

Regarding bell

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This article considers the author's friendship with the late bell hooks. Through conceptualizing the notion of wayward immobility as well as exploring the significance of bell's work on the author's life and academia, this article celebrates bell and her incredible thinking and writing practice.

Key words: bell hooks; wayward immobility; care; feminism; friendship.

I wrote part of the following article for bell hooks in the spring of 2022 after her death in December of 2021 for the open-access online journal *Ill_Will*. I experienced radical kinship with bell, even in the last years when she did not have a lot left to give because she was sick and already gave and gave through her writing and speaking practice. Following johanna hedva,

The most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself [...] To take seriously each other's vulnerability and fragility and precarity, and to support it, honor it, empower it. To protect each other, to enact and practice a community of support. A radical kinship, an interdependent sociality, a politics of care (hedva 2022: part 6).¹

My radical kinship with bell is one of the most difficult, but beautiful, experiences of my life this far, and thus, I'm writing this essay as redress for what bell and I dreamed of producing together. We were going to write something together, about our friendship. But it never happened. I am trying to theorize my relationship with bell through the pain of loss. This is a complex essay to write for many reasons, but grieving makes it the hardest: "It is not easy to name our pain, to theorize from that location" (hooks 1994: 74).²

I

Are we capable of enacting a reading practice that embraces individuals who ‘misbehave,’ even under conditions of relative freedom?
-Kaiama Glover, *A Regarded Self*

On December 3rd, 2021, my partner (Judy) and I drove down to Berea, Kentucky to visit bell and bring her books. At the start of the pandemic, I somehow became bell’s book buyer and would always bring a few bags of mysteries—primarily cozies—when seeing her. bell and I spoke on the phone many times a week, usually just to check in and talk about our daily lives. She hadn’t been answering the phone so I was concerned (bell would correct me for using the word “worried”) and wanted to see her in person. When we arrived at her house, we found her in critical condition and urged her to get emergency medical care, but as usual, she denied it (she always rejected the medical industrial complex and its relationship to antiblackness), desiring that her friends and family care for her instead in the form of mutual aid—a nod to Dean Spade, Mia Mingus, and others.³ And so, we cared for bell because we love(d) bell, even when she “misbehaved.”⁴

After leaving Berea on December 5th, bell became even more sick, and Judy and I drove back to Berea on December 7th to help care for her during her transition out of this world. On our way back to Berea, we listened to a talk by Kaiama Glover on her book *A Regarded Self: Caribbean Womanhood and the Ethics of Disorderly Being* (2021) where Glover conceptualizes the unruliness of Black womanhood in a way that spoke to bell’s very being. *A Regarded Self* analyzes Black female protagonists’ regard of the self in Caribbean texts such as Maryse Condé’s *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, René Depestre’s *Hadriana in All My Dreams*, and Jamaica Kincaid’s *The Autobiography of My Mother*. Glover writes, “The insistent self-regard of these protagonists draws our attention to the constraints and insufficiencies of what we often presume to be radical or expansive categories. These women remind us that any commitment to inclusivity and justice must make room for wayward subjects” (Glover 2021: 37). For bell, to care for her own waywardness was a form of self-regard. Indeed, self-regard, to paraphrase Glover, is a lens to reconsider enduring academic standards and ideological perspectives. I think this lens of self-regard exemplifies bell precisely: she encompassed waywardness, not only through her thorough and specific ways of being (or not being), but through the ways academia envisioned her or failed to envision her.

During her New School conversation with Melissa Harris Perry, bell stated that she liked to think of herself as “exacting and precise rather than difficult.”⁵ She was the most complicated, stubborn, and brilliant person I ever met, and I would indeed say she was difficult because of her exacting and precise ways of thinking and loving. bell’s waywardness and audacity to live her own temporal and spatial life provides a way of reading, as a form of study that aligns with Glover’s question in the epigraph. Not only was bell a constant reader of books and magazines (as in she read from the early morning into the night), but her reading practice also went beyond the written word. And this way of reading, a reading that encompasses the pain that arises from ethical veraciousness,

compelled me to love bell. My own commitment to inclusivity and justice has magnified through knowing and loving bell. Indeed, categories of radical love and acceptance must include many modes of waywardness as a kind of survival that signals toward another way of being.

