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Cover Page Footnote

Many thanks to the editors, Dr. Lisa Maruca and Dr. Kate Ozment, for their thoughtful engagement with this writing, and for their helpful commentary. Enormous thanks to Dr. Derrick Spires for his ongoing guidance and support. And a special thanks to Kameelah Janan Rasheed for her brilliance, generosity, and the privilege of community.

“COME THINK WITH ME”: FINDING COMMUNION IN THE LIBERATORY TEXTUAL PRACTICES OF KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED

Jehan L. Roberson

So I sort of like to play with language, and making something either very very legible, or making something very very opaque. And encouraging people to do the work of understanding it . . . it's really an invitation. Come think with me.”

—Kameelah Janan Rasheed, “The Edge of Legibility”¹

I first met Kameelah Janan Rasheed in the summer of 2016 at Smack Mellon, a gallery space in Brooklyn where she was then in residence. In truth, I was accompanying a friend who was researching another artist in residence, but I happened upon Rasheed in the middle of making art and affixing it to her studio walls. I was transfixed. I had never seen someone engage with text as directly and, frankly, as disruptively as she did. I mean disruptive in the best sense of the word—it felt like Rasheed was granting me permission to address and redress the text as a material and theoretical site for ongoing inquiry.

Her studio walls were almost completely covered in black-and-white scans and photocopies of book pages, cutout letters, and other textual arrangements. Her aesthetic favors bold typefaces inscribing even bolder phrases, reminiscent of newspaper headlines, but with the clear distinction of refusing attempts at objectivity and ready-drawn conclusions. Rasheed’s notes were often palimpsests written along the edges of her books’ pages and were continued with newer notations, sometimes with arrows drawn between pages, connecting one thought to another. For Rasheed, this focus on process over finalized pieces of art evinces an ethic of ongoing-ness, unending conversing and interrogating a text and its infinite meanings. Her practice expands beyond text in book form and into the realm of words as visual objects. At times implicit and explicit,

Kameelah's textual engagements are rooted in an analysis of how disruptions of text on the visual plane might offer up further points of entry and ways of knowing. Kameelah not only converses with the text directly through her own annotations, but she also puts texts into dialogues with one another, as evidenced by the letters and pages she cuts out from her encyclopedias and other books in order to create new messaging and new (il)legibilities. In juxtaposition, Kameelah's texts are an invitation to join her in an ongoing conversation with each of the writers, artists, and thinkers she engages. It is an open invitation for all others who care to join.

Kameelah's work, then, is rooted in citational and bibliographic practices as the foundation of both learning and unlearning. Citation in this way becomes a cartographic technique, a mapping of knowledge systems intentionally and violently erased or absented from colonial archives. Text is the undercurrent of our lives, our deaths, the many ways in which we as Black people have been rendered unliving. In many ways, text comes to signify the unbreachable chasm at the core of Black being. For Black women, the text becomes a sought-after space to work through this vexed relationality, giving particular consideration to text as a tool of defining,² circumscribing,³ dehumanizing,⁴ and killing.⁵ Text remains a site of deep tension, yet one with which Black people are inextricably bound. Kameelah's work begins with these implications of the text as rupture and as part of a self-affirming cycle that seeks to dictate what and how we know.

Like Kameelah, I am also attempting to sidestep the push for easy conclusions and finality, to remain open to all I don't know, and to release all I need to unlearn. I don't approach this process with a sure view of the road ahead but instead with the desire and the imperative to explore Black women's liberatory textual practices across time and space. From Harriet Jacob's textual mappings of herself everywhere and nowhere from her "loophole of retreat"⁶ to visual artists and writers like Kameelah who play within and outside of the so-called boundaries of the text, I argue that Black women's narrative technologies, whether material or immaterial, map covert and liberatory geographies for Black women. Within the spaces Black women access and open up through their texts, they may find both freedom from chattel slavery and other oppressive systems in the material world; from these spaces Black women craft their interiorities, their inner sites of self-possession and self-definition.

