IMANI PERRY

VEXY THING

ON GENDER AND LIBERATION

VEXY THING

VEXY THING

ON GENDER AND LIBERATION

IMANI PERRY

. . .

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Durham and London

2018

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper ∞
Text designed by Amy Ruth Buchanan
Cover designed by Julienne Alexander
Typeset in Chaparral Pro by Westchester Book Group

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Perry, Imani, [date-] author.
Title: Vexy thing : on gender and liberation / Imani Perry.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2018. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018007282 (print) | LCCN 2018017756 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478002277 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478000600 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9781478000815 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Patriarchy. | Feminism.
Classification: LCC GN479.6 (ebook) | LCC GN479.6 .P47 2018 (print) |
DDC 306.85/8—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018007282

Lezley Saar, *Thérèse Raquin,* 2111.
Mixed-media painting. Courtesy of the artist.

FOR MY SONS

ISSA GARNER RABB AND

FREEMAN DIALLO PERRY RABB

TO OUR COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is difficult to name everyone who taught you that freedom was a possibility. So I won't utter all their names, but their number is vast, and their influence ranges from passing comments to lifelong lessons learned from beloveds, art, and letters. I am grateful for every single one.

In particular, I thank my brilliant editor Kenneth Wissoker for his faith and steady encouragement, and the entire Duke University Press community. Likewise, I gave a number of lectures related to this book and received wonderful feedback. I thank the Department of English and Department of Africana Studies at Cornell University; the Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University; the English Department at Washington and Lee University; the Department of English at the University of California, Berkeley; the Department of English at Emory University; the Department of Philosophy at Rowan University; and the Department of Philosophy at Yale University. Most of all, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my home Department of African American Studies at Princeton University, a fantastic group of colleagues as well as undergraduate and graduate students whose thoughts inspire, whose work moves me, and whose support for my research and deep collegiality I cherish.

In addition to communities, several friends and colleagues served as key interlocutors and motivators while I was writing. Thank you for reading my words and/or listening to my chatter about these ideas over the course of many years: Michele Alexandre (whose book *Sexploitation* is a direct inspiration), Joshua Bennett, Ashon Crawley, Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (who read every word three times!), Farah Jasmine Griffin, Keeanga-Yamatta Taylor, and Simone White.

My family is the beating heart of everything I write. Thank you to my mother, Theresa Perry, for constant encouragement and support; the entire Garner and Perry families; my friends who have become like family; and especially my late grandmother Neida Garner Perry, my earliest model of organic feminism, and my late father, Steven S. Whitman, who was the first to read the earliest versions of this book and praised it as "Radical."

I am grateful beyond measure to have grown up in a community of feminist intellectuals, activists, and artists. As far back as I can remember, I had abundant feminist models surrounding me and encouraging me, both face to face and in the pages of their writing. I continue to be fed by their lifelong work. They are part of my chosen family and genealogy. This book is possible because of them.

Finally, I must thank my children. Their breathtaking beauty and brilliance are constant reminders to me that another world is possible and necessary. I pray that I, and the many other people who love and care for them: their father, our families, and our friends, can nurture them to become part of making it so.

INTRODUCTION

. . .

> In noticing "oddity" within ordering, we learn a great deal about the structure of things. This is true with narratives, laws, and the stuff of human lives.
>
> **Imani Perry,** email to editor Ken Wissoker

The story of Aphra Behn, known as England's first woman novelist, is filled with gaps and guesses. Few details are known for certain. There are scattered but intriguing tidbits. She was born in 1640. She appears to have lived in Surinam as a child. She likely was married to a Dutch merchant and then later was single. She served as a spy for King Charles in the Netherlands. In 1668 she found herself in so much debt that she served time in a debtor's prison. And after that she became a writer, a prolific one. Her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage,* was produced in 1670 at the Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was a romantic comedy in which forced betrothals are corrected by true love.