Self-regard, as a lens, and waywardness, as a means of survival, are two modes that offer a feminist way of being disobedient to the dominant order without being necessarily collective, or mobile. Indeed, bell's self-regard "[s]upports an ethics of sustained dissent" (Glover 2021: 28) that grounded her wayward immobility. As Saidiya Hartman so eloquently writes:

[Waywardness] is unrepentant. It traffics in occult visions of other worlds and dreams of a different kind of life. Waywardness is an ongoing exploration of *what might be*; it is an improvisation with the terms of social existence, when the terms have already been dictated, when there is little room to breathe, when you have been sentenced to a life of servitude, when the house of bondage looms in whatever direction you move. It is the untiring practice of trying to live when you were never meant to survive (Hartman 2019: 228).⁶

bell *was* consistently pushing the boundaries of *what might be* through her refusal to be anything but unrepentant. Yet towards the end of her life, she was not as interested in *what might be* as she was about *what was here*. bell's visceral and physical needs became primary in her life in ways that she could not predict and thus, her waywardness became one of immobility, one not only of survival but of allowing herself to rest—a restful waywardness that is not future oriented. Our relationship is a story about restful waywardness; this story that I am writing about bell colludes with Hartman yet figures within the realm of restful possibility, a possibility formed through wayward immobility that gestures back to bell's work on white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and her capacity to resist these structures, especially during times of physical and emotional distress.

bell embodied a wayward life through her refusal to accept anything within the bounds of hegemony. To think with Kevin Quashie's discussion of audacity,⁷ bell had the audacity to not give a fuck what others thought of her. Yet audacity brings much suffering for Black women, especially in the academy. She spoke out against all forms of oppression, even when her opinion was unpopular or regarded as extreme. Like the time she called Beyoncé a terrorist.⁸ bell never stopped critiquing class, more specifically, Black feminist intramural class antagonism and she saw Beyoncé as a neoliberal figure who reinforces the very suffering she attempts to resist in her music and visuals. bell got much backlash for that comment (perhaps it should not have been said publicly in front of a primarily white audience at the New School). bell's "misbehavior" in this scene no doubt compelled Beyoncé to perform at the Grammys with a life-sized lit-up sign screaming "FEMINIST" behind her that same year. bell continued to see racialized gender and class within intramural space as a foundational structure of power that was often erased or overlooked when interrogating antiblackness—a term she learned to embrace later in life.

Later in life, bell lived a quiet life, out of the public eye, but her thoughts and opinions were anything but quiet, at least in the traditional sense. Indeed, most people who knew bell and spent time with her would not call her quiet. Again, I am thinking with Quashie, whose notion of quiet exists beyond silence and stillness. He writes:

Quiet, instead, is a metaphor for the full range of one's inner life—one's desires, ambitions, hungers, vulnerabilities, fears. The inner life is not apolitical or without social value, but neither is it determined entirely by publicness. In fact, the interior—dynamic and ravishing—is a stay against the dominance of the social world; it has its own sovereignty. It is hard to see, even harder to describe, but no less potent in its ineffability. Quiet” (Quashie 2012: 6).⁹

bell's inner life was anything but apolitical and she expressed her desires and fears through her failing corporeality. Her interior did have a kind of sovereignty over her that was often hard to see, especially in the last few years. Or perhaps her “sovereignty of quiet” manifested differently toward the end, when bell stopped moving but never stopped being wayward in her thoughts and (in)actions. She had a waywardness about her that led me to think of wayward immobility as both imposed and chosen, as a form of radical refusal that is often quiet and perhaps even restful while also defiant and recalcitrant.

