

**Picturing Slavery: Photography and the U.S. Slave Narrative,  
1831-1920**

**by**

**Khaliah N. Mangrum**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(English Language and Literature)  
in the University of Michigan  
2014**

**Doctoral Committee:**

**Professor Sara B. Blair, Chair  
Professor Sandra R. Gunning  
Associate Professor Martha S. Jones  
Associate Professor Megan L. Sweeney**

## Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the diverse and dynamic expertise of my advisor, Sara Blair, and my committee members: Meg Sweeney, Martha Jones, and Sandra Gunning.

I am so grateful to Sara for her support, her guidance, and her scholarship. Her class and innovative research in visual culture inspired me to pursue this project, and her kind, sustained, and rigorous reading of my work has encouraged me to finish it. Thanks to Meg Sweeney for her thoughtful and incisive reading of my chapters and for making time to talk with me about the broader implications of my work. Thanks also to Martha Jones for her support as well as for her important research and curatorial work in nineteenth-century African-American visual culture. And many thanks to Sandra Gunning whose unfailing generosity, institutional wisdom, and wide knowledge of the field of African-American literature and culture has made my dissertating experience both possible and energizing.

I am also indebted to the faculty, staff members, and colleagues in the Rackham Graduate School, the Department of English, and the Department of African-American and African Studies. The camaraderie and intellectual support that I have enjoyed in student organizations like the USists and the Black Humanities Collective, and in the classrooms of professors like Melba Boyd, Xiomara Santamarina, Joshua Miller, Scotti Parrish, Damani Partridge, Michael Awkward, and Susan Najita, have been invaluable.

Thanks to the archivists and librarians at the University of Michigan, The Library Company of Philadelphia, The Library of Congress, The New York Historical Society, The Getty Museum, The National Portrait Gallery, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. I am also grateful to Anthony Bagues, and the faculty and fellows at the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University for offering me critical feedback on my chapter on Black Women and mourning.

Much thanks to Avril Fuller, Andrea Hechanova, and Angela Heetderks for listening to fledgling ideas and offering sharp and helpful feedback. And I am grateful to Avril, Andrea, Angela and her husband, David Heetderks, together with Craig Fella, Yvette Kellogg and family, Adrienne Carson, Rosaria Campanile-Minneci, Shanesha Brooks-Tatum, Carolyn and Dan Dekker, the Clark family, Sandra Santos, Dahlia Guajardo, Dale Ireland, Qin Chen, Konstantina M. Karageorgos, Ariana Orozco, Claire Whitlinger, Denise Gray, Chinyere Osuji, Jade Caines, Julia Kaziewicz, Hyun Ju Kim, Chinyere Uzogara, and Jewel Robertson for their love, friendship, and support throughout my time in graduate school.

Many, many thanks to Peng Zhang, Spencer Hawkins, Josh Shipper, Bea Zengotitabengoa, Brett Griffiths, Shu-Li Huang, Carolyn Dekker, Patricia Lott, Lisa Jong, Amrita Dhar, Jamie Jones, Jenny Emery-Peck, Melody Pugh, Ariana Orozco, Claire Whitlinger, Aston Gonzalez, Asynith Palmer, Rebecca Porte, and Deirdre Spencer for reading for me and writing with me.

A special shout-out to my writing buddies in the Women of Color Writing Group, as well as to the boss ladies of Google Hangout, Grace Okrah, Thandi Sule, TaShara Bailey, and Faheemah Mustafaa for their love of me and my work; thank you for making writing fun. To Faheemah, in particular—cheers to exponential productivity in the woods of Southeast Michigan and the Starbucks of Ann Arbor.

I would also like to thank my friend and mentor Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, for her sage advice, sisterhood, and unwavering belief in my work.

Last but not least, a special thanks to my Mommie, Ms. Dorothy Mae Williams, my family and friends.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Figures.....	v
Abstract.....	xii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One. Beheld by the Eye of God: Photography, Narrative, and Revelation in Frederick Douglass’s <i>The Heroic Slave</i> .....	18
Chapter Two. Fictions of Progress: The Visual Slave Narratives of the U.S. Civil War.....	56
Chapter Three. Mourning Becomes Political: Photographs and Politicized Self- Fashioning in Black Women’s Post-Bellum Slave Narratives.....	100
Chapter Four. “A Kind of Literary Archeology:” Post-Memory and the Proto- Neo-Slave Narrative.....	145
Conclusion .....	195
Notes .....	201
Works Cited .....	210

## List of Figures

Figure A. Thomas Wedgwood. “Am I Not a Man and a Brother.” 1787. Medallion. British Museum.....	15
Figure B. Elizabeth Margaret Chandler. “Am I Not a Woman and a Sister.” 1837. Woodcut. George Bourne. <i>Slavery Illustrated in its Effects Upon Women</i> . Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.....	15
Figure C. Artist Unknown. Charles Ball. <i>Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball</i> . Woodcut Illustration. 1836. Documenting North American-University of North Carolina. www.docsouth.edu.....	16
Figure D. Henry Prentiss. “The Fugitive’s Song.” Lithograph on Woven Paper. 1845. Boston. Prints and Photographs. Library of Congress. LOT 10615-59 [item] [P&P].....	17
Figure E. “Woodcut Runaway.” 1837 or before. Wisconsin Historical Society.....	17
Figure 1-1. Likely Taken by Edward White, NY, NY. “Frederick Douglass.” 1848. Daguerreotype. Albert Cook Meyers Collection, Chester County Historical Society. www.explorepahistory.com.....	51
Figure 1-2. Photographer Unknown. “Frederick Douglass.” 1850. Daguerreotype. Copy of a ca. 1847 Daguerreotype. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. NPG.80.21.....	52
Figure 1-3. Photographer Unknown. “Frederick Douglass.” Daguerreotype. 1845. Collection of Greg French. Published in Gregory Fried, “True Pictures,” <i>Common-Place</i> , Vol 2, No.2, January 2002.....	53
Figure 1-4. Frederick Douglass. Photographer Unknown. 1850. Frederick Douglass Collection. Howard University Museum. www.howard.edu/library.....	53

Figure 1-5. Dissembled Daguerreotype and Case. ca. 1859. Prints and Photographs Division. Library Company of Philadelphia. <a href="http://www.librarycompany.org/catchingashadow/section1/index.htm">www.librarycompany.org/catchingashadow/section1/index.htm</a> .....	54
Figure 1-6. Frederick Douglass. Woodcut Engraving. 1845. <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> . <a href="http://www.utc.iath.virginia.edu">www.utc.iath.virginia.edu</a> .....	54
Figure 1-7. Frederick Douglass. Woodcut Engraving. 1848. <i>A Tribute to the Negro</i> . Wilson Armistead. <a href="http://www.docsouth.unc.edu">www.docsouth.unc.edu</a> .....	54
Figure 1-8. Frederick Douglass. Woodcut Engraving. 1853. <i>Autographs for Freedom</i> . Marriott Library, The University of Utah. <a href="http://www.lib.utah.edu/collections/rarebooks/exhibits/past/publicsentiment.php">www.lib.utah.edu/collections/rarebooks/exhibits/past/publicsentiment.php</a> .....	55
Figure 2-1. James Presley Ball. 1862. Albumen Print. CDV Mount. Unnamed African-American woman with Sgt. Jesse L. Berch and Frank M. Rockwell. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca10940 (front).....	89
Figure 2-2. James Presley Ball. 1862. Albumen Print. CDV Mount. Unnamed African-American woman with Sgt. Jesse L. Berch and Frank M. Rockwell. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-10940 (front).....	89
Figure 2-3. “Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters.” Between 1863 and 1865. Ambrotype. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36454.....	89
Figure 2-4. Enoch Long. “Unidentified African American Soldier in Union Uniform.” Between 1863 and 1865. Tintype, hand-colored. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36456.....	90
Figure 2-5. Photographer Unknown. “Unidentified African American boy standing in front of painted Backdrop Showing American Flag and Tents.” Between 1861 and 1865. Tintype. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36463.....	90
Figure 2-6. Sheperd and Smith. Between 1864 and 1865. “Kager Mays.” Library of Congress. CDV. LG-DIG-ppmsca-11178.....	91
Figure 2-7. Ball & Thomas. “Full-length Portrait of an African-American Sailor.” Between 1861 and 1865. CDV. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11280.....	91
Figure 2-8. Photographer Unknown. “Unidentified African-American Soldier.” Between 1860 and 1870. CDV. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11298.....	91
Figure 2-9. Photographer Unknown. “Unidentified African American Soldier in Union Uniform with Forage Cap.” Between 1863 and 1865. LC-DIG-ppmsca-37079.....	91

Figure 2-10. Bernard Moses. Between 1864 and 1866. CDV. “African-American Man, Full-Length Portrait, Facing Right.” Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11202.....	92
Figure 2-11. Photographer Unknown. “Washerwoman for the Union army in Richmond, Virginia. Ambrotype, hand-colored. 1862-1865. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Photographic History Collection. www.npr.org.....	92
Figure 2-12. M.H. Kimball. “White and Black Slaves from New Orleans.” 1864. CDV. Prints and Photographs Division. Library of Congress. LG-DIG-ppmsca-11244.....	93
Figure 2-13. M.H. Kimball. “Isaac and Rosa. Slave Children from New Orleans.” 1863. CDV. Prints and Photographs Division. Library of Congress. LG-DIG-ppmsca-11092.....	93
Figure 2-14. Charles Paxson. “Rosa, Charley, Rebecca. Slave Children from New Orleans.” 1864. CDV. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11136.....	93
Figure 2-15. Charles Paxson. “Wilson, Charley, Rebecca & Rosa. Slave from New Orleans.” 1864. CDV. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11246.....	93
Figure 2-16 T.B. Bishop. “Private Hubbard Pryor, before his enlistment in the 44 <sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry.” 1864. The National Archives. www.http://research.archives.gov/description/849127.....	94
Figure 2-17. T.B. Bishop. “Private Hubbard Pryor, after his enlistment in the 44 <sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry.” 1864. The National Archives. www.http://research.archives.gov/description/849127.....	94
Figure 2-18. “The Escaped Slave,” an illustration based on a photograph by T.B. Bishop. <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> , July 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1864.....	94
Figure 2-19. “The Escaped Slave in the Union Army,” an illustration based on a photograph by T.B. Bishop. <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> , July 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1864.....	94
Figures 2-20 Algenon S. Morse and William A. Peaslee. “Before the Proclamation.” 1863. CDV. International Center of Photography. Accession Number: 893.1990. www.emuseum.icp.org.....	95
Figure 2-21. Algenon S. Morse and William A. Peaslee. “After the Proclamation.” 1863. CDV. International Center of Photography. Accession Number: 893.1990. www.emuseum.icp.org.....	95