Some eighteen years later, with many other works in between, Behn wrote a story with similar plot points but with African protagonists. *Oroonoko* is considered a foundational text in the development of the English novel. It remains fascinating and distinctive. I will tell the story of the novel in some detail. Its publication was foundational in Western literature, and it reveals so much about the idea and history of Western patriarchy, and therefore provides an apt beginning to this text. Named for its hero, *Oroonoko* is the story of two beloved Coromantie (Akan) youth, Oroonoko and Imoinda. They are, in the eyes of the English female narrator, ideal types of each gender, though Black. Of Oroonoko's form she says, "The whole proportion and air of his face was so nobly and exactly form'd, that bating his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome. There was no one grace wanting, that bears the standard of true beauty."[1]

His physical form was consistent with his capacity and integrity as a man. "Whoever had heard him speak," Behn writes, "wou'd have been convinced of their errors, that all ne wit is conned to the white men, especially to those of Christendom; and wou'd have confess'd that *Oroonoko* was as capable even of reigning well, and of governing as wisely, had as great a soul, as politick maxims, and was as sensible of power, as any prince civiliz'd in the most renowned schools of humanity and learning, or the most illustrious courts."[2]

Imoinda was a similarly extraordinary character; of her the narrator says, "To describe her truly, one need say only, she was female to the noble male; the beautiful black *Venus* to our young *Mars*; as charming in her person as he, and of delicate vertues. I have seen a hundred white men sighing after her, and making a thousand vows at her feet, all in vain, and unsuccessful. And she was indeed too great for any but a prince of her own nation to adore."[3]

At the beginning of the novel, Oroonoko takes the position of the king's top general after the death of Imoinda's father, the previous holder of the position. The two have married but not consummated their relationship. Their union is disrupted by the king, because he has also fallen in love with Imoinda. He exercises his authority to make her his wife and a member of his harem. But through the assistance of other members of the court, Oroonoko is able to sneak into her bridal chamber, and they have sex. They are immediately discovered, and although Imoinda claims that Oroonoko has raped her (to protect him), she is nevertheless sold as a slave as punishment.

Oroonoko faces the same fate. He is betrayed by an English ship captain with whom he had what seemed to be a gregarious relationship, and to whom Oroonoko had previously sold slaves. This captain was a man below the station of Oroonoko, yet they had previously behaved in a mutually respectful fashion. Behn described him as follows:

> This captain . . . was always better receiv'd at court, than most of the traders to those countries were; and especially by *Oroonoko*, who was more civiliz'd, according to the *European* mode, than any other had been, and took more delight in the white nations; and, above all, men of parts and wit. To this captain he sold abundance of his slaves; and for the favour and esteem he had for him, made him many presents, and oblig'd him to stay at court as long as possibly he cou'd. Which the captain seem'd to take as a very great honour done him, entertaining the prince every day with globes and maps, and mathematical discourses and instruments; eating, drinking, hunting, and living

> with him with so much familiarity, that it was not to be doubted but he had gain'd very greatly upon the heart of this gallant young man. And the captain, in return of all these mighty favours, besought the prince to honour his vessel with his presence, some day or other at dinner, before he shou'd set sail: which he condescended to accept, and appointed his day.[4]

Once on the ship however, the captain springs on Oroonoko and places him in shackles. He makes a man into a slave. The captain plans to sell Oroonoko once the ship has reached Surinam. In protest, Oroonoko and the other Africans on board refuse to eat, preferring death to captivity. Only with the promise of emancipation at the end of the journey, and an immediate removal of the shackles, does Oroonoko begin to eat again and convince the others to do so, as well. Used to good faith, fair dealing, and respect from other men, he hasn't yet learned the slave's wise distrust.

Oroonoko is betrayed once again and sold when the ship reaches Surinam. There he is renamed "Caesar." It is as though he has undergone a baptism of undoing, given a European name, though not a Christian one. That detail is not troubling to Oroonoko. He finds the Christian trinity to be an absurdity. Though deeply skeptical of European religion, he has yet to learn how profoundly his status has changed in this rebaptism that takes him outside the scope of civil society as he knew it and into the new world order of Blackness in modernity. Oroonoko is cast from aristocrat to slave—the same status as the other Africans—although Behn describes him repeatedly as their superior in form, intelligence, and status. While Oroonoko is cast with the other Africans despite his status, the Europeans are puzzled by the Indians in their midst. They, like Oroonoko, are considered great, beautiful, and powerful, though strange. Accordingly, the Europeans believed the Indians must be conquered, if not enslaved. A map of difference and its relations is unfolding.

