⁴ Considering these assumptions, I ask, what would it mean to leave alone that which cannot be read or that which resists the epistemological urgencies at the heart of such readability and knowability? What if Ursula’s daydreams are philosophical in ways that have nothing to do with their availability to external meaning or their ability to *articulate* anything at all?

These questions index dual ethical interests that are at once conjoined and seemingly opposed. On the one hand, *Wandering* is not interested in interrupting anybody’s bus ride, let alone Ursula’s. Jones’s reclusiveness moves alongside her characters’ own longing for unfettered movement. In some ways the worlds made by Jones are better off when left alone. Still, even as this book is an exercise in learning from Jones, *Wandering* seemingly undermines that learning in its own movement. More precisely, unlike Jones’s novels, *Wandering*’s assertion that enactments of philosophical desire are possible despite and because of their resistance to verifiability is troubled by its own tendency to make much of that possibility. While making much of infuses the kinds of analytic tendencies I otherwise critique—those that shift the philosophical from the private domain of its making to the public mode of its decryption—I want to express a different relation to this procedure. In my engagement with diverse aesthetic and historical scenes, then, I advance the possibility of philosophical abundance against racist, sexist, classist, spatial, ableist, logocentric, homophobic, and ocularcentric assumptions that presume both its impossibility and absence. In this way, making much of is an attempt to attend to the violence of such erasures while understanding that only much can really be made by the author or artist, daydreamer or bus rider.

This ethical complexity moves *Wandering* and celebrates the fact that the book both is and isn’t about what it says its about, both can and can’t be about wandering. What is powerful about wandering, I think, is its potential to resist this book’s enclosures—to be not only a mutant form of enunciation, articulation, and textuality but also an enactment that signals the refusal of all three qualities.⁵ Because wandering is as much an interior

as it is an exterior activity, it at once resists decryption and sustains an unavailable landscape of philosophical desire. In Jones's *Corregidora*, for example, Ursa's private wisdom wanders as song: "My voice was dancing, slow and blue, my voice was dancing but I was saying nothing. I dreamed with my eyes open."⁶ While the private "slow and blue" voice moves undetectably in the ether underneath and around "nothing" said, the visible and ostensibly public movements of the body aren't necessarily *articulating* a *readable* story either.

In my musings on wandering, however, I had a hard time finding work that didn't aggregate wandering with exterior kinesis (specifically walking) and, more problematically, corporeal readability, enunciativity, and agentic possibility. For example, Michel de Certeau argues that walking enacts a

triple "enunciative" function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic "contracts" in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an "allocation," "posits another opposite" the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action). It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation.⁷

Drawing parallels between walking and speech, using the language of enunciation, implies a shared quality of discursive availability and rests on the presumption of the walker as agent. In the spirit of Certeau, the dance studies scholar Susan Leigh Foster also employs a literary term to describe the walker's "swerve [as] a trope" that illuminates and resists state apparatuses of control.⁸ Both models presume a notion of human agency that is readable as exterior kinesis. Still, if to be an agent means having "intention, which is variously glossed as 'plan,' 'awareness,' 'willfulness,' 'directedness,' or 'desire,'" then what is at stake for those whose pedestrian "acting out(s)" are always already surveilled?⁹ What if state surveillance gets oddly replicated in tropological readings of the body's movement? Finally, what happens if the exercise of agency as exterior kinesis resists reading, or rather becomes agentic in its unreadability?

Crucially, scholars engaged with black performance, feminisms, and critical theory have advanced the notion that terrains of movement thrive beyond the discursive, epistemological, and empirical. For example, Jayna

Brown and André Lepecki's scholarship attends to the agentic qualities of corporeal unreadability and the exterior, kinetic bias of the post-Enlightenment's idealized subject, respectively. In her important work on early twentieth-century black female performers, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (2008), Brown contends that "racialized bodies wriggle through, around, with, and against . . . claims" that read them as discourse or discursive effects.¹⁰ Reimagining the black body as active in ways that exceed or resist discourse is crucial as the body's presumed discursivity often facilitates the most vicious of constraints. For example, before it was determined to be unconstitutional, California penal code section 647(e) rendered illegal the act of loitering or "wandering upon the streets or from place to place without apparent reason or business."¹¹ In the early 1980s, Edward Lawson, a black man who enjoyed late-night walks, refused to disclose his identity to authorities when out and about and was arrested under this penal code.