Restfulness and immobility, especially in relation to Black women, are not synonymous nor even usually thought together. To be restful symbolizes quiet while to be immobile signifies stillness—a stillness that is usually enforced rather than chosen. Yet immobility is not purely negative even as it has negative undertones tied to notions of failure and defeat. Immobility is a form of mobility and thus should be understood broadly to examine physical (non)movement along with psychic forms of immobility. In other words, to be immobile is not only tied to the physical but also to (un)consciousness through structural forces like depression, antiblackness, and medicalization, to name a few. People are immobilized by these forces, sometimes physically, often psychically, or usually a little (or a lot) of both. Immobility, then, is kind of reversal, an improvisation upon immobilizing forces. I am not interested in discussing the various diagnoses bell carried with her but rather how these diagnoses may or may not have shaped her wayward immobility, her unruliness in both thought and action. In thought, her wayward immobility created space to linger “in occult visions of other worlds and dreams of a different kind of life” (Hartman 2019: 228) to create an oppositional view of our world.

II

Significantly, my oppositional view (or gaze) of the world began in high school in the mid-1990s when I was first introduced to bell's work by a white butch dyke at the feminist bookstore, *A Room*

of One's Own in Madison, Wisconsin. She recommended *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* where bell ends stating:

The formation of an oppositional world view is necessary for feminist struggle. This means that the world we have most intimately known, the world in which we feel "safe," (even if such feelings are based on illusions) must be radically changed. Perhaps it is the knowledge that everyone must change, not just those we label enemies or oppressors, that has so far served to check our revolutionary impulses (hooks 1984: 163).¹⁰

Her words (still) hit me hard. High school was not an easy time as I was coming out as a dyke in rural Wisconsin while also growing into my budding alcoholism. I was too young to fully grasp the complexity of bell's thought, but I felt seen in ways that encouraged me to explore my own revolutionary impulses. Although the world that I had intimately known until that point did not feel like a safe place for me, reading bell's analysis of feminist movement guided me to envision radical change within my own life that eventually led me to create radical queer kinship with Judy and an intimate circle of friends, which included bell. My revolutionary impulses have transformed through loving and knowing bell in ways that continue to shape my understanding of what an oppositional worldview could look like at this point of late-stage capitalism.

Then in 2004, I enrolled in an undergraduate "Black Cultural Studies" class with Quashie at Smith College while I was a Frances Perkins student at Mount Holyoke College. Quashie crafted a beautiful syllabus that included "The Politics of Radical Black Subjectivity" and "Postmodern Blackness" out of *Yearning*¹¹ along with Hortense J. Spillers and Toni Morrison and many other brilliant Black women and a few Black men as well, mostly queer. At the beginning of "The Politics of Radical Black Subjectivity," bell quotes Paulo Freire: "We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to later become subjects" (hooks 1999: 15).¹² She asks, "How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness ...?" (hooks 1999: 15) and argues that "becoming a subject" is a process that "[e]merges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one's own life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as one invents new, alternative habits of being, and resists from the marginal space of difference inwardly defined" (hooks 1999: 15). When I read this twenty years ago, I was newly sober and very raw and felt empowered by bell's words because they spoke to my struggle to discover "alternative habits of being" that were emotionally, physically, and economically sustainable. These "alternative habits of being," like living a politically queer life, continue to guide my defiance and my survival, especially as the world falls further into genocidal violence and despair. As bell asked in 1990 but must be asked today, how *do* we create "an oppositional worldview" to understand not only how structures of power and domination work in our lives but also how to continue to invent "alternative habits of being?" The oppositional worldview that bell practiced throughout her work and life was foundational for bell's wayward immobility, for her oppositional gaze.

In the last few years of her life, bell rarely left her house. I struggled with accepting this as we had historically shared a love of thrifting and regularly dined out at restaurants. In fact, I first met bell

as a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) MA student at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio in 2010 when bell was there for an academic residency. The WGSS department arranged a lunch for graduate students to meet bell and I happened to sit right next to her (or she sat next to me). I distinctly remember that I ordered steak because bell began to eat steak off my plate with her hands. She asked me why I wasn't having an alcoholic drink, which I responded that I no longer drink because I'm in recovery. She then outed me by asking loudly "Are you sober?!" bell had always been intrigued by people in recovery and I suspect this aspect of my person explains, at least at first, why she clung on to me for the rest of her visit in Columbus. We spent much time together over the two weeks of her residency as well as the two weeks of her residency the following year. These four weeks forged my strong connection to bell and we spent the next seven or so years talking regularly on the phone and I would occasionally visit her in Berea.