In 2016, I was a recent MA graduate but still a forever student of literature. My formal literary training upheld the reverence for the book as sacrosanct, causing great internal conflict because of my own propensity for highlighting, circling, questioning, and *amen*-ing throughout the

margins and bodies of my books. Standing in Kameelah's Smack Mellon studio, I felt a sense of recognition, someone else mapping out their thinking in the way that my own brain works, as an ongoing conversation across bodies of texts, transgressing imposed boundaries of genre, discipline, and temporality. Kameelah's emphasis on *work*, the verb and the process, and not *works*, the noun and the product, alongside her emphasis on active engagement and interpretation, continues to push me to truly explore my own thoughts around the unbreakable link between blackness and textuality. More specifically, Kameelah stands within a lineage of Black women artists who advance Black ways of reading and being in conversation with the text.

Kameelah's practices call to mind Dionne Brand's formulation of Black life and living as inherently textual. In her landmark book *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, Brand states that "[t]o live in the Black Diaspora . . . is to live in a fiction—a creation of empires, and also self-creation. . . . It is to apprehend the sign one makes yet to be unable to escape it except in radiant moments of ordinariness made like art."⁷ Like Brand, Kameelah's methodology hinges on an expansive praxis of reading as not only receiving messages from the text but also as active engagement—as sitting with the new and unfamiliar, and as writing or talking back to the text directly on the page. Both her artist and ethos statements reveal a litany of texts that she synthesizes with an incredible virtuosity. From Fred Moten to Umberto Eco, from Saidiya Hartman to Octavia Butler, Kameelah reads scores of writers' texts collectively and horizontally, resisting boundaries of discipline, time, and place. For Kameelah, putting these texts into communion with one another encourages new ways of understanding and the potentialities of new knowledges emerging. Her reading practice refuses all notions of fixedness, be it in knowledges, movements, or ways of being. At the root of her methodology is the ethos and ethic of care, rooted in Black feminist ways of knowing and living, and of sustaining Black life. From her steadfast devotion to Black livingness emerges a recalibration of how Black life has come to be understood and inhabited. Kameelah characterizes her work as ecological, concerned with those iterative, revisioning, and cyclical processes innate to all forms of life and living.

Citation and bibliography, then, become vital and life-sustaining methodologies for Kameelah. In reading both her biography and ethos statements, Kameelah's citational practice is intrinsic to how she understands and defines herself, as she regularly utilizes footnotes to cite primarily Black women's writings. Hers is an understanding of what writer and scholar Julietta Singh points to in her invocation of Antonio

Gramsci in *No Archive Will Restore You*: “An infinite history of traces without an inventory! An endless collection of oneself that is impossible to gather. . . . I had no concrete idea of what it meant, or what currency it had in my own life, but I knew how it *felt*. It felt as though the broken thing I was might be restored, and it felt like an embodied idea I would never stop desiring for myself and for the world.”⁸ Like Singh, Kameelah refuses notions of the individual as a being unto herself, as a self-constructed and self-sustaining entity from which solely produced works of genius and mastery might emanate. Instead, the collective, or the community, is key. In kind, processes and practices such as reading and writing are also collective endeavors, ones that deposit within us the traces that Singh and Gramsci highlight. Kameelah pushes this orientation further through her iterative practice, which is itself a methodology that inherently recognizes the cyclical nature of life, text, and world-making. Crucially, she points to how the life cycles of a text can and should be considered alongside ecological life cycles, both for the ways in which we engage with books and other printed matter and also how we think about cycles of living and “cycles of perpetuating a process.”⁹ Octavia Butler’s notion of primitive hypertext, Katherine McKittrick’s “black Atlantic livingness,”¹⁰ as well as the theories of Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Fred Moten, and Lucille Clifton—all of these artists and thinkers populate Kameelah’s praxis, as evidenced by her citations on her website, itself an ongoing and expansive work within her oeuvre. Once again she maps Black life, Black ways of knowing and being known, into our shared memory.