Arguably, Lawson was arrested because his exercise of kinetic agency was discursively troubling to the state and, further, incommensurate with racialized and classed post-Enlightenment logics of the idealized moving subject. According to the philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva, late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century (normative, sanctioned, recognized) post-Enlightenment logics of subjectivity continue to hold powerful sway: "The subject of transparency, for whom universal reason is an interior guide [, is still associated with white Europeanness, while] subjects of affectability, for whom universal reason remains an exterior ruler," are still racialized and figured as Europe's outside.¹² What these post-Enlightenment logics presume is a notion of racialized, gendered subjectivity that is incapable of philosophical production though nonetheless subjected to the violation of being philosophically produced (recall Brown's critique). Put another way and in the context of Lawson and Ursa, black movement is, more often than not, *read* as disruptive physicality, a philosophical problem to be solved as opposed to that which resolves philosophical problems.

Moreover, this figuration of blackness is key to the racial consolidation of post-Enlightenment subjectivity. Along with da Silva, Lepecki argues that a key feature and privilege of post-Enlightenment subjectivity is (exterior) kinesis, the illusion of a normative body that enjoys and regulates his or her own "autonomous, self-motivated, endless, spectacular movement."¹³ I would add here that because external kinesis is given as either the sign of one's reason or its absence, critical theories of bodily readability

and discursivity limit black wandering's radicalism.¹⁴ We need a new way to think about wandering as philosophical performance, one not contingent on its availability to discourse or to analytics of bodily enunciativity, exterior-oriented narratives of kinesis, and individual agency. In the scene from Jones's *Corregidora*, for example, bus riding makes a world to which the novel's readers have no access.

Powerfully, these elusive philosophical worlds engendered by daydreams and prayers subvert the aforementioned, confining rhetoric of subjectivity held over from the Enlightenment. People move in ways that are invisible, along the grooves of their own mind, in the motion of a rambling tongue, outside the range of an administrative and purportedly enlightened gaze. Dealing with the legacy of the Enlightenment, then, is essential to this argument in that its theories of the normative subject thrive and continue to be shaped at the intersections of race, sexuality, and the logics of legibly rational philosophical comportment. As da Silva and Lepecki demonstrate, for example, the rational, self-same, self-possessed, and self-mobilizing subject, invented and revised by recognized European and American Enlightenment philosophers from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, still pervades state thinking about appropriate public (read: visible) kinesis and inspires an antiwandering ethos targeted particularly at the nonnormative. Concerning Lawson, according to Dan Stormer and Paul Bernstein, the police called him "the Walkman. . . . He liked to walk whenever possible—especially in white neighborhoods late at night. While in San Diego on business between 1975 and 1977, Edward Lawson was stopped fifteen times by police. . . . Later the officers offered a variety of explanations for stopping Lawson that fell far short of the reasonable cause requirement read into section 647 (e) by the courts. One officer thought that Lawson's behavior, which he described as 'dancing around,' might lead to someone's injury."¹⁵

The presumption that "dancing around might lead to someone's injury" indexes a larger belief system that figures blackness as incapable of rational comportment. Lawson's wandering was criminalized precisely because of its performative figuration as injurious and disorderly. What is more, because his "dancing" appeared recklessly unchoreographed, the state moved in to impose or solicit a script. Lawson refused and was arrested. Even though Lawson's subsequent lawsuit against the state resulted in a declaration of the unconstitutionality of section 647(e), police officers can still request a "suspicious" wanderer's legal identification. In fact, "stop

and identify” statutes are on the books in twenty-four states and affect “minority communities disproportionately.”¹⁶

Again, following da Silva, the state’s criminalization of black walkers resonates with the post-Enlightenment’s figuration of people of color as guided by an illegitimate, unlawful outside. Ironically, however, according to Lepecki, “*all* subjectivity that finds itself as a total ‘being-toward-movement’ must draw its energy from some [outside] source.”¹⁷ The scene of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century white European Enlightenment philosophy, in particular, was often animated and constituted by a vampiric cruising, with the “ground of modernity [being] the colonized, flattened, bulldozed terrain where the fantasy of endless and self-sufficient motility [took] place.”¹⁸ In fact, the Enlightenment’s supposedly straight text or choreographic script—where *straight* refers to the putatively disinterested investments in reason, morality, and justice—was frequently written through wandering: sidesteps into Otherness that forged the Enlightenment’s racialized, gendered, and sexualized energetic conditions of possibility. These conditions of a simultaneously disinterested and ecstatic racial and sexual kinesis often tragically resulted in the evacuation of life from the Enlightenment’s objects. Like vampires, the subject of the Enlightenment errantly moved under the cover of light, reducing others’ lives—either through the pen or the gun—to sustain the subject’s own.