Beginning in 2019, I started teaching at Berea College and living in Lexington, Kentucky and as such, bell and I spent a lot of time together in her home in Berea. Judy and I rented a midcentury home on a horse farm where we were surrounded by beautiful creatures: creek otters, farm dogs, our dogs, horses, and white women on horses doing archery, which was totally absurd. bell always wanted to see pictures and would consistently bring up Alice Walker's *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*. She wanted to visit the farm and see the horses, but she rarely left her house and was afraid of dogs (she would pray about it and would say that she was getting closer to being able to meet our dogs), which always made things difficult because we always have dogs. At this time, I was visiting with bell about three times a week and she would look at pictures of the farm and the horses almost every time.

Although bell returned to Kentucky to be closer to her roots, her notion of home was expansive and complicated. As bell writes:

Indeed the very meaning of 'home' changes with experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place who one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference (hooks 1999: 148).

I lost both of my parents within two years of each other during a time when most queer/trans twenty-one–twenty-three-year-olds have yet to develop a homespace with their natal parents. It was a time when one's trusted kin came from the corner bar or the nearest queer bookstore. As such, my home has always been to be free and be around those who allow me to be free. Not a freedom sutured to a sovereign notion of citizenship or even the freedom ostensibly invoked by radical oppositional movements, but one that allows me to do whatever the fuck I want. bell understood this home that I created and wanted to be part of it, and I wanted to be part of her home and freedom, too.

Home is nuanced and always changing and both bell and I felt alienation from the notion of home at different points in our lives and connected over this estrangement: “living in childhood without a sense of home, I found a place of sanctuary in ‘theorizing,’ in making sense out of what was happening” (hooks 1994: 61). bell’s was a theorizing compelled by grief and racism/classism while my theorizing centered on grief and transphobia/homophobia. We both felt a strong sense of pride for growing up rurally, even if this upbringing haunted both of us for the rest of our lives. This meeting ground also challenged our need to work, to labor for an academy that destroys the lives of so many Black women and femmes, as well as queers and trans folks. We felt the loneliness of being outsiders (within) and I connected with her on a deeper level, deepened by witnessing her physically suffer and knowing that she wouldn’t be around for much longer. We allowed ourselves the freedom to suffer and to speak about our suffering. This freedom¹³ was very important to bell—a freedom to be audacious and daring, to create dangerously in spite of suffering.¹⁴ To be clear, bell was not my mentor. I like to think we were teaching each other with no formal pedagogy. We were constantly reaching new levels of honesty with each other. We were an unlikely pairing and we found each other through theory and askance feminisms, through building a home with each other amidst our pain and suffering as well as our joy and our audacity to be free.

But how can you be free when you’ve made yourself housebound? At times, I struggled with bell’s turn to intractable immobility. But as I spent more time with her, which meant sitting with her as she lay on her black-leather Ikea couch, I recognized that her choice to be sedentary, physically inactive, immobile was itself a form of feminist theorizing. I realized that bell was pushing the boundaries of what freedom looks like. She spoke a lot about her decision to stop doing public talks and her choice of nonperformance (to cite Sora Han and Fred Moten).¹⁵ Put differently, bell’s act of nonperformance at the end of her life was a radical rupture in what many or most people see as a form of freedom—the freedom of mobility. I taught a Queer and Feminist Disability Studies class at Berea College, which guided me to understand bell’s decision to be immobile in a way that altered the meaning of immobility to include interiority. Put differently, her physical immobility did not limit her “sovereignty of quiet.” bell and I would discuss the readings I assigned as well as the books she read on her own, especially *When the Body Says No* by Gabor Maté.¹⁶ We analyzed the problems of diagnosis and cure, especially through Eli Clare and Johanna Hedva, two of my favorites. Further, I recently listened to Therí Pickens¹⁷ describe and theorize the structural conditions within academic institutions that impose and arrange themselves onto the bodies of Black women and femmes and thought about bell and how enamored she would be of Black feminist disability studies (although I’m sure she would have found plenty to critique).