Figure 2-22 P.F. Cooper. “As We Found Them.” 1864. CDV. George Eastman House/Getty Images.....	96
Figure 2-23. P.F. Cooper. “As They Are Now.” 1864. CDV. George Eastman House/Getty Images.....	96
Figure 2-24 Photographer Unknown. Drummer Taylor, 78 <sup>th</sup> Regiment, U.S.C.T. (Before). 1864. CDV. National Archives, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff.....	96
Figure 2-25. Photographer Unknown. Drummer Taylor, 78 <sup>th</sup> Regiment, U.S.C.T (After). 1864. CDV. National Archives, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff.....	96
Figure 2-26. McPherson & Oliver. “Contraband that marched 40 miles to get to our lines” 1863. CDV. Cowan’s Auctions-sold to unidentified collector.....	97
Figure 2-27. <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> . 1863. “Gordon in his Uniform.” Etching modeled after a photograph. Library of Congress. Pictures and Photographs Division.....	97
Figure 2-28. McPherson and Oliver. Gordon, View of Back (Full Head of Hair). 1863. CDV. Prints and Photographs Division. Library Company of Philadelphia.....	97
Figure 2-29. McPherson and Oliver. Gordon, View of Back (Full Head of Hair). 1863. CDV. Prints and Photographs Division. Library Company of Philadelphia.....	97
Figure 2-30. Unidentified Creator. “Gordon, A Union Soldier.” Engraving on Paper. July 4 <sup>th</sup> , 1863. National Portrait Gallery. Image No. AD/NPG.2007.40.....	98
Figure 2-31. Unidentified Author. Gordon as “Uncle Tom.” 1863. CDV. Sold by Swann Galleries to an unknown buyer.....	99
Figure 3-1. “Marks of Punishment Inflicted Upon a Colored Servant in Richmond, Virginia.” <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> . July 28, 1866, p. 477. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library. <a href="http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu">http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu</a> .....	132
Figure 3-2. Original photo by Alexander Gardner. “President Lincoln—Photographed by Brady.” Abraham Lincoln. Woodcut Illustration. <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> . April 27 <sup>th</sup> , 1861. p.268. <a href="http://www.sonofthesouth.net">www.sonofthesouth.net</a> .....	133
Figure 3-3. Alexander Gardner, Mathew Brady’s Washington Gallery. Portrait of Abraham Lincoln. CDV. February 23, 1861. Meserve-Kunhardt Collection. <a href="http://www.mkfound.org">www.mkfound.org</a> .....	134



Figure 3-4. Photographer Unknown. “Unidentified African American boy standing in front of painted Backdrop Showing American Flag and Tents.” Tintype. Between 1861 and 1865. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36463.....135

Figure 3-5. Artist Unknown. Elizabeth Keckley. 1866. *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*. University of North Carolina- Documenting the American South. [www.docsouth.net](http://www.docsouth.net).....136

Figure 3-6. Preston Butler. “Mary Todd with Willie and Tad.” Glass Negative Print. 1863. Meserve-Kunhardt Collection. [www.mkfound.org](http://www.mkfound.org).....137

Figure 3-7. “President Lincoln at Home—Photographed by Mathew Brady. Woodcut Illustration. *Harper’s Weekly*, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865. [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net).....138

Figure 3-8. Mathew Brady Studio. “Abraham Lincoln with his son, Tad.” CDV. February 9, 1864. Meserve-Kunhardt Collection. [www.mkfound.org](http://www.mkfound.org).....139

Figure 3-9. Photographer Unknown. Susie King Taylor. Frontispiece Image, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).....140

Figure 3-10. Artist Unknown. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Colonel First South Carolina Volunteers, Afterwards 33<sup>rd</sup> U.S.C.T. Photographer Unknown. Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).....141

Figure 3-11. Artist Unknown. Major H.A. Whitney, Liet. J.B. West, Henry Batchlott, Steward of the John Adams. Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).....142

Figure 3-12. Artist Unknown. Capt. J.W. Metcalf, Capt. Miron W. Saxton, Capt. A.W. Jackson, Corporal Peter Waggall. Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).....143

Figure 3-13. Photographer Unknown. “My School House in Savannah.” Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).....144

Figure 4-1. Photographer Unknown. “Paul Laurence Dunbar.” Half-Tone. 1892. Ohio Historical Society. [www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Paul\\_L.\\_Dunbar](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Paul_L._Dunbar).....177

Figure 4-2. Photographer Unknown. “Paul Laurence Dunbar.” 1895. Half-tone. Frontispiece, *Majors and Minors: Poems*. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....178

Figure 4-3. Photographer Unknown. “Paul Laurence Dunbar.” Half-tone. 1897. Frontispiece from *Lyrics of Lowly Life: With an Introduction by W.D. Howells*. University of Delaware Library. [www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/londonbound/sect4.html](http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/londonbound/sect4.html).....179

Figure 4-4. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Landscape in Deserted Plantation.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....180

Figure 4-5. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Man.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library University of Michigan.....181

Figure 4-6. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Children.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....181

Figure 4-7. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Child.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....182

Figure 4-8. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Man.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....183

Figure 4-9. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Children.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....184

Figure 4-10. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-Americans.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....185

Figure 4-11. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Woman.” Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library.

University of Michigan.....186

Figure 4-12. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Woman.” Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin’ Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....187

Figure 4-13. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Woman.” Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin’ Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....188

Figure 4-14. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Man in Union Uniform.” Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin’ Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....189

Figure 4-15. T.B. Bishop. “Private Hubbard Pryor, after his enlistment in the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry.” CDV. 1864. The National Archives. [www.http://research.archives.gov](http://research.archives.gov).....190

Figure 4-16. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Woman.” Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin’ Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....191

Figure 4-17. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Unidentified African-American Woman.” Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin’ Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....192

Figure 4-18. “The Escaped Slave in the Union Army,” based on a photograph by T.B. Bishop. *Harper’s Weekly*, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864. [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net).....193

Figure 4-19. Hampton Institute Photo Club. “Lias’s Burial Mound.” Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin’ Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.....194

## Abstract

In my dissertation, *Picturing Slavery: Photography and the U.S. Slave Narrative, 1831-1920*, I argue that photography—the single most revolutionary visual technology of the nineteenth century—transformed the formal structures and circulation practices of the U.S. slave narrative.

*Picturing Slavery* illustrates how photography—its processes, effects, and cultural histories—changed the structure and purpose of nineteenth-century narratives of slavery and freedom. Via extensive archival research and close readings of both written and visual texts, I uncover the ways in which abolitionists' desires for visual impressions of slavery—representations of the former slave's experiences as images or "pictures"—shifted the written slave narrative to a form self-consciously in dialogue with new and emerging visual technologies. In their attempts "to tell [slavery's] story to the eye," Black and White writers embraced the photograph as a structural model for a new kind of narrative. In *Picturing Slavery*, I highlight the photographic reference points for visual and written texts as diverse as Civil war era photo albums, Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, Louisa May Alcott's *Hospital Sketches*, Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes*, and Paul Laurence Dunbar's photographically illustrated poems.

In bringing these new forms to light, I call for a radical shift in how we imagine not only the slave narrative, but also the literary traditions that it shaped over the course of the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth.

## Introduction

But memories and recollections won't give me total access to the unwritten interior life of these people. Only the act of the imagination can help me.

— Toni Morrison, “Sites of Memory”

Scholars of the U.S. slave narrative have identified the mid-nineteenth century as a period of rapid evolution in the genre’s narrative form.<sup>1</sup> The slave narrative of that era served as a contested epistemological site, one in which Black narrators and their White Northern allies wrestled with the problem of how to represent slavery to an audience that was, by and large, free and White. These efforts engendered a period of experimentation with form, one that in the decades following the 1831 founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society, dramatically altered the conventions of the genre.<sup>2</sup> By revising the slave narrative’s form and purpose so that it might more accurately reflect what literary scholar Frances Smith Foster describes as their own “truths” and “visions,” formerly enslaved narrators constructed dynamic and experimental accounts of the meanings of slavery and freedom (Foster 2; Andrews 18).

In my dissertation, “Picturing Slavery: Photography and the U.S. Slave Narrative: 1831-1920,” I demonstrate how questions of “truth” and “vision,” of sight and fidelity, fueled the evolution of the slave narrative’s purpose and form. Throughout the project, I trace how White and Black anti-slavery activists embraced photography to delineate a previously ignored schism in nineteenth-century narratives of slavery and freedom. This schism was the result of two different approaches to solving the problem of representing slavery—one which aimed to picture slavery “as it is,” the other that imagined such a task

as either impossible or undesirable (Weld and Grimke ii). Addressing a wide range of texts and images, I demonstrate how anti-slavery activists embraced photography—its processes, practices, and cultural meanings—to enact both approaches.

Numerous scholars have noted that, the U.S. anti-slavery movement was marked by its desire for a mode of representation that was at once purely objective and completely transparent (Gates 9; Andrews 65).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, as scholars like Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Philip Gould describe, some abolitionists identified the problem of representing slavery as an authenticating one, one in which the purpose of the form became to document and authenticate a growing body of evidence against slavery and slaveholders (Sekora, “Black Message, White Envelope” 497). Circumscribing the nature of the enslaved condition to that which could be verified by the unaided human eye, nineteenth-century representations of slavery came to define the “facts” of enslavement as synonymous with that which one could see. Visual descriptions of enslaved people’s suffering bodies that were governed by this logic pervaded the majority of the abolitionist movement’s mid-century representations of slavery (Hartman 3; DeLombard 242; Abruzzo 160). Via visual images and graphic written descriptions of enslaved people being whipped, branded, flayed, or otherwise physically traumatized, some abolitionists hoped, as one viewer put it, to “tell slavery’s story to the eye” (*The New York Independent*). In telling “slavery’s story” to a reader’s “eye,” Northern cultural producers sought to re-enact the wounding of the former slave’s body, and in doing so persuade readers of Black Americans’ humanity and Southern slaveholders’ depravity.