To even begin to approach Kameelah or her work, then, is to necessarily engage with the incredible depth and expansiveness of her reading practice. As a matter of principle, she begins each of her presentations with an acknowledgment of “where she knows from,” her own cartographies at the core of her approach to texts and to learning.¹¹ Kameelah cites her father’s tendency to annotate the Quran and other texts—particularly during his conversion to Islam in the early 1980s—and how his study tactic laid the groundwork for her art practice. Born and raised in East Palo Alto, California, in a community steeped in the Black radical tradition of radical literacy and pedagogy, her formative years were spent honing a way of being and reading that was rooted in systems of care. There was an onsite publishing center at her elementary school, where Kameelah was involved with the creation and dissemination on text at every level and at a formative age, where she began scaffolding an approach to reading and learning that is as expansive as it is thoughtful, with an adherence to intentionality that guides each aspect of Kameelah’s

living and her work.¹² This early grounding in text as collaborative, cowritten, and coproduced continues to inform her practice today.

Colonial approaches to so-called mastery or full understanding dictate that the “writer” or “narrator” assume the posture of objectivity and a presentation of knowledge production as an almost all-endeavor that is a process of obtaining or possessing certainty. Yet for Black people and especially Black women, citation is ceremonial. It’s an assertion of Black legibility, which is not to suggest a way of being understood or legible within colonial frameworks but rather a way of being read and known by oneself that affirms Black life and living. Black legibility is a way of revealing the distortions at the root of dominant narratives by asking viewers to question prevailing ways of knowing that undergird how we all currently exist and move in the world. Kameelah’s emphasis on lenticularity as a means of opacity and legibility is of a piece with the relational frame to which Hartman gestures. Every text, every narrative needs a witness; each is required to call the other into being.

Here I draw a distinction between Black being—or Black life—and blackness, alongside McKittrick’s definition of blackness as the “where” we know from, as a positionality characterized as eternally marginal, peripheral, and on the edges, never the center of the grand narrative of history.¹³ Within this framework, Black being and Black life are the everyday practices of self-affirmation and self-liberation that Black people employ in the face of antiblackness and its attendant violences, or what Kevin Quashie terms “Black aliveness.”¹⁴ Inherent within decades of Black study is the refrain of dispossession as one of the most defining characteristics of being Black in diaspora. There is much truth to this point: dispossession—as the denial of one’s right to one’s self and one’s histories, narratives, and ways of knowing deeply informs blackness and Black identity formation. Still, as Kameelah contends, that is not all we are.

Dispossession, understood here as lack, emanates not from blackness but from the archive’s inability to hold the fullness of Black living and Black narratives. Through colonial reading practices that intentionally misrecognize and render illegible Black ways of knowing and being, the archive’s self-affirming nature continues to instruct us to acquire knowledge through an accumulative, capitalist sense of ownership and property. As McKittrick notes in her invocation of Édouard Glissant:

The poetics of landscape, in Glissant’s terms, “awakens” language, offering intelligible and visible black struggles. . . . What is striking here, and very useful in terms of black women’s geographies, is that the poetics of landscape

are not derived from the desire for socioeconomic possession. Nor are they derived from a unitary vantage point. Indeed, Glissant suggests that there are different sets of geographic tools available, which are anchored, primarily, in non-linearity, contradictory histories, dispossession, and an “infinite variety” of landscapes. The claim to place should not be naturally followed by material ownership and black repossession but rather by *a grammar of liberation*, through which ethical human-geographies can be recognized and expressed.¹⁵