bell insisted that she never liked to move her body and always preferred staying home to read and write. And then I found this quote on the internet that has no date or reference but is repeatedly cited as being said by bell: “I’m such a girl for the living room. I really like to stay in my nest and not move. I travel in my mind, and that’s a rigorous state of journeying for me. My body isn’t that interested in moving from place to place.”¹⁸ Freedom found in silence, alone, in the world of books. bell was an introvert who enjoyed solitude to read, think, meditate, and write. In many ways this is my dream too, but with my dogs and Judy and lots of science fiction and fantasy books. As an

empath, while at Berea, I found myself effected (affected) and desiring to follow bell's path to be sedentary and read fiction all day. Unfortunately, such desire does not accommodate the tenure track or really any track within the world of capitalist work. As such, wayward immobility is also an expression of a kind of freedom.

While working on expanding this essay, I discovered a portion of an interview with Gilles Deleuze in the ABC Primer (Recording 3, 1989) where the interviewer, Parnet, asks, "Is this theme of travel connected to your natural slowness?" Deleuze responds:

No, I don't conceive of traveling as slow, but in any case, I feel no need to move. All the intensities that I have are immobile intensities. Intensities distribute themselves in space or in other systems that aren't necessarily in exterior spaces. I can assure you that when I read a book that I admire, that I find beautiful, or when I hear music that I consider beautiful, I really get the feeling of passing into such states [...] Never could traveling inspire such emotions (Deleuze 1989).¹⁹

Deleuze's notion of *immobile intensities* resonates with my discussion of bell's wayward immobility. Traveling in her mind, bell's immobile intensities, at least later in her life, were entangled with physical debilities that were/are difficult to confront without immobile intensities.

III

I told bell that I had been grappling with voicelessness in my first year on the tenure-track at Berea, a kind of academic aphasia: "I have confronted silence, inarticulateness. When I say, then, that these words emerge from suffering, I refer to that personal struggle to name that location from which I come to voice—that space of my own theorizing" (hooks 1999: 146). For so many years I was stuck, in my own way, unable to put word to paper—inarticulate. Last fall I decided to take ketamine treatments for my depression and anxiety after decades of struggling to name my pain. I no longer struggle in the same ways, yet naming this pain has never been my only struggle, especially as I revise this in early November of 2024, less than a week after Trump has been reelected as US President. I struggle to explain the immensity of bell's work in relation to a counter-hegemonic structure that works against imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. This struggle feels even more urgent today than when I wrote the previous sentence over two years ago and this counter-hegemonic structure even more necessary—a structure that bell often named as marginality or "choosing the margin" as a space of radical possibility (hooks 1989: 20).²⁰

While many of us feel marginalized in the academy, we simultaneously work toward creating various forms of counter-hegemonic structures for our students and for our beloveds. As for all the conversation around feminism, collectivity, and community in gender studies classrooms, bell

believed that academia was a lonely space. She would talk about how this is a solitary experience, this academic labor. I experienced this loneliness early on while working on my PhD in Culture and Theory at University of California, Irvine. One poignant memory comes from the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) in 2014 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I was in my second year and my PhD program was falling apart. During the conference, my gender studies advisor dropped me for expressing dissent about their hiring practices²¹, which threw me into a depression spiral sparked by the trauma of bad (dead/ancestral) parenting. Shortly after receiving this news, I went to bell's keynote at NWSA where she talked about relations of power within gender studies departments and the problems of white supremacy. She explained that gender studies departments often replicate structures and systems of power that the field is ostensibly trying to dismantle.