By remarkable coincidence, on the plantation where Oroonoko is held he finds Imoinda (whom he was told had been killed rather than enslaved). Although they are enslaved, they marry and live in a tentatively blissful domestic union. Soon Imoinda is pregnant. Their status troubles them both. They sense the fragility of their domesticity from the beginning of Oroonoko's time on the plantation. But they are deceived by the master's seeming respect. Before actually meeting Imoinda (now renamed Clemene) on the plantation, and having merely heard about an especially beautiful slave, Oroonoko asks his master why he hasn't raped the enslaved woman:

> *I do not wonder* (reply'd the prince) *that* Clemene *should refuse slaves, being, as you say, so beautiful; but wonder how she escapes those that can entertain her as you can do: or why, being your slave, you do not oblige her to yield? I confess* (said *Trefry*) *when I have, against her will, entertained her with love so long, as to be transported with my passion even above decency, I have been ready to make use of those advantages of strength and force nature has given me: But, oh! she disarms me with that modesty and weeping, so tender and so moving, I retire, and thank my stars she overcame me*. The company laugh'd at his civility to a slave, and Caesar only applauded the nobleness of his passion and nature, since that slave might be noble, or, what was better, have true notions of honour and vertue in her. Thus passed they this night, after having received from the slaves all imaginable respect and obedience.[5]

This "civility" of his master, Trefry, in not raping Imoinda is deceptive when it comes to the constitution of their family. Oroonoko, though thrilled to be married and expecting a child, learns how profoundly his social position has transformed in his current life as a slave by virtue of his inability to negotiate for his and his family's freedom through exchange or contract:

> From that happy day *Caesar* took *Clemene* for his wife, to the general joy of all people; and there was as much magnificence as the country would afford at the celebration of this wedding: and in a very short time after she conceived with child, which made *Caesar* even adore her, knowing he was the last of his great race. This new accident made him more impatient of liberty, and he was every day treating with *Trefry* for his and *Clemene's* liberty, and offer'd either gold, or a vast quantity of slaves, which should be paid before they let him go, provided he could have any security that he should go when his ransom was paid.[6]

At each stage, however, the Europeans with whom Oroonoko is dealing breach their words, their promises, and their contracts with him. They can do so because, as an enslaved African, Oroonoko has been forcibly removed from the social contract through which he can be a party to negotiated contracts. He no longer counts as a "Man." Finally, Oroonoko realizes that their slaveholder has no intention of setting them free and that no negotiation will succeed. They must fight for freedom. So he, Imoinda, and other Africans revolt.

Even then, however, he continues to interact with the Europeans, acting as though he is a legally recognized man. When the Europeans defeat the Africans' insurrection, Oroonoko and his second in command,

Tuscan, attempt to negotiate the terms of their surrender. Behn writes that Oroonoko

> was overcome by his wit and reasons, and in consideration of *Imoinda*: and demanding what he desired, and that it should be ratify'd by their hands in writing, because he had perceived that was the common way of contract between man and man amongst the whites; all this was performed, and *Tuscan's* pardon was put in, and they surrender'd to the governour, who walked peaceably down into the plantation with them, after giving order to bury their dead.
>
> But they were no sooner arrived at the place where all the slaves receive their punishments of whipping, but they laid hands on *Caesar* and *Tuscan*, faint with heat and toil; and surprizing them, bound them to two several stakes, and whipped them in a most deplorable and inhuman manner.[7]

Unlike *The Forc'd Marriage*, this work has a tragic rather than a comedic ending. After Oroonoko's defeat and torture ("bleeding and naked as he was, [they] loaded him all over with irons, and then rubb'd his wounds, to compleat their cruelty, with *Indian* pepper, which had like to have made him raving mad; and, in this condition made him so fast to the ground, that he could not stir"[8]) he intends to kill Imoinda (seeing himself still as a patriarch who maintains possessive control over her life and death) and himself rather than continue to live as slaves. He succeeds in killing Imoinda but is recaptured before he can complete his suicide. Instead of the noble ending he seeks, a return to life in Africa after death in the Americas, he is drawn and quartered, sliced up like cattle after the slaughter.

Behn's work provides an instructive and foundational exemplum for this book. Among the remarkable things about this story is that in its moves from glory to abjection and death, patriarchy moves with it, shifting with tragic and horrific circumstances. Behn's bifurcated tales of fortune and misfortune, *The Forc'd Marriage* and *Oroonoko* are, in turn, comedic and tragic. They are twin narratives of the development of modern patriarchy.