What McKittrick offers and what Kameelah takes up in her own textual practice, is a production and interrogation of space that rejects possession, or ownership, as the only mode for Black living. Within the poetics of landscape is a recognition of the coconstitutive nature of text and place. For these theorists, the text becomes its own cartographic site, a place where freedoms become mapped into cultural memory, a place that offers up modes of affirming, protecting, and sustaining Black life. Within colonial frameworks that render the book as a sacrosanct space or site of knowledges divine, secular, and otherwise, Kameelah’s approach is one that recognizes how the text has been both a site and tool of Black Death. Thus, it follows that her process begins with a rejection of the notion that the text is a sacred site that cannot be transgressed. Kameelah’s work resists the recuperative impulse, an especially prevalent methodology within recent art and scholarly offerings that seeks to recover the Black histories and, sometimes even, those Black lives that are rendered deadened, rendered as objects through the colonial archives in which we first appear as objects of sale, ship cargo, and as items to be insured in the case of illness or death. While understandable, I argue that the recuperative impulse is itself grounded in similar desires for (intellectual) property and ownership, and that Kameelah’s is an orientation that grapples with the impossibility of knowing, not as a point of despair but as an opportunity. For Kameelah, the vast impossibility of total knowledge is the launching point for infinite possibilities and for more ethical human geographies.¹⁶ In embracing uncertainty, she asks both her viewers, or readers, and herself to interrogate *what* and *how* we come to know. As Saidiya Hartman notes in “Venus in Two Acts,” “The archive is, in this case, a death sentence, tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history.”¹⁷

As evidenced in Figure 1, that you must labor in order to view, to engage, or to read Rasheed's work is no accident; her spatial arrangements of text necessitate the use of one's whole body from squatting to read texts near or on the floor to turning one's head and/or torso to view texts written at sharp slants and angles. In doing so, Kameelah suggests and implores the "reader" to disrupt their own ideas about how to read and what meanings become available through this radical reading practice. The body, Kameelah asserts, is also a primary text that she engages within and implores her viewers to understand/embodiment as part of her radical reading practice. In many ways, the body is both material and theoretical, the vessel through which we experience the world and the primary site on which narratives are impressed, beginning before a child exits the womb. For Black people and especially for Black women, those narratives were—and continue to be—matters of life and death. If reading is a method of interpreting and ascribing meaning, blame the narratives that render blackness as synonymous with threat, as synonymous with criminality, as synonymous with inhumanity. Consider the refrain of the many white police officers guilty of murdering unarmed Black people—they perceived a threat and were fearful of their lives. These rapid judgments are in fact readings, ones suggesting a sort of legibility that is irreconcilable with true interdependence and with true living. Kameelah's practice of lenticularity, or varying modes of visibility and legibility, is a disruption of these lethal narratives with which Black people must contend. Detailing her work, Kameelah states, "I want to constantly assert livingness. . . . I'm interested in creating ecosystems of these iterative and provisional products that are basically never actually done."¹⁸ Through emphasizing process over results, Kameelah eschews colonial systems of commodification and possession in favor of a dedication to the everyday, radical act of Black living. She asks us to consider: "What does aliveness look like? What does living look like? What does ecology look like as part of blackness, as part of Black histories and Black futures?"¹⁹

"A Book as a Temporary Gathering of Friends:" Kameelah Janan Rasheed's *Black School* (2018) and *No New Theories* (2019)

In 2018, I was privileged to once again encounter Kameelah and her work through her collaboration with the New Museum, resulting in a reading room and worship as part of a suite of offerings she calls the *Black School*.



Figure 1. Worshipping at the Altar of Certainty. © Kameelah Janan Rasheed, 2021.

As a workshop participant, we learned about the history of mass print technologies within Black liberation struggles, with a principle focus on the Xerox and risograph machines, as well as other textual enterprises such as book binding. Within the space of the *Black School* was a compilation of Kameelah's own books, many bound in the traditional book format, while others appeared as pamphlets or scans, clearly and carefully (re)assembled by Kameelah herself. Kameelah brings the collective with her, always. In perhaps one of her most straightforward citational efforts, the books Kameelah included in the *Black School* remained "intact" yet were organized within a radical framework that recognized the importance of mass dissemination and an informed Black public. Certainly in step with other contemporary radical Black libraries, Kameelah's collection was also an invitation for reading, learning, and exploring her own foundational texts. Still, the emphasis here remains on the viewer or the reader's engagement and their own contribution to the ongoing conversations begun in the texts.