I asked her about her keynote at NWSA in an interview I conducted with bell in 2015 for the introduction of a special issue of *Transcripts* on "Race/Gender Revisited":

[I]nside the academy, it's really a question of power and how power is organized. And because the academy, as a corporate structure, is so deeply organized around hierarchy and domination, can we be surprised that within Women's Studies and Feminist studies, relations between women don't represent a difference from dominant power structures but instead play out in similar ways to power relations within the structure as a whole? (hooks 2015: 3)²²

Although I never romanticized academia as a space of radical possibility—particularly because both of my parents were English professors—I did not realize how true bell's words were until my time at Irvine. I understand now why she did not want me to go into the academy as she saw it as a dangerous space full of intellectual vampires. She was free from academia at the end and hence, she was alone rather than lonely. One of her most cited quotes states: "I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing" (hooks 1994: 59). bell embodied this theory and we bonded over it. Theory gave us both a means to heal and to resist—a way to change our lives. Even so, academic power dynamics and the structures that support them are dangerous for those who deal with physical pain and other physical limitations, not to mention mental debilities.

bell did not have a plan for growing old. She never thought about it because she spent all her time reading and writing. But then her hands failed her (peripheral neuropathy), and she faced a kind of crisis. She spent her life turning psychic pain into generative thought but the physical pain became too much. This is where her faith as a Buddhist Christian was so important. In fact, towards the end of her life, bell would spend the mornings reading books on Buddhism and spirituality and then would allow herself to shift to cozies in the afternoon and evening. I still have the last bag of books I got her, which consisted of cozies (she was on an Amanda Cross kick and always loved Laurie King)²³ and an issue of *Magnolia*, Joanna Gaines' lifestyle magazine. Indeed, a few of the non-cozy books that bell talked about regularly were *Pleasure Activism* edited by adrienne marie

brown and *Thick* by Tressie McMillan Cottom.²⁴ Yet we are all imprisoned by culture—bell loved to hate Joanna Gaines from HGTV and was obsessed with tiny homes. She wanted to build her own tiny home on land that Judy and I had recently purchased, along with a tiny cottage, in Bloomington, Indiana. She would consistently talk about it. But by then bell’s world of desire wasn’t aligning with her physical world in any tenable way. This desire surfaced in words just a few months before bell passed away. By this time, she was in dire need of full-time home care, and she refused to get a caretaker. You see, Judy and I are both assistant professors starting new positions and we had neither the money, nor the time or training, to care for bell in the way she needed: 24/7. I still have guilt about setting this boundary, (“please come but we must hire you a caretaker”), around her fantasized move to her tiny home near our small cottage. I still fantasize about it too. Not only that, but I wake up every day thinking that I need/want to call bell, a painful reminder each morning of losing her.

Being with bell as she transitioned, experiencing some of her last moments of joy (she smiled a lot at the end), I came to understand how regarding oneself was for bell a Black feminist practice: “To love, to possess, to defend, to preserve, to regard oneself—to behold oneself in defiance of the gaze of more powerful others—must be recognized as an ethical practice” (Glover 2021: 222). bell’s wayward immobility was, in the end, a means of self-regard in defiance to the gaze of white supremacist, imperialist, capitalist patriarchy. bell writes, “The practice of love offers no place of safety. We risk loss, hurt, pain. We risk being acted upon by forces outside our control” (hooks 2001: 152).²⁵ And, as such, I loved her anyway.

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¹ johanna hedva, “Sick Woman Theory,” *Topical Cream* March 12, 2022 (URL: <https://topicalcream.org/features/sick-woman-theory/>; last accessed on December 1, 2024).

² bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom*, New York: Routledge, 1994.

³ For example, see the talk “Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)!” with Dean Spade and Mia Mingus through the Bluestockings Cooperative (URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sQfvJSPRBI>; last accessed on December 1, 2024).