In his discussion of nineteenth-century colonial travelogues, Johannes Fabian addresses this vampirism by arguing that explorers, in their collision with “unfamiliar cultures,” resolved the “moral puzzles and conflicting demands” by “stepping outside, and sometimes existing for long periods outside, the rationalized frames of exploration, be they faith, knowledge, profit, or domination.”¹⁹ Methodologically speaking, the condition of possibility for the repeated consolidation of the hegemonic, sovereign subject of the Enlightenment (who da Silva names the subject of transparency) was an anthropological-explorationist project that required man to “step outside,” diverge from, or run astray of his own fixed threshold. Even as, according to Sankar Muthu, the Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot argues that errant movement, particularly the “unchecked passions . . . unleashed among crusading voyagers,” was a betrayal of an Enlightenment ethic of universal humanity, I maintain that errant movement itself shaped the uneven enactment of such ethics.²⁰ Indeed, Michel Foucault speaks to this “fundamental arrangement” between anthropology and philosophy when he writes that “anthropology constitutes perhaps the fundamental

arrangement that has governed and controlled the path of philosophical thought from Kant until our own day.”²¹

The opening that made possible the fundamental interplay between philosophy and anthropology animated and was (de)formed by the emissaries of imperialism’s own “affectable” movement. Moreover, as the philosopher Sylvia Wynter observes, those humans who endured the violence of imperialists’ inherent affectability described such movements accordingly, as drunk or under an outside influence. Quoting from the Cenu Indians’ response to the Spanish Requisition of 1492, whereby Spain was given land (or “the new world”) that didn’t belong to it, Wynter connects the Cenu’s perception of imperial drunkenness to a larger set of irrational procedures. That is, the condition of possibility for the Requisition itself rested on a paradoxically restrictive notion of the human, one that passed itself off as “natural, supracultural and isomorphic with the human species” but that in actuality foregrounded white Europeanness and a monotheistic belief system as its *raison d’être*.²² The exercise of humanity was nothing if not trespassive, where Europe’s meandering “identitarian land claim[s]” overruled all others.²³

Still, these philosophers advanced Enlightenment humanism as self-determined, unaffected, and teleological mobility. In doing so, wandering became pathologized even as it remained methodologically necessary. Discerning such movement requires that we recognize that while Europeans’ finitude was tested and transgressed in the interest of its definition, the bodies and minds that provided the anthropological and epistemological occasions—figured as the scene and embodiment of affectability—as well as the conditions of possibility of such exploration suffered the severe constraints of forced (im)mobilization.

In the context of colonial exploration and the transatlantic slave trade, this often manifested, time and again, in a quasi-spiritual transcendence for the subjects of the Enlightenment and a brutally material death for the Enlightenment’s objects. In other words, affectability, being moved by an outside force or “dangerously unproductive will,” in da Silva’s words, was an experience, a vacation from reason that was also reason’s very condition.²⁴ These vacations from reason, however, were “perilous passages,” both for the recognized subject whose very descent into affectability meant his temporary loss of transparent self-determination and independent mobilization as well as for the objects of (un)reason whose imbrication with affectability resulted in their endless trespassive violation and

containment.²⁵ What is more, the danger experienced by the subject of the Enlightenment was often resolved through the homicidal eradication of its objects. As Wynter argues, “We have lived the millennium of Man in the last five hundred years; and as the West is inventing Man, the slave plantation is a central part of the entire mechanism by means of which that logic is working its way out.”²⁶

To be sure, the endless roaming of the purportedly enlightened emissaries of imperialism, and with it a promiscuous and increasingly narrow understanding of the human, required the energetic hijacking of someone else’s will. African slaves in the Americas and their descendants, through their very politico-economic, racial, sexual, and ontological inscription as chattel, according to Hortense Spillers, experienced the unimaginable violation of being radically severed “from [their] motive will.”²⁷ Slaves were “perceived as the essence of stillness (an early version of ‘ethnicity’), or of an undynamic human state, fixed in time and space. . . . ‘Slaves [were] deemed, sold, taken, reputed and adjudged in law to be *chattels personal*, in the hands of their owners and possessors, and their executors, administrators, and assigns, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever.”²⁸ Temporally fixed in a hierarchical historical geography, slaves were also defined by their fundamental disposability, affectability, movability, and alienability.

The radical fracture of the captive self’s being from its motive will, in conjunction with the slave’s status as stock and as necessarily stock-still, produced a series of violent choreographic effects. Namely, while regarded as the “essence of stillness,” slaves endured the racial, sexual, and philosophical *whims*—the economic, political, sexual, aesthetic, and epistemological desires—of the master. Saidiya Hartman observes, “[E]njoyment [in the context of antebellum slavery] is virtually unimaginable without recourse to the black body and the subjection of the captive, the diversion engendered by the dispossession of the enslaved, or the fantasies launched by the myriad uses of the black body.”²⁹ Such crookedly whimsical *flights* of fancy enlarged the performative scope of whiteness while consolidating a vicious state of black unfreedom.