Following the formulation offered by Cedric Robinson regarding Western "terms of order" through this and many other stories, events and cases,[9] I am invested in tracing a more detailed architecture of patriarchy than what commonplace understandings in the U.S. offer, something more complex than the binary gender constructs of Western bourgeois domesticity. This book is about the praxis of *reading* as a feminist and, specifically, as what I am terming a "liberation feminist." I am inviting

readers (of this text and of the world around them) to conceive of feminism not primarily as a set of positions or doctrines but as a critical practice for understanding and working against gendered forms of domination and against the way gender becomes a tool of domination and exploitation. This is a book that asks readers to engage in this critical reading practice with the stories, events, and cases presented.

These stories, events, and cases are deliberately chosen to resist accounts of patriarchy that treat "patriarchies" in each society, culture, or subculture as a parallel set of structures that merely repeat themselves within each group, ethnicity, or nation-state. In other words, this book does not say, "Here's patriarchy here—and look: It's also over there!" but instead explores the historical and philosophical relation between the here and the there. This work, moreover, is not about the sexism within sociality (an important topic, just not mine). It focuses on the multiple forms of domination that grew under a structure of patriarchal authority that was globally imposed during the age of empire. I am interested in exploring these multiple iterations of patriarchy as shaped by the logic undergirding them all, one that spread across the globe through modernity and European conquest and capture. Hence, while I identify as an Americanist scholar, I have had to stretch myself beyond the borders of the U.S. nation-state and even beyond this hemisphere to make an argument about what has happened to and across the globe. This work attends to the drawing and quartering, the institutional rape, the men who could not be patriarchs, the people who could be neither patriarch nor lady, the captured and the excluded. It attends to those who stood outside the plantation fence, as well as those who sat on thrones in palaces.

The way I use story and vignette, along with description, theorization, and analysis, is admittedly an "odd" structure, at least according to the conventions of academic writing. But within these portraits of gender and gendering, ones that reveal both rules and exceptions, and states of exception, the complex structure of patriarchy is revealed. The gift of such portraits is also that while I present readings, they invite another layer of reading from the reader, and, potentially, a dialogue.

Let me apply these ideas to the foregoing story and its author: The opacity of Behn's life is unquestionably a piece of the legacy of patriarchy. Were she a comparably achieved Englishman of her period, we would likely have a fuller record. However, her characters, Oroonoko and Imoinda, who may or may not have been based on real people she encountered in Surinam, lie even further underneath the layers of relation that characterized patriarchy as it took shape in the modern period and through the

rise of industrial capitalism. The account of patriarchy in this book, and aspiration toward its undoing, reads the lives of both the Aphras and the Imoindas, and many others betwixt and between, as a feminist praxis. Ultimately, that labor is rooted in an ethical commitment to undoing gendered domination as a critical goal of feminist politics and thought.

Here is another story, strange and nonfictional: Almost two hundred years later, and many miles away, with substantial changes to political economy, law, and imperial formation, a distinct yet structurally consistent set of events took place. In the winter of 1885, David Dickson died. Dickson was a prominent Georgia planter and slave owner. He grew his wealth on Cherokee land that had been auctioned off to white citizens in 1838, with the use of innovative crop-cultivation techniques executed by his slaves. Dickson left the bulk of his fortune to his daughter Amanda and her children. This included seventeen thousand acres of land in Hancock and Washington counties.

Amanda was beloved by her father and doted on by her grandmother. But this transfer of property was a problem for most of the rest of Dickson's family. Forty-nine of them contested the will. Amanda was not a legitimate inheritor in their eyes.

Amanda's mother, Julia, had been raped by Dickson when she was twelve years old. Julia was his slave and his victim. This wasn't unusual. Sexual violence was an integral part of the slave regime and economy. Rape was institutionalized. What was unusual was Dickson's concerted effort to legally recognize Amanda and grant her the status of lady that was disallowed by law and custom for nonwhite women.

Amanda was educated, despite laws against slave literacy, and in 1865, when she was sixteen or seventeen, Dickson arranged for her to be classified as white and to marry her white first cousin Charles Eubanks, a Confederate veteran. Amanda and Charles had two children, but by 1870 she had returned home, and she and her children all took on the patronym Dickson.