⁴ As Kaiama Glover writes about Black female Caribbean characters who often make “wrong” choices: “They question whether our antinormative, progressive, womanist, antiracist, anti-imperialist, postcolonialist engagements with the world and its cultural productions are capacious enough to accommodate those who make the “wrong” personal choices” (Glover 2021: 33). This point is difficult on many levels but primarily because I am not concerned with bell’s “choices” and the ways they could be regarded as “wrong” or even “detrimental.” See: Kaiama Glover, *A Regarded Self: Caribbean Womanhood and the Ethics of Disorderly Being*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

- ⁵ The talk is titled “Black Female Voices: Who is Listening” and can be accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OmgqXao1ng>; last accessed on December 1, 2024.
- ⁶ Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.
- ⁷ Kevin Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or A Poetics of Being*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. See especially Chapter 2: “Aliveness and Oneness” and Quashie’s discussion of *Sula* by Toni Morrison. Although there is not space in this essay to tackle the relationship of *Sula*, the main character of Morrison’s text, to bell, there is much that could be said about the two. As Quashie states, “*Sula*’s illness does nothing to dull the audacity that allows her to imagine and pursue rightness of being [...]” (Quashie 2021: 110).
- ⁸ During a New School conversation between Marci Blackman, Shola Lynch, and Janet Mock, titled “Are you Still a Slave? Liberating the Black Female Body,” hooks discussed Beyoncé’s *Time* magazine cover. In response to Mock, hooks said, “Then you are saying, from my deconstructive point of view, that she is colluding in the construction of herself as a slave. I see a part of Beyoncé that is in fact anti-feminist—that is a terrorist, especially in terms of the impact on young girls.” (URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJk0hNROvzs>; last accessed on December 1, 2024).
- ⁹ Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012.
- ¹⁰ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, Boston: South End Press, 1984.
- ¹¹ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, Boston: South End Press, 1999.
- ¹² Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was first published in Portuguese in 1968.
- ¹³ I realize “freedom” is not the only goal nor is it even desired in any uncomplicated, unnuanced way. I used this term in the original essay because I had recently read bell’s piece “Love as the Practice of Freedom” at the end of *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, New York: Routledge, 1994.
- ¹⁴ Here I am referencing Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- ¹⁵ Sora Han develops the idea of nonperformance in “Slavery as Contract: Betty’s Case and the Question of Freedom,” *Law and Literature* 27, no 3 (2015): 395-416 and Fred Moten’s talk “Blackness and Nonperformance” at the Museum of Modern Art can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2leiFByIIg&t=1605s>; last accessed on December 1, 2024.
- ¹⁶ Gabor Maté, *When the Body Says No: Understanding the Stress-Disease Connection*, New York: Wiley, 2003).
- ¹⁷ “Mad Blackness*: Rage, Resistance, Refusal” through the Barnard Center for Research on Women, March 22, 2022 (URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsfX1N9MWOI>; last accessed on December 1, 2024).
- ¹⁸ For example, the website *Goodreads* cites bell as the author. See, URL: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/9241500-i-really-like-to-stay-in-my-nest-and-not>; last accessed on December 1, 2024.
- ¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, “The ABC Primer, Recording 3-N to Z,” June 3, 1989 (URL: <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-recording-3-n-z/>; last accessed on December 1, 2024).

- ²⁰ bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 36 (1989): 15-23.
- ²¹ This is certainly a simplified statement about what was a complicated, unethical situation that, simplifying once again, was because of a culture war at Irvine between Black studies and gender studies.
- ²² bell hooks, "Conjuring *Ain't I a Woman*: An Interview with bell hooks," *Trans-Scripts* 5 (2015): 1-6.
- ²³ Within the realm of Amanda Cross, bell loved her Kate Fausler series. She also adored Laurie King's Mary Russell series, of which she insisted I read *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* (New York: Picador, 2014). I must admit, I enjoyed the book, which is basically a feminist take on Sherlock Holmes.
- ²⁴ ed. adrienne marie brown, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, Chico, California: AK Press, 2019 and Tressie McMillan Cottom, *Thick: And Other Essays*, New York: The New Press, 2019.
- ²⁵ bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*, New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 2001.