As evidenced by the frequent use of words like “sketch,” “illustration,” “scene,” and “picture,” tropes of vision and seeing permeated nineteenth-century representations

of slavery and emancipation.<sup>4</sup> A growing desire for what Gates calls “ocular proof”—a type of knowing that relied on seeing, then believing—was borne out of the perceived need to authenticate formerly enslaved people’s testimonies (Gates 9). Indeed, racist stereotypes concerning Black Americans’ intrinsic dishonesty, child-likeness, and lack of intelligence deeply influenced how the early slave narrative was structured (Frederickson 49).<sup>5</sup> These racist notions—echoed by statesmen and scientists like Thomas Jefferson and Louis Agassiz, and performed daily in popular media like the minstrel show and the illustrated newspaper—became an enduring part of how enslaved people were imagined in the ante-bellum North. As literary scholar John Sekora notes, “a habitual attitude of disbelief toward black accounts [guaranteed that it was] not black storytelling but white authentication [that] made for usable narratives” (497). In response to widespread doubt about the enslaved person’s ability to present unbiased and verifiable accounts of their experiences in slavery, abolitionists searched for a narrative form that might prove impervious to skeptics’ reproof (Andrews 2).

The result was that early forms of the slave narrative—and most of the anti-slavery writing produced by White Northern abolitionists—positioned the formerly enslaved person as nothing more than a recorder of his or her own experience. As the mere medium by which knowledge of slavery might be derived, formerly enslaved narrators were asked, as White abolitionist John Collins put it, to provide “the facts” of enslaved experience, leaving “the philosophy” of what those facts meant to White Northern interlocutors (Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* 272). Examples of this phenomenon abound throughout the 1830s. For instance, in their 1839 book *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, White Northern minister Theodore

Dwight Weld and his writer-activist wife Angelina Grimke sought to reproduce slavery's picture by amassing a database of "facts"—visually-mediated testimonies about the treatment of enslaved people in the ante-bellum South (Weld and Grimke iv). In an effort to produce an accurate composite picture of slavery "as it [was]," Weld and Grimke placed dozens of testimonies from White writers who had lived in the South alongside survey data culled from hundreds of runaway and slave auction advertisements in Southern newspapers (Weld and Grimke ii).<sup>6</sup> By using the testimonies of "a thousand" eyewitnesses, Weld and Grimke craft a narrative that argues over and over again that it is the visual witnessing of the enslaved person's suffering body that best enables viewers to understand "slavery as it is" (ii).<sup>7</sup>

Weld and Grimke's argument mirrors that of radical abolitionist George Bourne. Throughout the 1830s, Bourne published and re-published two separate manuscripts—*Picture of Slavery in the United States of America* (1834; 1835; 1838) and *Slavery Illustrated in its Effects upon Women and Domestic Society* (1837)—both of which sought to represent slavery visually, without the direct testimony of the formerly enslaved eyewitness.<sup>8</sup> In both books, Bourne relies heavily on graphically written descriptions and woodcut illustrations of the tortures endured by enslaved people to impress upon his readers the horrors of enslavement in the U.S. South (*Slavery Illustrated in its Effects* 127). In his own attempt to present "things as they are," Bourne embraces as evidence the re-presentation—through image and through word—of the wounded Black body (*Slavery Illustrated in its Effects* 127). As indicated, for example, by the graphic violence depicted in its woodcut illustrations—and equally violent caption titles like "Flogging American Women," "Ladies Whipping Girls," "Torturing American Citizens," and



“Tanning a Boy”— Bourne’s *Picture of Slavery* offers a view of the peculiar institution dependent upon the visual re-presentation of a broken Black body awaiting liberation (*Picture of Slavery* 95, 109, 129, 145).

Grimke, Weld, and Bourne all rely on the graphically explicit enumeration of Black suffering as a means by which to amass incontrovertible proof of slavery’s horrors. The consequence of this approach is that it often subsumed the enslaved narrator’s perspectives on slavery’s causes, meanings, and consequences. In Isaac Fischer’s preface to Charles Ball’s 1837 *Slavery in the United States: Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*, Fischer, a White abolitionist and editor of Ball’s *Narrative*, describes *Slavery in the United States* as a “faithful portrait” of U.S. slavery, one that reveals the institution to “the very eyes of the reader” (Andrews 63). Fischer credits his own excision of Ball’s “opinions” as the reason for the memoir’s visually-mediated faithfulness (Ball xi):

Many of his opinions have been cautiously omitted, or carefully suppressed, as being of no value to the reader; and his sentiments upon the subject of slavery, have not been embodied in this work. The design of the writer, who is no more than the recorder of the facts detailed to him by another, has been to render the narrative as simple, and the style of the story as plain, as the laws of the language would permit. To introduce the reader, as it were, to a view of the cotton fields, and exhibit, not to his imagination, but to his very eyes, the mode of life to which the slaves on the southern plantations must conform, has been the primary object of the compiler. (Ball xi)

Fischer praises Ball's narrative as being free of the subjective "opinions" and "sentiments" of the slave narrator (xi). In excising Ball's narrative voice, Fischer deems Ball's thoughts and feelings as not only of "little value to the reader," but also a potential impediment to making slavery transparent for Ball's White Northern audience (xi). Fischer credits the narrative's suppression of Ball's "philosophy" as a means by which to "introduce the reader" to "the cotton fields" of the U.S. South (xi). In its desire to "exhibit" slavery and its consequences "not to [the] imagination but to [the] very eyes of the reader," Ball's narrative equates "facts" with sight-based verification of physical pain (xi). This medial slight of hand in which Ball is identified as yet another "recorder" and not the author of his life narrative allows Northern readers to experience slavery as if they, themselves, were eyewitnesses to its horrors, as though they had been to the South and had seen U.S. slavery "as it is" (Ball xi; Weld and Grimke ii).

Indeed, a reviewer of Ball's *Slavery in the United States* praised the narrative as a story capable of transporting Northern readers to the U.S. South. The reviewer notes that the narrative is "a perfect[ly] accurate picture of slavery," one so clear and transparent, that it acts as a "mirror" into the system, a "window of the very best plate glass" (*Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine* I, No. 4, 1836). This desire for a "picture" of slavery so clear that the "beholder is perpetually mistaking it for an open window" (*Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine* I, No. 4, 1836) was born out of a desire to bring the viewer to the actual scene of the event without the mediating effects of either the written word or the formerly enslaved narrator (*Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine* I, No. 4, 1836).

Ball's excision from the narrative extends to his frontispiece portrait (Figure C). Here the visual authority is garnered not by Ball's unique visual representation. Instead of

the author portrait so common in authenticating a narrator's story, Ball's narrative is prefaced with the popular and often reproduced image, "Am I Not a Man and a Brother" (Figure A). In using Josiah Wedgwood's iconic 1787 image as a stand-in for Ball's portrait, *Slavery in the United States* suggests that the slave narrator's individualized portrait is interchangeable with a mechanically reproducible visual icon, a symbolic image that together with "Am I Not a Woman and a Sister," Elizabeth Margaret Chandler's 1837 re-mix of Wedgwood's image, stood in for the face and frame of every slave, everywhere (Figure B).<sup>9</sup> If a narrative praised for its veracity and transparency uses a stock image as a stand-in to the author's portrait, what does this suggest about the ability of visual images to communicate historical or experiential truth? And what are the consequences of excising the narrator's words and image from the story of his or her own life?

This emphasis on visually verifiable "facts" afforded formerly enslaved narrators little rhetorical space in which to represent their memories of enslavement (Douglass, *Life and Time of Frederick Douglass* 219). In response, formerly enslaved narrators, themselves, challenged the notion that the entirety of slavery's picture could be represented via a disinterested display of "facts" (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219). And some writers questioned whether or not slavery itself could be represented at all. In "Slavery As it Is," William Wells Brown's 1847 lecture to the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, for example, Brown claimed that "Slavery has never been represented. Slavery can never be represented" (82). In the midst of a growing body of books, pamphlets, novels, and pictures, all of which purported to represent slavery as it really was, Brown argues that representing the lived reality of U.S. slavery was impossible not

only for him and his contemporaries, but also for anyone at any time. Brown was not alone in his claim. Frederick Douglass also rejected the notion that slavery could ever be clearly represented (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219). This belief led many formerly enslaved narrators to take a different approach to representing the institution, one that relied as much on the slave narrator's thoughts and feelings about slavery and freedom as it did the visually-mediated facts of slavery's brutality (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219). In adding the enslaved person's "philosophy" to slavery's picture Douglass and many others sought to offer a clearer set of truths concerning slavery's consequences (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219).

Indeed, Douglass wrote and spoke repeatedly of the drawbacks of non-photographic visual representations, denouncing drawings and sketches of former fugitives as specious representations that warped and flattened the sitter's features and character.<sup>10</sup> Such images, in Douglass's view, disfigured the former slave, leading Douglass to lament in an 1849 book review of Wilson Armistead's *A Tribute to the Negro*:

Negroes can never have impartial portraits at the hands of white artists. It seems to us next to impossible for white men to take likenesses of black men, without most grossly exaggerating their distinctive features. And the reason is obvious. Artists, like all other white persons, have adopted a theory respecting the distinctive features of Negro physiognomy.... This theory impressed strongly upon the mind of an artist exercises a powerful influence over his pencil. (P. Foner, *The Life and Writings* 384)

Here, Douglass identifies White artists' engagement with a visual and discursive "theory" of representation, one that limits their ability to produce faithful likenesses of Black sitters (P. Foner 384). Douglass himself notes his own discomfort at being misrepresented visually, a possibility that became lived reality with the production of images like the one in Figure D, an illustration that borrows from the structures and meanings of the runaway slave icon (Figure E). Although this image was intended as an honorific one, it instead equates Douglass the man with the barefoot, and seemingly clueless image of the runaway slave, an image that Marcus Wood describes as static and tragic in its stasis (Wood, *Blind Memory* 94). "Running everywhere and nowhere," the image of the runaway woodcut suppresses Douglass's dynamic life narrative with a much simpler and often reproduced picture, one whose meanings negates Douglass's unique perspective on slavery and its consequences.

For Douglass, this visual logic—one in which a Black sitter's likeness is distorted by a White artist's hand—might be successfully subverted with more faithful pictures, pictures whose seeming indexicality offered a one-to-one relationship between the sitter's actual image and his pictured one. The advent of photography in 1839 seemed a promising approach to overcoming the racist logic of visual re-production. It is this promise—that photographs might succeed in producing faithful images—that lead Douglass, in a series of lectures on pictures delivered during the years of the U.S. Civil war, to identify the medium as a democratizing apparatus, one which made it possible for "men of all conditions and classes" to see and be seen without the rude "impartiality" of hand-drawn illustrations ("Pictures and Progress" 7; P. Foner 384).

