

Library Interventions: Sharon Kivland

Faith's whistle

I, *Faith Hershaft*,¹ chalk, white wench, slave,² of age, four tens or so, smile, bare, good set of teeth, put self (head to toe, shred of soul) up for sale. By X sign, black mark, ink bond, I'll be bound, twelve spring days, on the trot. A spell, twelve nights, hope clasped, I'll be on the run.³ My rune is *sept*. My lot to please. My type/group, born to bleat *Mam's Law*:⁴ *'If you want me just whistle. You know how to whistle don't you?'*⁵

I, *Faith Hershaft*, like all taint souls, seek self, the hood mind, at the klux of things, to be winked out of it. Like all slaves, I seek to be free. These twelve days trade, when whistle toots, *Honor Bright* at heart,⁶ flax picked, hair tucked, I'll hobble run, ball fluff self, make soft soul hard, to be ground down. South to North I'll run, to be life milled. I'll rail to, not from, (stars wrong) the whip hand, who is, owns, my own *thesis/antithesis*: my cure. Dirt poor, faith rich, I'll hitch skirt, thumb lifts, beg food, squat roofs, make tracks, rail ride, *souterrain*. Whistle blown, I'll be Leeds bound.

I, *Faith Hershaft*, wish to ask, were I male, born *Chance Hisshaft*, would such a trip, risk the fall, be hitch free?

I, *Faith Hershaft*, place mind, pearl shell (both) at risk, in fear. I lay me down, rope fate to this path (steam train comes) to see where it Leeds. Will it free, this chalk, white wench. Will I be used, ill? Who will bleed?⁷ All said and done, dear *Mam*, have not care, to lose slave face, what once was owned.

I, *Faith Hershaft*, in truth, smile twice. Once shown, once hid (neath skirts). Both sets teeth.⁸ *Vagina Dentata*⁹ keep sake, keeps safe, holds me in *Her* hands, (not *His* mits). My clay saint, corn doll hair, grins, stands guard, will keep *Faith* (and her shaft) safe.

I, *Faith Hershaft*, slave, freak, smile (twice) sign two strokes X. Deed done, take this, my word bond, pledge, to come North, as called, to read, write, speak as I find, when asked. To stitch, sew, draw from life, in blood, as it please *Mam's Law*. When chores, tasks are done, if I fail, don't please, beat me back, spurn me South, by force, though it is your right, and thy will be done. X

1 Daughter of *Herrshaft und Knechtschaft*

2 'It is, I suppose, a master/slave relation, after Hegel, for there is lordship on my part, and a form of bondage on yours, at least initially – for if one considers Hegel's dialectic: after thesis and antithesis, there is self-realisation, and thus freedom'
Sharon Kivland, 3 January 2014

3 *12 Years a Slave*, dir. by Steve McQueen (2013)

4 *Manderlay*, dir. by Lars Von Trier (2005). Slaves are catalogued according to *Mam's Law* (played by Lauren Bacall) as belonging to the following groups: 1. Proudly, 2. Talkin', 3. Weepin', 4. Hittin', 5. Clownin', 6. Loser, and 7. Pleasing (also known as a chameleon, a person of the kind who can transform herself into exactly the type the beholder would like to see)

5 [...] *Just put your lips together and blow.* Lauren Bacall, from *The Complete Films of Humphrey Bogart*, New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990

6 Tracy Chevalier, *The Last Runaway*, London: HarperCollins, 2013

7 Alexandre Kojève – Hegels intentions were to illustrate that overcoming the fear of death was the only way to achieve true freedom

8 *Teeth*, dir. by Mitchell Lichtenstein (2007)

9 *Vagina dentata* (Latin for *toothed vagina*) describes a folk tale in which a woman's vagina is said to contain teeth, with the associated implication that sexual intercourse might result in injury or castration for the man involved