Kameelah's central premise is care, and she ensures care is explicit and affirmed in how she approaches notions of school and study. She cites and sites herself as "thinking about school, and study, and learning in the language that Alexis Pauline Gumbs uses, where . . . school is a scale of care." As a self-identified learner, Kameelah theorizes on learning as a practice of care. . . . It's thinking about how learning can actually be a disposition towards care."²⁰ Hers is an understanding and an attunement

rooted in Black feminist histories and ways of knowing, as the continuation of works advancing Black women's liberation and thus liberation for everyone.²¹ But also evident is a fundamental understanding of structure and how the structure often prescribes how one engages with the materials and, more often than not, limits the possibilities of learning. With Black liberation as her central and ultimate goal, Kameelah both emphasizes and interrogates notions of access by working within and outside of institutions and institutional knowledge systems, crafting narratives with potentially infinite points of entry, all in the service of Black liberation. Kameelah exists and creates in multiplicities. In emphasizing care and slowness as the underpinnings of her methodological approach, she points to the liberatory and life-sustaining potential of Black women's self-articulations and textual cartographies.

It is from this same orientation of care and Black aliveness that Kameelah approaches *No New Theories*, a book initially published in 2019 but that has since seen two new iterations thus far. The works collected in *No New Theories* were composed utilizing a variety of techniques and styles, such as found texts, deconstructed texts, poetic fragments, and Kameelah's own writings generated through Oulipo, or constrained writing techniques. Her work hinges on what she calls the accretion and association of texts with one another. In addition to her invocation of Alexis Pauline Gumbs's conceit of school as a scale of care, Kameelah orients herself away from the hyperindividualist models of learning to the type of work that bridges theory with practice in establishing and enlivening spaces of care that prioritize Black life and ways of being with one another. As Kameelah has said, "I think about the book as a collection, but [as] a temporary collection. Every single page in this book had a life before it came into this book, and every single page in this book will have a life after the book lives in the world. So I think about a book as a temporary gathering of friends, and those friends disperse at some later point."²² Within this move toward care is a recognition of citation as a vital praxis and ethic, in keeping with Sara Ahmed's assertion of citation as "a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies."²³ For Kameelah, and also for Lynne, building a world centering Black women's bodies, as well as their bodies of knowledges, is not only achieved through citation and invocation but also through this emphasis on friendship, on those closest relations(hips) and everyday acts of communion.

At the center of *No New Theories* is a sprawling interview with art writer and Kameelah's good friend Jessica Lynne. The intimacy between the two is apparent, as the errant conversation reveals. Their lexicon

is shared and drawn from a codeveloped glossary around Black pedagogy and liberation. After the book's initial publication in 2018, *No New Theories* was pulled because of publication errors. At the same time, Kameelah's own ethos of the unfinished and the ongoing ran counter to the idea of a book as a finished product. As a result, *No New Theories* evolved organically into an interrogation of the book form and of completion through multiple iterations, revisions, and rewritings. Lynne and Rasheed revisit their initial conversation, which took place in 2017 and engage in a process of reencountering themselves, as well as "what" and "how" they were thinking several years apart. As evidenced in the pages below scanned from *No New Theories*, revision, annotation accompany the original conversation, building up like palimpsests alongside older notes and excerpts, sometimes placed sideways on the page (fig. 2). It isn't immediately discernible which texts and notes are "first" or oldest on a given page, and intentionally so. For Kameelah and, so it seems, for Jessica Lynne, too, meaning isn't derived from a linear or tidy conversation that appears in print only after it's been edited of all its "mess"—rather, meanings are many, and they emerge from moments of encounter and reencounter. Both Kameelah and Lynne take up the charge to approach learning as a disposition—a nod to the affective, sensorial, and embodied registers of knowledge—coupled with Rasheed's reading of Fred Moten's and Stefano Harney's definition of study as inherently social and that which we do together. Harney harkens to those moments where we become possessed by others as they're speaking or acting as part of the process of study, what Kameelah refers to as being "held by a moment."²⁴ As Lynne and Kameelah demonstrate, to be held in the way that Harney describes is in many ways contingent upon an openness to not knowing and a refusal of certainty as inextricable from the process of revisioning.