Belief in the photograph's ability to picture things as they are, led both Black writers and their White interlocutors to test the ability of photography and photographic practices to accurately picture slavery for its White Northern audience. For formerly enslaved narrators, the promise of a visual technology potentially impervious to the subjective influence of racist ideologies encouraged them to experiment with representing stories of slavery and freedom using photography as a tool. Similarly, the indexical properties of photography encouraged White Northern cultural producers to experiment with using photographs as a way by which to locate what was essential about slavery and the enslaved experience, and to make those experiences accessible to their readers.

"Picturing Slavery" is the story of these dynamic and contesting attempts. My project is the first that brings together research in the slave narrative's formal evolution with the rise of nineteenth-century photographic practice. Although scholars of African-American literature have visited the question of photography's relationship to African-American literature and culture, none have yet traced the distinctly visual—and after the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839, distinctly photographic—nature of the slave narrative and its literary after-lives.<sup>11</sup> In recent years scholars have directed attention to the pervasive presence of the visual in nineteenth-century American literature and culture.<sup>12</sup> And other scholars have noted the specific offices of the visual in African-American literature of the nineteenth-century and beyond. Noting the ways in which photography affected the formal choices of major writers like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, W.E.B. DuBois, and Ralph Ellison scholars like Maurice O. Wallace, Shawn Michelle Smith, Jeanine DeLombard, Marcy Dinius, P. Gabrielle Foreman, Michael A. Chaney, and Sara Blair have established the significance of photography and

photographic practices in the lives of formerly enslaved African-Americans and their descendents.

Building on their work, I address the ways in which the demand for visual evidence in narratives of slavery and emancipation encouraged Black and White writers to embrace photography and photographic practices. I use photography as a filter by which to understand better how former slaves' life narratives were circulated in the print culture and visual culture of the U.S. North. In doing so, I uncover a heretofore understudied archive, one that brings together conversations in print culture, visual culture, and African-American autobiography. Most broadly, "Picturing Slavery" argues that photographs and photographically-inspired illustrations forever changed the way Black narrators and their White interlocutors imagined slavery and its consequences. In using texts as diverse as photographs, photographically-inspired drawings, and ekphrastic written descriptions of photographs, "Picturing Slavery" reveals the many ways in which former slaves and their allies embraced the photograph and its cultural effects to revise, replace, or re-imagine the conventional slave narrative and its literary after-lives.

In the first chapter of my dissertation, "Beheld by the Eye of God: Photography, Narrative and Revelation in Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*," I trace the strategies with which Douglass's 1852 novella, *The Heroic Slave*, resists the conventional slave narrative's formal limitations. My dissertation begins with a re-evaluation of *The Heroic Slave* as a text in conversation with the larger U.S. cultural practices and meanings surrounding daguerreotyped portraiture. While scholars of *The Heroic Slave* have tended to dismiss its narrative structure as formally unremarkable, in my first chapter, I re-read Douglass's novella as a bold formal experiment, one that embraced the

processes, effects, and cultural meanings of the daguerreotype—one of the earliest photographic technologies—to construct a clearer picture of slavery. In *The Heroic Slave*, the photograph's presumed indexicality and cultural power as an object of sentiment leads to a democratic vision in which a former slave might be pictured as citizen and friend. Douglass develops an ekphrastic picture of his protagonist as a woebegone intellectual (the kind of philosopher that Douglass himself was warned against becoming) who, in a series of soliloquies, ponders the epistemological consequences of slavery. Washington's verbal performance is witnessed by a hidden interlocutor, a White Northern traveler named Listwell, whose intimate gaze and listening ears lead him to "understand all" of the terrors of slavery in such a way as to spark a friendship between the two men, making possible a new vision of equality (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 185).

Throughout Douglass's own career and the parallel evolution of the mid-nineteenth century slave narrative, photographic technology itself underwent rapid change. Indeed, by the start of the Civil War in 1861, innovations in the medium had made it possible to mass-produce photographed portraits of former slaves by the thousands. The vast photographic archive that resulted has led some scholars to argue in favor of Douglass's thesis about the democratic possibilities of former slaves' photographic self-representations. I push against these readings to reveal a darker history. In Chapter Two, "Fictions of Progress: The Visual Slave Narratives of the U.S. Civil War," I demonstrate how innovations in the making and dissemination of photographs disrupted the promise and potential of photography as a medium of Black self-expression. I argue that Civil war era photographs produced a new narrative form—the before and after narrative—a form that reinforced negative stereotypes about the



ineptness of the former slave for full citizenship. These war-era visual narratives buttressed doubt about the enslaved soldier's ability to fight or the formerly enslaved child's ability to become a productive future member of society; they also left out the war-era experiences of formerly enslaved women.

Little scholarly attention has been given to how Black women embraced photography and post-bellum photographic practices as a way to insert their own life narratives into the larger national narrative of post-Civil War reunion and reconstruction. In my third chapter, "Mourning Becomes Political: Photographs and Politicized Self-Fashioning in Black Women's Post-Bellum Slave Narratives," I argue that Civil war era photographs, as they intersected with post-war acts of mourning, altered how (and why) some former slaves wrote about their lives in slavery. In conversation with recent scholarship on how post-bellum narratives of slavery uniformly increased their focus on civil rights, my chapter illustrates how writers like Mattie J. Jackson, Elizabeth Keckley, and Susie King Taylor engaged photographic forms of mourning as critical components in their representations of the former slave as citizen. For example, engaging with mourning photographs of Willie Lincoln, and of Lincoln himself after his assassination, Keckley opens a space for new iterations and performances of Black citizenship. By foregrounding the memoirs of these three writers, my chapter demonstrates the broader extent to which Black women's political activism was fueled by photographic pictures of individual and collective mourning.

My fourth chapter, "A Kind of Literary Archeology": Post-Memory and the Proto-Neo Slave Narrative," continues this retrospective gaze, considering the ways in which memories of slavery were pictured three decades after its abolition. Here, I take

up the turn-of-the century work of poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Hampton Institute Camera Club to consider their varied ways of picturing slavery in the light of the Civil war photographic archive. Part of what I argue is that the juxtaposition of word and image creates meanings that extend beyond what either Dunbar or the Camera Club photographers may have intended. By borrowing from and extending Toni Morrison's theories of memory and artistic production in her essay "Site of Memory," I demonstrate how the Dunbar/Hampton photo-texts offer a new way of writing and reading about the U.S. slave past. Read in this way, Dunbar's work stands as an early prototype of the neo-slave narrative genre of the post Civil-Rights era. My dissertation's final chapter thus alludes to the rich and ongoing importance of photographic practices in African-American writers' formal innovations. By demonstrating the role of photographs and photography in African-American literary production, "Picturing Slavery" calls for a re-evaluation of the slave narrative genre, as well as the twentieth- and twenty-first century genres that it engendered.



Figure A. Thomas Wedgwood. "Am I Not a Man and a Brother." 1787. Medallion. The British Museum.



Figure B. Elizabeth Margaret Chandler. "Am I Not a Woman and a Sister." 1837. Woodcut. George Bourne. *Slavery Illustrated in Its Effects Upon Women*. Prints and Photographs Division. Library of Congress.

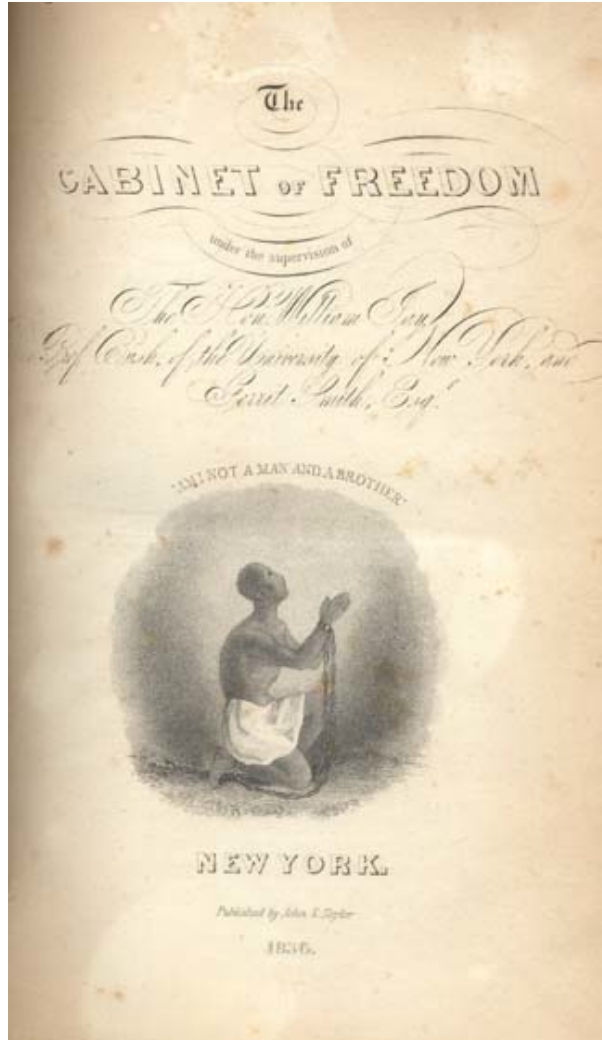


Figure C. Artist Unknown. Charles Ball. *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*. Woodcut Illustration. 1836. Documenting North American-University of North Carolina. [www.docsouth.edu](http://www.docsouth.edu).

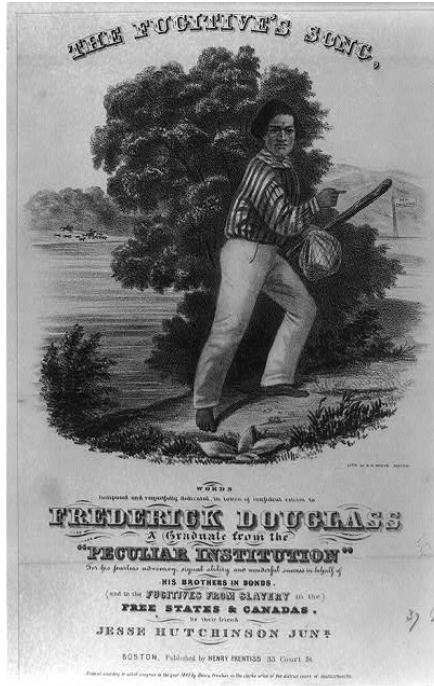


Figure D. Henry Prentiss. "The Fugitive's Song." Lithograph on Woven Paper. 1845. Boston. Prints and Photographs. Library of Congress. LOT 10615-59 [item] [P&P]



Figure E. "Woodcut Runaway." 1837 or before. Wisconsin Historical Society.