In response to this violently paradoxical crisis of unfreedom—where unfreedom meant, among other things, being ontologically codified as the nowhere, the detour, the backyard, and the movable and material sign of white diversion—black people philosophized, moved. As Wynter writes, “[The] slave plot on which the slave grew food for his/her subsistence, car-

ried over a millennially *other* conception of the human to that of Man's."³⁰ Indeed, it was often not just the plot itself but how one moved through it that shaped these alternative "genres of the human," in the words of Alexander G. Weheliye.³¹ On the one hand, the set of performances associated with the drive toward anticaptivity bespeaks a powerful philosophical claim associating black humanity with self-possession, determination, and, for some, the fulfillment of Enlightenment ideals. Further, self-possession and self-determination in the antebellum era involved a set of philosophical performances characterized as moving for oneself. This self-mobilization refers to a range of physical and rhetorical transgressions, according to Hartman, such as "movement without a pass to visit a loved one, stealing, unpermitted gatherings," slave revolts, and published polemics against slavery.³²

On the other hand, while self-direction and self-mobilization were key to antislavery consolidations of humanness, other modalities of movement across the plot were just as important. That is, the plot also became the ground for diverting the pursuit of others, and, in that way, respatializing the terrain of freedom. An aesthetics of diversion is arguably at work in the slave narrative. Powerfully, (anti)slave narration's informational withholding and aleatory prose corresponds to tactics practiced by those who worked and traveled on the Underground Railroad. This has all contributed to the protection of black humanity from the trespassive encroachments of the slave catcher and abolitionist reader, both exemplary products of recognized European and American Enlightenment traditions. Just as the emissaries of the imperial Enlightenment immobilized (by fixing and rendering transparent) black life in their attempts to know it, the slave catcher and abolitionist reader performed similar, albeit politically distinct, labors. This is not to say that all abolitionists operated in the spirit of Enlightenment-as-pornotropic-trespass but that some tendencies reveal an ugly, energetically comparable trace. According to the contemporary scholars Deborah Garfield and Carol Lasser, an emphasis on sexual violence, what Garfield refers to as an "impassioned speech," formed a troubling early tendency of nineteenth-century abolitionism.³³ While this tendency was one of many and should not be conflated with the rich and complicated abolitionist movement itself, I query this problematic violation of black people's right to privacy and why it was necessary for the achievement of so-called real Enlightenment freedom.

Moreover, in the context of racial slavery, black privacy figured as dangerous, a highly pursued philosophical scene of potential insurrection and unreadable desire. Curiously, in the context of antislavery, black privacy sometimes suffered a similar fate, albeit motivated by different political and ethical intentions. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), for example, Harriet Jacobs's narrative oscillates between an interior (private) kinesis—an embrace of wandering manifested through recklessness, prayer, and daydreaming—and a strategic rhetorical commitment to transparent, enlightened, and self-regulated comportment.³⁴ This oscillation, or, for some (including Jacobs), waywardness, proved crucial for her enactment of black female enlightenment. That is, just as some white female antislavery activists required Jacobs to renounce her right to privacy as a condition for her inclusion in their enlightenment project, her strategic information withholdings (particularly with respect to sexual violence) along with other unnarrated sojourns elsewhere expressed her philosophical desire while subverting theirs.

Similar to Lawson's dangerous dancing and Ursa's bus riding, Jacobs's trips into undisclosed locales refused the pull of someone else's script. This is not to say that such movements remained unpoliced or unscripted; all three movements negotiated the kinetic constraints engendered by others' anxious readings. Rather, because wandering exceeds the terrains of the visible and the physical and because it's not possible to *know* and legislate the private ambulations of the spirit, antiwandering laws and acts don't spell the end of black freedom. In fact, historically speaking, against the state's figuration of black wandering as disruptively criminal (and trespassive) physicality, black artist and activist philosophers have expanded black wandering's kinetic meaning and philosophical potential.

Significantly, black feminist theory informs my engagement with wandering's complexity and radical possibility. To begin, black feminists have been at the forefront of theorizing the limits of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment as racial, patriarchal projects by interrogating the fictitious mind-body split (Audre Lorde and Barbara Christian) and by defamiliarizing the imperial, epistemological processes of nonconsensually naming, codifying, and immobilizing the movements of black women (Spillers).³⁵ Lorde, in particular, powerfully critiques the constraints on black women's movement as a legacy of the Enlightenment. More precisely, her work defamiliarizes and deconstructs key features of post-