Communion becomes the vehicle through which Kameelah explores the many themes informing the visual works and installation pieces recorded in *No New Theories*. Through naming and tending to those texts that are foundational to her practice and her way of being, Kameelah critically communes with Black people and Black legacies of textual disruption and liberation across time, space, and place. Octavia Butler's notion of "primitive hypertext" is one Kameelah often cites, interpreting Butler's practice of reading multiple books simultaneously and spread throughout a given space as a geographic arrangement of text, a practice Kameelah extends through a cosmological approach à la Alexis Pauline Gumbs's conceit of "ancestrally co-written texts."²⁵ Each work Kameelah produces is in collaboration with others, whether they exist in the present, the past, or future.

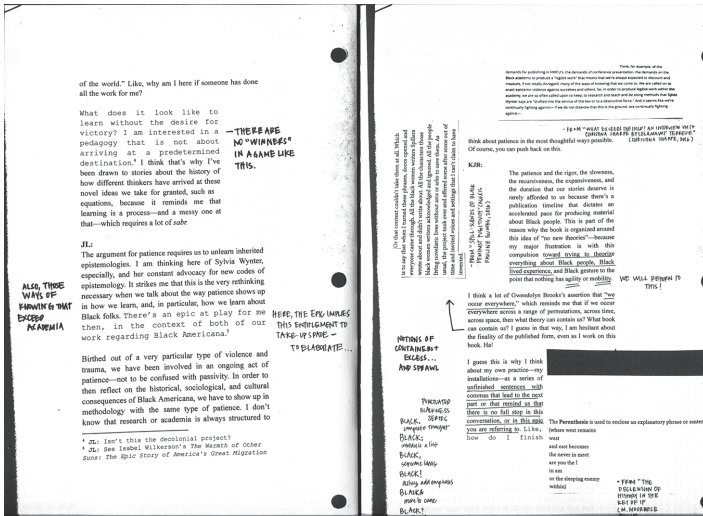


Figure 2. No New Theories, scan. ©Kameelah Janan Rasheed, 2019.

Conclusion

Everyone, everything, is reference. As Kameelah herself explains, all people approach texts through the lens of their own previous readings, bringing along their own preexisting narratives. Within her push for slowness is a deeper imperative to truly engage, at every possible level, the meanings and the material implications of the text, especially as it has come to bear on Black life. Her practice is derived by a desire to emphasize radical slowness as a possible antidote to the rapacious rates of consumption and movement that we are pushed to match in the throes of hypercapitalism. Rightly so, there are a number of prerequisite texts requiring prior engagement before entering into Kameelah's ongoing conversations. Also necessary is an openness to being reoriented away from knowledge as yet another good to be consumed or to be owned, particularly with any notion of total mastery or possession. For Kameelah, bibliography and citation are at the core of her practice, though not with any intention of obligatory attribution or comprehensiveness. Rather, through beginning with a recognition of impossibility, Kameelah's emphasis on text as the genesis for infinite possibility homes in on the liberatory potential of text as being contingent on the willingness of the reader to read and be read, to learn and to unlearn. She builds and rebuilds frameworks and scales of learning, always extending an invitation to join the many communities in progress. Within Kameelah's invitation to think alongside

her is the implicit agreement to reorient oneself away from the empty rhetoric of representational politics and other popular discourses that seek to fix blackness and Black people in place. Hers is an invitation to eschew knowledge predicated on desires of ownership and possession, those initiatives that explicitly and implicitly close off engagement with others and demand a hypervisible, transparent figure, one who's most easily recognizable or comprehended within colonial logics.²⁶ Kameelah states, "I think a lot about what it actually means to make myself legible and visible . . . how you present yourself to the world, so that it's legible and appealing to people, versus [saying,] 'I'm not going to make myself known until I'm ready.'"²⁷ As a document of life, sometimes available and at other times kept private; as a mode of agent being and being with one another; as a site of enacting care across geographies and temporalities, Kameelah Janan Rasheed's radical approach to text opens up new spaces and potentialities of deeper intimacy, communion, and being for Black people.