## Chapter One

### “Beheld by the Eye of God”: Photography, Narrative, and Revelation in Frederick Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*

Give us the facts. We will take care of the philosophy.

—White Abolitionist John Collins to the young fugitive, Frederick Douglass

But the photograph does not really prompt you to remember people the way you might otherwise remember them—the way they moved, the manner of their speech, the sound of their voice, that lift of the eyebrow when they made a joke, their smell, the rasp of their skin on yours, the emotions they stirred. (Can you ever really *know* someone from a photograph?)

—Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance*

A gift from Frederick Douglass to his close friend Susan B. Anthony, this rarely circulated 1848 portrait of the nineteenth-century writer-activist once sat on the mantel-piece of Anthony’s parlor (Figure 1-1).<sup>13</sup> As a sign of both their friendship and mutual respect for one another, the daguerreotype offers not only a picture of how Douglass saw himself, but also how he desired to be seen by Anthony and her guests, many of whom were also activists in the anti-slavery and women’s rights movements. Although the 1848 daguerreotype features the distinguished yet stylish attire typical of Douglass’s early daguerreotypes—the smart black suit and starched white shirt—the image provides a stark contrast to both the fierce dignity of his other photographic portraits (Figures 1-2 to 1-4), as well as the cartoon-like illustrations drawn by white artists, illustrations that led Douglass to deride the limits of visual representation (Figure D; Figure 1-6; Figure 1-7).

Indeed, the Douglass pictured in his 1848 gift to Anthony seems to turn his critical eye inward, while simultaneously training his inscrutable gaze towards a future

beyond the borders of the daguerreotype's frame. Suggestive as it is of a robust and mysterious inner-life, this daguerreotype's visual departure mirrors a generic departure in Douglass's narrative representations of slavery. Much like the 1848 daguerreotype in Anthony's parlor, Douglass's 1852 novella, *The Heroic Slave*—Douglass's first and only foray into fiction-writing—captures a picture of slavery marked by its focus not on the spectacle of the formerly enslaved person's wounded body, but on his opaque and dynamic interior life. In *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass departs from the slave narrative genre—from its desire for visually-mediated facts about slavery—to write a fictionalized biography of the interior life of fugitive slave and rebel leader, Madison Washington. In the fictional universe he creates, Douglass images a relationship between a formerly enslaved narrator and his White Northern reader that mirrors the unique interpersonal exchanges made possible by the daguerreotyped portrait. In an effort to imaginatively reconstruct Washington's thoughts and feelings, *The Heroic Slave*'s narrative structure references and borrows from the daguerreotype's processes and effects.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, Douglass's novella seeks to represent accurately not only Washington's face and form, but also his character. Rejecting representations of the fugitive that direct the reader's attention to those indignities of bondage visible to the eye—e.g. chained hands and feet, branded flesh, or scarred backs—Douglass employs the processes, effects, and cultural meanings of the daguerreotype to reveal slavery's hidden consequences.

Douglass's experiment was possible because of the introduction of photography into national life. A photo-mechanical process perfected by Louis Daguerre, the daguerreotype became a viable method for picture-making in 1839 (Newhall 17). Introduced by the nation of France as a gift to the world, this photomechanical process

was the first stabilized tool by which to index reality; or, as contemporary viewers described it, the daguerreotype allowed operators to capture a faithful likeness of any object or person placed before the camera's lens (Newhall 21). Although an object of debate and anxiety during the mid-nineteenth century (S. Smith 15), the daguerreotype nevertheless afforded Douglass a chance to represent the enslaved narrator's life in a mode that went beyond the limits of human sight.

These new representational possibilities were, in part, the result of the daguerreotype's structural qualities and cultural meanings. In both its materiality and cultural reception, the daguerreotype is unlike any other visual technology before or since. Like the 1848 daguerreotype in Anthony's parlor, each daguerreotype was a one-of-a-kind positive print whose clarity inspired awe in its contemporary viewers, many of whom, like Lewis Gaylord Clark, described the daguerreotyped portrait as "perfect...without the *possibility* of an incorrect likeness" (560). The daguerreotype's eerie mirroring of reality provided a level of clarity that, for some viewers, promised to reproduce faithfully the physical world visible to the eye, and to picture adequately the interior world of the sitter's heart and mind (Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 27). This presumed omniscience was imagined as a means by which to reveal a sitter's character with the same indexical precision as it did her face and frame (S. Smith 4). Given its seemingly "perfect" reproduction of the sitter's exterior and interior worlds, the daguerreotype soon took on a unique role as an object of sentiment, one that offered not a piece or trace of the original sitter, but an embodied miniature of the sitter herself.



As a result of the daguerreotype's perceived powers of revelation, it was valued as a means by which to ignite interpersonal connection across boundaries of time or distance.<sup>15</sup> For Douglass, the daguerreotype's unique structural qualities marked it as an ideal formal referent. In a narrative experiment designed to add the formerly enslaved person's otherwise absent thoughts, feelings, interpretations, and analyses—what abolitionist, John Collins called his “philosophy”—to the body of evidence attesting to slavery's wrongs, Douglass used the daguerreotype as both a metaphor for deep interpersonal connection as well as a model for Black self-expression (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219). Indeed, Douglass's hopes concerning the daguerreotype's powers of revelation were no doubt indebted to its uncanny materiality. Ensclosed behind a protective layer of glass, the daguerreotyped image is a photographic object with both material and metaphorical heft (Figure 1-5). A viewer looking at the daguerreotype at a particular angle and in the appropriate light might view an image of ethereal clarity. However, depending on how the daguerreotype is tilted, and the play of light upon the protective layer of glass, one might encounter instead one's own mirrored reflection—or the commingling of one's own visage with that of the photographed sitter—or, in some instances, nothing at all. Its instability, its shifting balance between clarity and mystery, promised the viewer a sort of visual transcendence denied to the unaided human eye.

In *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass adopts the daguerreotype's structural qualities as a means by which to capture realities about the enslaved person's experience that were invisible to the eye. In going beyond the fugitive's scars and stripes—the tangible and visible proof of slavery's consequences—Douglass elucidates, instead, the invisible effects of slavery. As Douglass asserts in a fourth revision of his own life narrative, *Life*

and *Times of Frederick Douglass*, he “could not always follow [the] injunction” to “narrate” “his simple story” because of the many “new views” of slavery that followed his own evolution as a writer (219). These “new views” led Douglass to shift focus from the slave’s chained and whipped body to the invisible wounds of the soul, offering readers a perspective of slavery made possible via the use of an innovative narrative form, one designed to reveal slavery’s effects on the fugitive’s unseen thoughts and emotions. In doing so, Douglass boldly rejects fellow abolitionist John Collins’s admonition to “give [readers] the facts” and merely to “tell his simple story,” admonitions that limited the scope of the former fugitive’s self-expression, leaving little “room” for “grow[th]” (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219).<sup>16</sup> The “growth” that Douglass speaks of is related to a new approach to writing narratives of slavery and freedom, one that tied the fugitive’s emancipation together with the fugitive’s evolution as citizen.

In *The Heroic Slave*, I show how Douglass embraces an alternative narrative form so as to narrate an expansive vision of slavery and emancipation, one that trains its eye on the fugitive’s inner life. In pressing this claim I aim to contribute to seemingly settled debates about the narrative structure of *The Heroic Slave* in relationship to Douglass’s other writings. The majority of modern-day Douglass scholars read *The Heroic Slave* as structurally unremarkable. Scholars either abandon the novella as a formal failure, dismiss it as yet another (less successful) slave narrative, or ignore the question of form altogether. Douglass biographer William McFeely, for example, reads *The Heroic Slave* as “a way station on the road to [Douglass’s] second telling of his own heroic life [in *My Bondage and My Freedom*]” (174). McFeely’s metaphor designates Douglass’s novella as a relative non-event in Douglass’s literary accomplishments, “a way station” to the

literary destinations that matter. Likewise, literary scholar Robert Stepto acknowledges Douglass's novella as an important turning point in his political identity, but also frames it as "a not altogether extraordinary piece of work" (360).

For both McFeely and Stepto, the novella's aberrant narrative features—its seemingly loose treatment of narrative time; its self-assured acceptance of factual uncertainty—seem to mark it as a text that has failed to reflect adequately the conventions of the genre. As, indeed, it has. Given the most basic rubric of slave narrative conventions, Douglass's novella intentionally misses the mark (Olney 48). Against more canonical readings, my chapter demonstrates that rather than being a failed slave narrative or a detour on the road to his later work, *The Heroic Slave* is a formal experiment that influenced how Douglass imagined the "facts" of the fugitive's life story. More specifically, while Stepto reads the novella's most distinctive feature—Washington's soliloquies—as merely "florid" narrative flourishes that reflect little in the way of authorial craft (Stepto 360), I read them as the most innovative aspect of Douglass's experiment. And while other scholars of *The Heroic Slave* cite the visible oppression enacted on the fugitive's body as central to the novella's narrative project (Rizzo 138), I argue instead that the real focus of representation in Douglass's novella is the fugitive's dynamic interior life—the invisible life of the heart and mind.

In his novella, Douglass exploits both the daguerreotype's structural qualities as well as cultural beliefs about the daguerreotype's power to reveal a person's inner character. Early viewers describe the daguerreotype as a technology capable of representing a sitter as "reflected in a positively perfect mirror," one "*infinitely* more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands" (Poe 2, emphasis Poe's;

Hawthorne 133). The daguerreotype's mirror-like qualities led viewers to describe it as "a mirror with a memory," "the pencil of nature," and "the eye of God" (Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph" 739; Wendell 70; Morton 181). In all three instances, viewers describe the daguerreotype as a remarkable new technology more capable than the human eye and hand of representing the world as it is.