We can easily speculate about the difficulties Amanda faced as the slave-born wife of a Confederate war veteran. It may have been terrorizing. And there would hardly be any larger social warmth toward a very wealthy freedwoman who entered public life precisely when the White South was smarting from defeat and suffering from economic disaster and military occupation. Amanda, unbound from her husband, sought further education at the recently established Black college, Atlanta University, between 1876 and 1878. She subsequently married a Black man, Nathan Perry. Ostensibly, she was accepting the social fact of her racial

status, or accepting that it would be forced on her. And yet, David Dickson was also successful in ensuring that his daughter would live her remaining days in wealth and comfort, if not in whiteness.[10]

When I first read *Oroonoko* as a high school student, it struck me as an odd tale because of its respectful and sensitive account of Africans at an Ur-moment in British letters. Now I read Behn's narrative unmaking of the hero and heroine as one of modernity's creation myths, a story about the world the slave masters made. When I first read the story of Amanda America Dickson, she struck me as an oddly situated person, possessed of a life on the margins that reveal the contours of the color line. But more recent readings about her, as I have been working and writing on gender, have led me to read her history and attend to its details differently.

Dickson was a patriarch in the modern sense of the world. He built wealth with unfree labor and was a settler on colonized land. He was an agent and perpetrator of the institutionalized rape that was not only a form of intrinsic violence in the legal and social regime of U.S. slavery but also a harrowing form of wealth production. In fact, had Amanda not been treated differently, she likely would have been lucrative. "Likely" mixed-race women were marketed for sexual exploitation in the slave economy.

But Dickson treated Amanda differently. And the markers of this are the manner in which he tried to give her the features of a white lady, and exercised his power to make a white lady of her. He did so with marriage. And when that failed, she and her progenitors bore his name. And then not only did he grant her property, but he did so through the legal transfer required by inheritance law. Julia and Amanda, mother and daughter, were distinctly, conventionally and unconventionally, situated in the architecture of patriarchy.

The story of Amanda America Dickson demands more than an observation of her oddity. For those of us who wish to use feminist analyses to understand the world, she is more than transcendent; she is caught between mechanisms of gendered forms of domination, which include her racialization as a Black woman and the attempt to remove her from blackness to whiteness. This is the type of story readers of this book will be called to grapple with as part of our understanding of gendering in both the modern and the postmodern world.

The argument in this book is distinctive in another way: It resists doctrine. There are a host of positions that are, in the contemporary moment, proxies for feminism, usually liberal feminism. In truth, I agree with most of them, at least in the present moment. But I have consistently

noticed that behind concepts such as "slut shaming," "street harassment," "reproductive rights," and "pay equity," there is always a complicated architecture of relations of domination, one that often falls out of view in the assertion of the professed position. Occasions for deep interrogation and debate that might lead us to identify the sources of the injustice, violence, and ethical failure differently are lost. That is to say, one might argue that "street harassment" is terrible or (taking a rather standard antifeminist position) that it is not. But in the process of simply taking a pro or con position as a doctrine, it is easy to neglect analyses of public space and the history of gender in the public sphere, over- and under-policing, gender socialization, race and class mythologies as applied to men, women and genderqueer people, the way some people are expected to occupy public instead of private space and therefore potentially experience less protection, and the role of economic precariousness and existing on the "wrong side of the law" as a victim of harassment, to name just a few forces. All of these forces are relevant for understanding the repeated events of sexualized and harassing encounters in a public arena. To my mind, it is essential to seek deep understanding to pursue gender liberation. This requires both the past and the present.

This book is, on the one hand, descriptive and analytical: It moves from modernity to the current complex and vexing historical conjuncture in which we are faced with a relatively new global economic order and technological transformation, as well as trenchant remnants of the old imperial order. However, it is also a theoretical argument advocating the primacy of praxis rather than position. Those of us who seek gender liberation ought to think of feminism as a critical reading practice in which one "reads through these layers" of gendered forms of domination. Gender is complicated and demands careful analysis. But reading through the layers is especially necessary now, because some ideas that we conventionally associate with feminism are increasingly colonized by our marketized public sphere; at the same time, politically powerful neoconservative forces are rolling back the gains of feminist movements. This dynamic requires that I map both the "old" and the "new" orders, as it were, as well as the dizzying complex of forces today.