Jehan Roberson is a queer writer, scholar, artist, and memory worker using text as the basis for her interdisciplinary practice. Born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, Jehan's work explores text as a site of liberation, place-making, and historical intervention for Black peoples in the Americas. Her art and research have informed her previous work in archives and cultural sites such as the National Civil Rights Museum and the Center for Southern Folklore in Memphis, Kismet Productions in Chicago, and the Borges Cultural Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Jehan is a PhD student in the Department of Literatures in English at Cornell University. She holds an MA in humanities and social thought and a BA in English literature with a double minor in Spanish and journalism from the University of Missouri.

NOTES

Many thanks to the editors, Dr. Lisa Maruca and Dr. Kate Ozment, for their thoughtful engagement with this writing and for their helpful commentary. Enormous thanks to Dr. Derrick Spire for his ongoing guidance and support. And a special thanks to Kameelah Janan Rasheed for her brilliance, generosity, and the privilege of community.

- 1 "Kameelah Janan Rasheed, "The Edge of Legibility," *Art21*, October 2021, <https://art21.org/watch/new-york-close-up/kameelah-janan-rasheed-the-edge-of-legibility/>.
- 2 "The plot of her undoing begins with a man in his study writing a tome about the Americas, the species, the fauna, the races, it is a compendium illustrated with botanical drawings, architectural plans, sketches of farm buildings, and a microscopic view of her scarf-skin." Saidiya Hartman, "The Plot of Her Undoing," *Notes on Feminism*, Feminist Art Coalition, 2019, 1, <https://feministartcoalition.org/essays-list/saidiya-hartman>.
3. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxiii. "The poetics of landscape allow black women to critique the boundaries of transatlantic slavery, rewrite national narratives, respatialize feminism, and develop new pathways across traditional

- geographic arrangements; they also offer several reconceptualizations of space and place, positioning black women as geographic subjects who provide spatial clues as to how more humanly workable geographies might be imagined.”
4. Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14. “The archive is, in this case, a death sentence, tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history.”
 5. *Ibid.*
 6. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written By Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Francis Child (Boston, 1861), 173.
 7. Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011), 18–19.
 8. Antonio Gramsci qtd. in Julietta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2018), 17–18. The full Gramsci quote to which Singh refers reads as follows: “The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. . . . Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.”
 9. Kameelah Janan Rasheed, “Spring 2020 Lecture Series—Kameelah Janan Rasheed,” RISD Graphic Design, April 8, 2021, <https://player.vimeo.com/video/534944849>.
 10. Katherine McKittrick, “Diachronic Loops/Deadweight Tonnage/Bad Made Measure,” *Cultural Geographies* 23, no. 1 (2016): 3–18, quotation on 3.
 11. Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 61.
 12. Rasheed, “Spring 2020 Lecture Series.
 13. McKittrick, *Dear Science*, 61.
 14. Kevin Quashie, *Black Aliveness or a Poetics of Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).
 15. McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxii–xxiii; emphasis added.
 16. McKittrick, xxii–xxiii.
 17. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 2.
 18. Rasheed, “NYU Libraries.” The point of being undone is one Kameelah regularly explores in her artist talks and workshops, often pointing to Lucille Clifton’s poem “I Am Not Done Yet” as encapsulating and informing her ethos.
 19. Rasheed.
 20. Rasheed, “Spring 2020 Lecture Series.”
 21. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Got Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017). Taylor’s book-length collection of interviews and reflections on the impact of the groundbreaking collective alludes to the oft-quoted declaration from “The Combahee River Collective Statement”: “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression” (17).
 22. Rasheed, “Spring 2020 Lecture Series.”

23. feministkilljoys [Sara Ahmed], "Making Feminist Points," *Feministkilljoys* (blog), September 11, 2013, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/>.
24. Stefano Harney paraphrased in Rasheed, "Spring 2020 Lecture Series."
25. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *M Archive: After the End of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), xi.
26. Rasheed, "Spring 2020 Lecture Series." Rasheed has cited Édouard Glissant's attention to the etymology of comprehend, whose meaning is rooted in acquiring or possessing.
27. Rasheed, "Edge of Legibility."