In addition to its role as a cultural symbol presumed capable of perfect representation, the daguerreotype's very structure offered Douglass an apt model for constructing an ideal slave narrative. The daguerreotype's flickering surface, made possible by the exposure of direct sunlight on a silver-plated copper plate polished to a mirror finish, offers a photographic image that flees from the viewer's eye.<sup>17</sup> The result—both strange and beautiful—is that of "a flickering mirror ... something alive" (Trachtenberg, "Likeness as Identity" 409) that requires the viewer's full attention in order to be perceived. Exchanged between family members and close friends, the daguerreotype enlivened relationships that might otherwise fade. Unmet longing for the visage of a lost love, or distant cousin, or growing child, could find an antidote in the delicate contours of the daguerreotype's case and frame. In this way, the daguerreotype spurred a triangle of desire, one in which image, viewer, and sitter were inextricably bound.

By virtue of its seeming desire to be "pored over and read" (Williams 4), the daguerreotype allowed viewers to "read" Washington's character in a manner that would be impossible with other representational forms. In recent years, scholars have noted Douglass's specific interest in the representational possibilities of the daguerreotype. Unlike these previous studies, however, my reading identifies the specific ways in which

the daguerreotype's materiality and cultural meanings influenced *The Heroic Slave's* form so as to push forward the rigid boundaries of the conventional slave narrative. By looking at form from this angle, I also demonstrate how the daguerreotype broadened the scope of the narrative's purpose, from merely arguing against slavery to arguing for the slave's promise as national exemplar. As Laura Wexler argues, Douglass's treatment of the daguerreotype in *The Heroic Slave* was both an argument for abolition, and an argument for the former slave's rights as citizen (18). I go further, demonstrating how Douglass's sustained interest in the relational powers of the daguerreotype was yoked together with the fugitive's introspective voice, a word and image combination that worked to transform the fugitive from a slave and into an American hero. In short, I argue that Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* is an innovative work of experimental fiction, one that uses the daguerreotype as a cultural reference and structural model to create a new type of narrative, a narrative designed to exploit the tensions between word and image so as to redefine African-American resistance to slavery as in line with notions of the ideal American.

### The Heroic Slave

Fascinated by the meanings of Washington's armed revolt aboard the domestic slave ship, *The Creole*, Douglass, in speeches given both before and after the novella's publication, extolled the rebel leader as a luminary of the race and of the nation.<sup>18</sup>

Although Douglass found himself with few facts with which to frame Washington's biography, he was also free to place the imagined facts of Washington's life narrative in service to his own philosophical treatise about the patriotic nature of the fugitive slave's rebellion. On November 7, 1841, Washington led eighteen enslaved men in a successful

slave revolt (Hendrick 11). Told that they would not have the supplies necessary to reach Liberia—their desired destination—the rebels, hoping for asylum, sailed instead towards the British port of Nassau (Hendrick 95). Upon their arrival, the leaders of the rebellion were arrested; the other men, women, and children remained on board the ship, pending an investigation by British magistrates. Five days later, British authorities—to the great consternation of U.S. slaveholders—ruled there was no British law under which the fugitives might be detained as property. The formerly enslaved people still aboard *The Creole* were legally emancipated as a result; the leaders of the rebellion who had been imprisoned were released from custody several months later (Davis 21).

Relatively little is known about Washington’s life before or after the moment of his emancipation. Shadowed by both a lack of clarity about exactly what happened on board *The Creole*, as well as a lack of clarity about the specifics of Washington’s life prior to the 1841 slave revolt, Douglass depends on his own intellectual resources to fill in the gaps in Washington’s biography. Written as a contribution to the 1852 anthology *Autographs for Freedom, and* edited by abolitionist Julia Griffiths, *The Heroic Slave* taps into the patriotic discourse of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution (McFeely 174). Douglass’s decision to embrace the Founding Fathers as a touchstone of the narrative reflects a dramatic shift in both his choice of genre and his stance towards the U.S. Constitution (Wexler 18). In stark contrast to the stance held by radical Garrisonians who argued that the Constitution had no place in the fight against slavery, and was, in fact, a pro-slavery document, Douglass had come to “a new vie[w]” (Douglass, *Life and Times* 242)—that the Constitution could and should be “wielded in behalf of emancipation” (P. Foner 173):

The Constitution, construed in the light of well established rules of legal interpretation, might be made consistent in its details with the noble purposes avowed in its preamble; and that hereafter we [the editors of *The North Star*] should insist upon the application of such rules to that instrument, and demand that it be wielded in behalf of emancipation. (E. P. Foner 173)

Douglass's decision to "wield[d]" the Constitution "in behalf of emancipation," however, placed him in direction opposition to his mentor and one-time supporter, William Lloyd Garrison and shifted his ideology away from moral suasion and towards an equal rights discourse (P. Foner 173).<sup>19</sup>

This shift—together with Douglass's 1847 decision to start his own newspaper—placed him in what Stepto calls a form of domestic "exile" (Stepto 356). This "exile," and the financial burdens it wrought, led Griffiths and the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society to organize a gift book anthology in order to raise money for *The North Star*. Both the 1852 and 1853 editions of *Autographs for Freedom* reads like a who's who of Douglass supporters following his break with Garrison. With the support of friends and fellow activists, Douglass's new political views, inspired by his own concerns with the unequal racial hierarchies of the anti-slavery movement, inspired him to frame a narrative in which a fugitive slave could be re-imagined as the consummate American patriot.

In this manner, *The Heroic Slave*'s narrative structure modeled for its 1852 audience how the fugitive slave's thoughts, feelings, and subsequent actions were analogous to those of the heroic rebels of 1776. Douglass starts his novella, then, not with the "I was born" of the slave narrative (Stepto 361), but with the narrating voice of an

unnamed third-person speaker, a speaker who positions Washington as an equal to the most illustrious of Americans:

The State of Virginia is famous in American annals for the multitudinous array of her statesmen and heroes... Yet not all the great ones of the Old Dominion have... escaped undeserved obscurity. By some strange neglect, *one* of the truest, manliest, and bravest of her children—one who, in after years, will, I think, command the pen of genius to set his merits forth, holds now no higher place in the records of that grand old Commonwealth than is held by a horse or an ox (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175).

Here the “I was born” of the slave narrative establishes Washington as the ideological kinsman of “statesmen and heroes” the likes of Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry, all the “children” of a personified “Virginia” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175). In direct opposition with Southern law and custom which dictated that a child take on the enslaved condition of his or her mother, the novella personifies the State of Virginia as Washington’s “mother,” and identifies Washington himself as one of her “truest, manliest, and bravest” sons (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175). The narrative traces Washington’s political genealogy back to the ideals of the nation’s founding fathers to argue that Washington’s enslaved status was incongruous with his character.

Douglass’s novella places Washington’s face and form alongside America’s most lauded heroes. This move transforms the fugitive slave from a criminal into a patriot. Douglass’s imaginative reconstruction of Washington’s experiences mirrors the narrative form of another biographical project, the patriotic mid-century portrait-biographies published during the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>20</sup> The best known of these portrait biographies



was Mathew Brady's *The Gallery of Illustrious Americans, containing the Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Twenty-Four of the Most Eminent Citizens of the American Republic Since the Death of Washington*. Sub-titled "the gift book of the republic," *The Gallery* included engraved portraits drawn by artist Francis D'Avignon, and modeled after daguerreotypes taken in Brady's studio (Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 45). Each engraving was accompanied by a short biography intended to illustrate the representational qualities lost when artists translated a daguerreotyped portrait into a woodcut engraving. Written by C. Edwards Lester, the volume's editor, each biography was intended to illustrate the character of the public figures pictured, as well as to construct a "national work," one intended to reflect back to the nation the visage and character of its most celebrated patriots (Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 48). Like later works that patterned themselves after it, *The Gallery of Illustrious Americans* urged viewers to "contemplat[e] the portrait of an eminent person...[to] consid[er] his actions...[and] behold his countenance" (Buttre ii). In this way, Americans could look upon the face of greatness, and meditate upon the qualities that might lead an average American to become an illustrious one.

Portrait-biographies like Brady's relied upon the daguerreotype's presumed indexicality and powers of revelation to actualize *The Gallery's* myriad purposes. Like the daguerreotyped miniatures so popular in studios across the nation, the word-image contributions of *The Gallery* led the "imagination ... to coin a set of features, or to conceive a character, [or to] to supply the absence of one or the other" (Buttre Preface). Playing upon the daguerreotype's peculiar powers of connection and revelation, Brady's photo-biographies played off of the tensions and synergies of word and image

(Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 27). In re-creating the material experience of seeing the patriot in person, texts like Brady's *The Gallery* attempted to reproduce for a mass audience the inner and outer qualities of the nation's most famous citizens.

Griffiths's gift book *Autographs for Freedom* does work similar to that done in Brady's gift book. Griffiths's anthology, however, invites luminaries of the anti-slavery movement—men and women like James M'Cune Smith, Lewis Tappan, Charles Sumner, Horace Greely, Richard Hildreth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Frederick Douglass—to model how and why slavery should be abolished. Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* goes beyond an apology for abolition to make an argument for the former slaves' fitness for full citizenship. The longest contribution in the anthology, *The Heroic Slave*, like Brady's *Gallery* connects word and image so as to render visible the interior life of "a great character" (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175). Indeed, Douglass boldly places Washington, a fugitive slave and rebel leader, as the equal of his Revolutionary namesakes, James Madison and George Washington, as well as the peer of Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and other eminent Virginians (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175). In asserting that Washington's Virginian heritage distinguished him as the ideological descendent of revolutionaries as much as the biological descendent of an enslaved people, Douglass marks the fight for the fugitive's emancipation from slavery as inextricable from the freed person's fight for his rights as citizen.

As a "gift" to the nation, *The Heroic Slave* questions what it meant to represent slavery without a linear narrative comprised of visually verifiable facts. As I argued in the Introduction, fugitive narrators and their white allies were often in conflict over the

question of whether or not slavery could ever be clearly represented or fully understood. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, black narrators' recurrent anxieties about the difficulty of narrating their experiences of enslavement led to an explosion of innovative formal experiments throughout the 1850s. The task of translating memories of slavery into inflexible structural forms limited the ability of former slaves to make legible thoughts and feelings which words alone could not describe. Douglass—as do slave narrators like William Wells Brown, Moses Roper, and Lansford Lane—speaks repeatedly of feelings that words cannot describe. In emphasizing the ways in which slavery and its effects defied representation, Douglass emphasizes the gaps and silences of the slave record in order to construct what he believes to be a more apt likeness of slavery as it was.