The book is divided into three sections. The first chapter of the first section, "Seafaring, Sovereignty, and the Self: Of Patriarchy and the Conditions of Modernity," is a reading backward. Through stories such as the two that begin this introduction, I provide exempla of how we can understand the history of modernity and globalization in terms of patriarchy as the foundational architecture for gender domination. I locate modern patriarchy at the intersection of three legal formations—personhood,

sovereignty, and property—that shaped relations of power in the ages of conquest and the transatlantic slave trade.

In chapter 2, "Producing Personhood: The Rise of Capitalism and the Western Subject," the structure of patriarchy is further elaborated in light of the industrial and technological revolutions in the nineteenth century, the end of slavery that coincided with the rise of colonialism, the transgression of gender boundaries in metropoles, and the resulting punishments. It includes close readings of landmark legal cases, texts, and public figures. Stories of these people and works reveal the status of the nonperson in this global history as the "opposite" to the patriarch who was defined both by his relationship to those in his immediate environment and the status of public and political recognition in the global landscape dominated by European nations.

Between the first and second section there is an interlude. It picks up the structure of patriarchy at the moment of its most dramatic confrontation: in the mid-twentieth century, when anticolonial, civil rights, feminist, and gay rights movements demanded major transformations in the social order of the dominant empire, the United States. Here I describe the truncated terms of its gains due to how feminist achievement (such as ones for racial justice and postcolonialism) became ensnared by the neoliberal logics that are the subject of concern in the second section.

The chapters in the second section then take the construct of the first section and extend it into our understanding of the present moment—specifically, gender in the postmodern, economically neoliberal world. In this there is both a structural repetition of the contemporary landscape in the form of the chapters, as they move outward from various satellite points. This diffusion in the formal structure of the text is a reflection of the contemporary condition. There is also a slight narrative shift. Throughout the text I write to readers as "we" as a mode of naming the collective (though virtual) process of writing, reading, and grappling between writer and reader. However, in the second section I begin to work with a conception of "we" that is specifically focused on how we are constituted as neoliberal subjects in the contemporary era.

Chapter 3, "In the Ether: Neoliberalism and Entrepreneurial Woman," interrogates the problem of neoliberalism for feminist thought, with an exploration of the figure of "entrepreneurial woman" and the ideology of "neoliberal feminism," as well as the "gender artifacts" that circulate and are adopted as artifactual revisions of the material given and that have "exchange values" as products of both exploited labor and beauty markets.

The fourth chapter, "Simulacra Child: Hypermedia and the Mediated Subject," explores how hypermedia and the digital age transform how people exist in relation to one another in markets and shape our existence as political subjects. These transformations take place with a simultaneous inheritance of past gender formations and eruptions of the new and resistant gender formations, which all become part of the pastiche of a hypermedia culture.

Chapter 5, "Sticks Broken at the River: The Security State and the Violence of Manhood," focuses on the logic of the security state as the bluntest force of patriarchy, in terms of the rise of both militarization and the proliferation of guns and carcerality (prisons and detention centers), in light of neoliberal market logics.

The final section follows a second interlude, a meditation on the continued analogical, symbolic, and philosophical usefulness of the trope of the witch, a figure who has troubled five hundred years of structuring patriarchy around rules of relation, recognition, and domination. This meditation is preparation for us to move away from the argument about the layered architectures of gendering, inherited and new, to suggest practices of insurgency relative to those architectures. It adds to the act of "reading" as a feminist that has animated the preceding chapters an argument for the explicit practices of witnessing, mapping, and transforming relations.