Douglass's representation departs from the expectations of the slave narrative genre by focusing not on Washington's transparency, but on his inscrutability. The novella's speaker departs from the usual work of the slave narrative preface—in which White writers verify the speaker's identity and character—when he highlights the narrative's inability to capture fully Washington's likeness:

Glimpses of this great character are all that can now be presented. He is brought to view only by a few transient incidents, and these afford but partial satisfaction. Like a guiding star on a stormy night, he is seen through the parted clouds and the howling tempests; or, like the gray peak of a menacing rock on a perilous coast, he is seen by the quivering flash of angry lightning, and he again disappears covered with mystery. (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175)

Douglass frames Washington's fictional biography not with strongly worded assertions

about who Washington is and why he can be trusted, or a frontispiece portrait that attests to his identity and respectability, but with similes that liken him to a “guiding star,” or a “gray peak of a menacing rock” (175). In comparing Washington to a force of nature, Douglass offers his reader “glimpses” of an epically heroic figure, one whose greatness seemingly escapes the power of full description. “Glimps[ed]” by the light of a “quivering flash of angry lightening,” Washington, like the “star[s]” in the sky or the summit “of a menacing rock on a perilous coast,” exists beyond the scope of the reader’s visual apparatus (175). This partial vision is at the center of Douglass’s project—to narrate the impossibility of ever representing Washington’s life in slavery as through a “clear glass window” (175). “Covered with mystery” and “enveloped in darkness,” the novella’s fugitive is only partly “revealed” by “the light of the northern skies” (175). This insistence on partial revelation, on “marks, traces, possibles, and probabilities,” challenges the notion that the reality of slavery’s consequences could ever be represented without the unfettered expression of the fugitive’s thoughts and feelings (175).

Given the absence of the historical Washington’s testimony surrounding his actions upon the *Creole*, Douglass is spurred to write what literary scholar Toni Morrison terms “a kind of literary archeology,” a fictive biography of Washington’s life based on Douglass’s own imaginative reconstruction (71). Douglass’s act of imaginative reconstruction depends much upon Washington’s first-person testimony, a testimony that Washington intends for an audience of one—himself. In a lyrical set of non-narrative soliloquies, Washington uses the secluded pine forest as material to theorize the nature of slavery and freedom. Looking at the birds flying “among the tall pines” at the edge of a secluded forest, Washington compares his fate to theirs:

Those birds... sounding forth their merry notes in seeming worship of the rising sun...are [my] superiors. They *live free*, though they may die slaves. They fly where they list by day, and retire in freedom at night. But what is freedom to me, or I to it? I am a *slave*...even before I made part of this breathing world, the scourge was platted for my back; the fetters were forged for my limbs (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 177).

In naming the birds of the air as his “superiors,” Washington unveils a key contradiction in the peculiar institution’s logic (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 177). Asking broad existential questions such as “What is life?” and “What is freedom?” Washington unveils a robust thought life (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 177). When he poses existential questions about the meaning of life and liberty—questions that engender deep anguish—Washington undoes arguments about the slave’s lackluster intellect and shallow emotional life. Indeed, Washington’s angst is heightened, in fact, not by physical trauma of his enslavement—he was whipped by an overseer before retreating to the forest—but more so by his awareness of it.

In his wood glen monologue Washington develops a philosophy of slavery that gives him the will to strike for his own self-emancipation. Much like the young Douglass of his 1845 *Narrative*, Washington’s robust thought life leads him to question the meaning of slavery. He goes on to theorize his own enslavement by use of reasoned arguments and rhetorical craft. Using a distinctly literary diction, he engages in a dialogue with himself, a dialogue that rejects the most popular pro-slavery arguments. For example, against the popular pro-slavery sentiment that the slave was content with enslavement, Washington argues that life as a slave is “aimless,” “worthless,” even

“worse than worthless” thus amplifying rhetorically his own theory of slavery and its meanings (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 176). Washington then affirms himself “a man...with thoughts and feelings...powers and faculties” that make the mere thought of his subjugation more unbearable a fate than the physical trauma that led him to the glen (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 177). Challenging another pro-slavery defense that would cite the slave’s presumed cowardice as evidence for his unfitness for freedom, Washington recites to himself (and for himself) scenes from his own heroic past—his rescue of a drowning youth, and tête-à-tête with a “raging bull” (177). In refuting the arguments of slavery’s apologists, Washington engages in a one-man debate that culminates in a single question—“Do I dare strike for freedom?” (177). It is this question that propels the rest of the narrative, and forecasts the enslaved hero’s future role as rebel leader aboard *The Creole*.

When Washington delivers his soliloquy, he believes himself to be alone. His impassioned debate, however, is, instead, performed for an audience of two. Listwell, a Northern traveler, and Washington’s hidden interlocutor, is initially attracted to the glen by the “sound of a human voice...engaged in earnest conversation” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 176). As a result, Washington’s image and unfettered self-expression unfold before Listwell’s eyes without the limiting effects of other textual and visual forms. When Listwell hides behind a fallen tree so that he can both hear and see Washington, his active yet silent attendance mimics the relational contract between daguerreotyped sitters and their unknown viewers.

Listwell, after hearing Washington’s most private thoughts, looks up to see the eloquent bondsman in “full view” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 178). What Listwell sees

becomes critical to his experience of what he hears. Long after Washington leaves the scene, Listwell “meditate[s] on the extraordinary revelation” enacted by Washington’s embodied performance (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 181). In seeing and hearing Washington’s uninterrupted “revelation,” Listwell experiences a state of vision not possible with conventional ways of seeing, one which allows him “to sound the mysterious depths...of [Washington’s] thoughts and feelings” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 179). What was at first a solitary address is, in fact, transformed into a “conversation,” in which a speaking Washington and a listening Listwell engage in an intimate act of exchange (Noble 3). This act, however, is as much a visual one as it is an aural one. Washington is transformed by speaking into being an idealized image of himself; Listwell is transformed by witnessing Washington’s dynamic self-imaging. Within the quiet space of a pine wood clearing—a space that serves as an alternative to the church meeting taking place at the same time as Washington’s speech—Washington’s words and image forges a bond between the two men.

Washington concludes his soliloquy with a firm resolution to flee. Echoing the language of Patrick Henry: Washington proclaims “Liberty I will have or die in the attempt to gain it” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 178). At the end of his speech, Washington declares that his “resolution is fixed” upon freedom. The steadfastness of Washington’s resolution, the fixedness of his gaze towards a free future brings to a close what seems to Washington’s hidden interlocutor, Mr. Listwell, an almost supernatural transformation. After Washington speaks his final words of resolve, Listwell takes a second and “full view” of the man whose “earnest conversation” had, at first, sparked only curiosity:

Madison was of manly form. Tall, symmetrical, round, and strong. In his movements he seemed to combine, with the strength of the lion, a lion's elasticity. His torn sleeves disclosed arms like polished iron. His face was "black, but comely." His eye, lit with emotion, kept guard under a brow as dark and as glossy as the raven's wing. His whole appearance betokened Herculean strength...But his voice, that unfailing index of the soul, though full and melodious, had that in it which could terrify as well as charm.

(Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 179)

Here the novella continues the anthropomorphic comparisons begun with Washington's comparisons between himself and the small and vulnerable creatures of the forest. In stark contrast to the birds of the pine wood forest, Listwell imagines Washington as a powerful force of nature. Following Washington's resolution to live free or die trying, Listwell likens the future fugitive to a lion "in his movements...and strength," suggesting a latent power and ferocity that frighten Listwell (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 179). Mirroring the ferocity of Douglass's own early photographic portraits, Listwell's word-portrait communicates Listwell's awe after hearing and seeing Washington's soliloquy. What inspires Listwell to look upon Washington with awe, however, is not only the latter's physical prowess; it is also the power of his voice, "that unfailing index of the soul...which could terrify as well as charm" (179). In its dual ability to "charm" and "terrify," Washington's voice evokes what philosopher Immanuel Kant defines as the sublime, a greatness that inspires both wonder and awe, and exists outside the bounds of human perception (Stauffer 137).



Moreover, in Douglass's carefully constructed portrait, those physical features so often attributed to African heritage—a “broad mouth and nose”—are re-framed as indicative of “Herculean strength,” indomitable courage, and a kind and peaceful disposition (Yarborough 167). In the context of nineteenth-century notions of the masculine ideal and the daguerreotypic portrait, we find that Washington's fine form and figure reflect an even more refined character. This character is offered to us in pieces, “brought to view only by a few transient incidents” that “afford but partial satisfaction” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175). And yet the import of Washington's text-based photograph lies in the decisive turn of the word “but” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 179). Although his visual appearance offers a dignified character, his voice is what proves “poignant” to Listwell and is what, in the end, proved an “index [to his] soul” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 179). Washington's image and voice prompts the crouching Listwell to declare himself an abolitionist (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 182).

When Listwell sees Washington in the pine wood glen, he sees him through the mediating effects of the daguerreotype. Far from a repetition of racialized scripts in which Listwell's gaze assaults Washington's sub-altern body (Rizzo 138), Listwell's observation helps to impress upon his memory a sort of living daguerreotype, one animated by Washington's face and voice. Washington's performance in the forest, as a sort of enlivened daguerreotypic portrait of himself, negates notions of the fugitive as easily accessible and completely transparent. Indeed, Douglass rejects the woodcut runaway's dumb stillness with an opening epigraph that features a protagonist on the move, a “weeping pilgrim” whose internal pain is observed by an unnamed viewer (*Poetical Melange* 156).

Douglass uses the most promising aspects of the daguerreotype's processes, effects, and cultural references to model an instance of perfect self-expression and by extension, idealized interpersonal exchange. As "the eye of God," the daguerreotype mediates an exchange that makes both the fugitive's free self-expression and Listwell's faithful witnessing possible (*Poetical Melange* 156). The novella's opening epigraph provides a fitting frame for *The Heroic Slave*'s idealized narrative of slavery. Taken from the first stanza of a popular poem that is variably titled "For I Know Their Sorrows," "Consolation," and "God is Love," the novella's first epigraph describes the "sorrow" of an unnamed "weeping pilgrim":

Oh! child of grief, why weepest thou?

Why droops they sad and mournful brow?

Why is thy look so like despair?