The first of these three chapters, chapter 6, "Unmaking the Territory and Remapping the Landscape," is an argument for the deliberate practice of mapping relations, populations, and landscapes differently, guided by a principle of ethical relation. Here I use fiction writers as theorists of remapping—specifically, Toni Morrison and Edward P. Jones. Chapter 7, "The Utterance of My Name: Invitation and the Disorder of Desire," takes up the philosopher Stanley Cavell's idea of the "passionate utterance" and Audre Lorde's conception of the erotic to pursue an ethics of feminist engagement that disrupts the "performative utterances" that gender theorists have compellingly argued are integral to the creation and the coerciveness of gendering.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, is titled "The Vicar of Liberation." A play on the ecclesiastical term, it is an argument about the tending of our spirits in the service of an ethics and praxis that might liberate us from commitments to patriarchy and compel us to fight against it. This work of nurturance, I argue, is essential to emancipating ourselves from conceptions of what it means to "count" as a person according to the logics of patriarchy inherited from centuries past and the manner in which they

have been extended in the neoliberal, hypermedia, and "security state" era in which we live.

Throughout this book, I use stories and historical vignettes as examples of the structure of patriarchy. These mini-narratives also serve as models of how we read layers of domination at work in a profoundly heterogeneous world. In each branch of the argument at least one exemplum is available, and a reading provided by the author, but the exempla are also set forth as an invitation for alternative readings. In this way, this is a deliberately dialogic work. It is suggestive and exploratory rather than doctrinal or utopic. Art is critical in this project—visual art and literary—for exploring how the artistic imagination is rife with philosophical arguments about ethical social and intimate relations and with the moral imagination of being in right relation with others in the world.

Within the landscape of scholarly writing, this work descends from a substantial body of feminist criticism and gender and race theory. Yet I have tried to write it in such a way that it does not demand that the reader be well versed in the long history of such scholarship, although the citations are an encouragement for readers to follow the intellectual genealogy presented. That said, the arguments set forth are presented not as a debate with previous feminist criticism but, rather, as something influenced by previous work, yet distinct.

The additional usefulness I find in writing in this way is that, given the plethora of meanings attached to the words "feminism" and "patriarchy," it allows me to take up space to present an extended and particular idea of what I take these terms to mean. The usefulness of that unpacking does not lie primarily in arguing for my type of feminism over that of another. Rather, it allows me to give the reader some historical and political mooring that serves as a tool for critical interrogation, regardless of whether the reader ultimately embraces the concept "liberation feminism."

Although the last word of the *Oroonoko* is "Imoinda," it is a ghastly homage. The condition of slavery has led her "lord," as Behn called her, to kill the "beautiful and constant" wife. This inversion of the patriarchal order of protection that was granted to lieges, a common understanding in the West, is an integral feature of the history of Western patriarchy—one that demands unearthing to pursue its undoing.

Amanda America Dickson died of neurasthenia. It was a disease that today doesn't clearly fit into classification systems, although it was a popular diagnosis in the nineteenth century. Fatigue, anxiety, fainting, headache, heart palpitations, and depression were symptoms. Commonly

speculated causes for the disease included the growth of economic competition and the speed of city life. We don't know what caused Amanda Dickson's death. But in her we have a record of a life that surely must have been dizzying, anxiety-rendering, and rife with heartache. In that she wasn't alone; she certainly was a part of a staggering majority: those who failed to be and were failed by the patriarchs in their midst.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*; *or*, *The Royal Slave*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, vol. 5, ed. Montague Summers (1915; Project Gutenberg, 2009), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29854/29854-h/29854-h.htm, 136.
2 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 136.
3 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 137.
4 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 161.
5 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 172.
6 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 175.
7 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 197.
8 Behn, *Oroonoko*, 198.
9 Cedric J. Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).
10 Kent Anderson Leslie, *Woman of Color Daughter of Privilege: Amanda America Dickson, 1849–1893* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

CHAPTER 1. SEAFARING, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE SELF

Epigraphs: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 9 of *The Prose Works of John Milton: With an Introductory Review*, (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1866), 66; John Donne, "A Valediction: Of Weeping," in *The Love Poems of John Donne* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), 71.

1 See Baptista Boazio, *St. Augustine Map, 1589*, World Digital Library, accessed May 30, 2017, https://www.wdl.org/en/item/3936.
2 Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976), 27.
3 John Locke, "The Second Treatise of Civil Government," 1689; Constitution Society, 1998, chap. 9, sec. 124, http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtr09.htm.
4 Locke, "The Second Treatise of Civil Government," chap. 5, sec. 27.
5 Locke, "The Second Treatise of Civil Government," chap. 5, sec. 27.
6 John Locke, "The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina," 1669; Avalon Project, Yale University, 2008, sec. 110, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nc05.asp.