What deep, sad sorrow lingers there? (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 174)

Composed of a series of questions, and set to iambic tetrameter, the epigraph speaks directly to an invisible interlocutor, a man of "sorrow" whose cries precede the action of Washington's heroic tale. A "child of grief," born into "deep, sad, sorrow," the poem's protagonist communicates his inner state on his "brow" and in his "look" (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 174). Yet, this physical manifestation of the protagonist's inner pain fails to offer the speaker a transparent picture of the protagonist's fate; it prompts, instead, a series of questions. In that each line of the first stanza—and a great number of the lines that follow it—begins with a question about "what" lies below the surface of the protagonist's physical form, the speaker communicates his inability to know the thoughts and feelings behind the pilgrim's pain.

Suggestive of an internal dialogue inaccessible to the viewer/speaker— a private debate of the pilgrim’s heart and mind—the protagonist’s visibly “droop[ing] brow” hides more than it reveals. Although the poem’s first stanza emphasizes the difficulty of translating the pilgrim’s thoughts and feelings to the eye and ear, his “sad” state changes dramatically in the song’s final quatrain (*Poetical Melange* 156). As a result of a perceptual apparatus “more perfect” than that of the speaker, the protagonist ends his “sorrow[ful]” journey by becoming a participant in a more perfect union:

Then, weeping pilgrim, dry thy tears;

Comfort on every side appears;

An eye beholds thee from above,

The eye of God, and ‘God is love’ (*Poetic Melange* 156)

In being “beheld from above” the sojourner can be the recipient of an admiring gaze, and via the superior powers of perception attached to “the eye of God,” is seen anew (*Poetical Melange* 156). The epigraph that Douglass chooses to frame his novella presents an exchange between seer and seen in which “God’s [loving] eye” enacts a special kind of seeing and knowing, a mode of perception that closes distance and enacts relationship (*Poetical Melange* 156). Douglass’s choice, then, to frame Washington’s narrative with a poem that identifies “God’s eye”—a term also used to describe the daguerreotype’s powers of extra sensory revelation—as a healing extension of his love emphasizes the necessity of picturing the fugitive’s thoughts and feelings through a medium capable of producing an “impartial” likeness (156). In going beyond the limits of human perception, the “eye of God” makes it possible to see the pilgrim’s character; this is the kind of exchange Douglass desires for Washington and Listwell (*Poetical*

*Melange* 156). In the pages of *The Heroic Slave* that follow, Douglass offers a sophisticated reading of how viewers might in such a way overcome the limitations of human perception and challenge the truth claims of visual images that would distort the former's slave's image.

The visual image that challenges the dynamism of Washington's living daguerreotype is the image of the woodcut runaway (Figure E). In its lurid descriptions of scars, wounds, and brands, the runaway advertisement was one of the most common visual and written genres of fugitive's representations, and by 1852, a well-known icon of American visual culture (Wood 3). As Marcus Wood notes in his seminal study, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865*, the two-dimensional woodcut so popular in newspaper advertisements:

is the *locus classicus* for the slave-holder's view of the runaway. In its literalization of the concept of 'run-away' it is a negation of the slave's most radical anti-slavery gesture...Comic, trivial, pathetic, and always the same, with his bundle of goods and one foot eternally raised, he proclaims his inadequacy for the task he has set himself. The very engraved lines which make up the slave are running around in circles, running everywhere and nowhere (Wood 93).

The "eternally raised" foot of the stereotyped woodcut places the fugitive in a state of permanent captivity (Wood 93). "Running around in circles," the fugitive is frozen in a timeless moment of aimless wandering that he can neither alter nor comprehend. "A negation of the slave's most radical anti-slavery gesture," the woodcut runaway refutes the very notion of the fugitive's inner life, making still and one-dimensional the complex

realities of the fugitive's dynamic interiority (Wood 93). In stark contrast, Douglass's daguerreotype of Washington features a thinking fugitive struggling in the throes of existential crisis. While the woodcut runaway's visual argument reduces the fugitive to a figure dead to thought and feeling, Douglass's protagonist embraces the slave's "most radical anti-slavery gesture" after a great deal of self-reflection, and despite much travail (Wood 93).

Douglass explicitly contrasts his protagonist with the runaway woodcut at two different points in the novella: once after Washington decides to "pursue his journey" North, and once outside of the Listwells' Ohio cabin. Indeed, Douglass stresses the image of a Washington on the move, developing his text-based daguerreotype in sharp contrast to the woodcut stereotype:

my last dollar was now gone, and you may well suppose I felt the loss of it; but the thought of being once again free to pursue my journey, prevented that depression which a sense of destitution causes; so swinging my little bundle on my back, I caught a glimpse of the *Great Bear* (which ever points the way to my beloved star,) and I started again on my journey'." (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 201)

"Swinging his little bundle on [his] back," Douglass's hero speaks of himself as engaged in a journey, placing him in a long tradition of heroic wanderers (201). Like the wandering pilgrim of in Part I, Washington travels with intention, if not without peril, and uses his wit to influence his destiny. Once he arrives at the Listwells' cabin, Washington is described as having "a stick in one hand" and a "small bundle in the other," breaking apart—literally—the iconic imagery of the "little bundle" hanging from

the woodcut fugitive's back (201). In both instances, Douglass self-consciously alludes to the most iconic visual imagery of the runaway only to refute its inherent meanings.

In scenes like these, Douglass works to undo the negative representations wrought by images like the woodcut runaway and visual technologies like the woodcut illustration by replacing them with a new picture of the fugitive, one inflected by the dynamic powers afforded by the daguerreotype. This desire for an improved perceptual apparatus was, for Douglass, critical in providing a “deeper shade to [slavery's] picture” (Douglass, “Lecture on Slavery” 167):

It is only when we contemplate the slave as a moral and intellectual being, that we can adequately comprehend the unparalleled enormity of slavery, and the intense criminality of the slaveholder. . . . The slave is a man, “the image of God,” but “a little lower than the angels;” possessing a soul, eternal, and indestructible. . . he is endowed with those mysterious powers by which man soars above the things of time and sense (Douglass, “Lecture on Slavery” 167)

Here, Douglass frames the fugitive's story in the language of an eternal order. For Douglass, the inability to apprehend the “criminality” of the enslaved condition lies in the mortal viewer's flawed perceptual apparatus—his or her failure to “adequately comprehend” the fugitive as a “moral and intellectual being” (167). If the viewer's perception were “adequate” to the task of seeing the slave's “soul [as] eternal, and indestructible,” he would see before him men and women “a little lower than the angels” (Douglass, “Lecture on Slavery” 167). The daguerreotype's uncanny ability to picture the invisible—its perceived status as the unerring “eye of God”—allowed Douglass to

craft a theory of visuality “adequate” to the task of representing “the unparalleled enormity of slavery” (*Poetic Melange* 156; Douglass, “Lecture on Slavery” 167). For Douglass, the daguerreotype’s power as a personal—and deeply intimate—technology of remembrance was integral to this project of making “adequate” viewers’ perceptions of former slaves as fully sentient beings “endowed...with mysterious powers” not merely in hindsight, but *during* the moment of their enslavement (“Lecture on Slavery” 167).

In the fictional world of *The Heroic Slave*, Douglass creates a fugitive whose greatness—and the inherent gaps and uncertainties wrought by that greatness—bridge relational distance, creating an intimate bond between the fugitive and his silent interlocutor. Listwell’s transformation is made possible not by the inherent uniqueness of Washington as a man, but in the peculiar circumstances under which Listwell encounters his life narrative. In contrast to the conventional slave narrative or the woodcut runaway, Douglass constructs a protagonist whose identity is expressed via a formal structure chosen by the fugitive himself. In this sense, this picture of slavery and the “great character” who endured it, are made possible by Washington’s soliloquies and Listwell’s silent attendance (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 175).

For Listwell, Washington’s combined words and image provide a form of perception that allows him to look not only beyond Washington’s current status, but also into Washington’s future. When Listwell observes Washington after the latter speaks his resolution to flee, Listwell notes that “a smile of satisfaction rippled upon his expressive countenance...[that] the future gleamed brightly before him, and his fetters lay broken at his feet” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 179). Here Listwell extends the daguerreotype’s power of perception so that instead of a representation of fixed time, Washington affords

an image of the future, a visual premonition of Washington's actions aboard the Creole. By bucking temporal boundaries, and foreshadowing events to come, Listwell extends the perceptual power of Washington's living daguerreotype. By first listening well, and then seeing rightly, Listwell sees Washington not as the "dead fact" of the woodcut runaway, but in the dynamic revelation of a living daguerreotype, a revelation made possible by Washington's introspective musings (Douglass, "Pictures and Progress" 462).

Indeed, Douglass hints at the danger of relying on Washington's image as the sole means by which to represent him. Five years after Washington's resolution to flee, he walks up to at a lone cabin in a forest of Ohio; this cabin belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Listwell. Listwell, sensing a presence outside of his cabin door, steps outside and sees Washington, but does not recognize him. Viewing the heroic slave via the inverted camera obscura of his well-lit cabin against the darkened backdrop of the night-time sky, Listwell initially misidentifies Washington as a generic and nameless wanderer. When Listwell describes Washington as "a tall man...with a stick in one hand and a small bundle in the other," he is calling to mind the runaway woodcut. This brief moment of misrecognition is broken when Washington speaks. Then, "the Virginia forest scene flash[es] upon [Listwell]," and he instantly recalls the living daguerreotype impressed upon his memory by his experience in the pine wood (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 185). As the "index" to Washington's inner life, the fugitive's voice "made such an impression upon [Listwell] as can never be erased" (185). This "impression" inspires Listwell to recognize the unknown traveler as a friend only after voice and image are combined. As Listwell says when the two men meet face-to-face outside of his cabin, "Oh sir, I know not your name, but I have seen your face, and heard your voice" (Douglass, *The Heroic*



*Slave* 185). In seeing and hearing Washington's frame and voice, Listwell calls up the mental image that had so struck him five years before, a mental image that he had cherished as a token of friendship and interpersonal connection.

Listwell's appellation of respect and recognition surprises Washington, who knows nothing of the friend he had made on the day of his own internal transformation from slave to free man. After Washington is alarmed by what seems at first an uncanny level of familiarity, Listwell reveals his identity as an unknown witness to the revolutionary events of Washington's pine wood soliloquy:

'Ever since that morning,' said Mr. Listwell, 'you have seldom been absent from my mind, and though now I did not dare to hope that I should ever see you again, I have often wished that such might be my fortune; for, from that hour, your face seemed to be daguerreotyped on my memory.'

(Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 188)

Here, Listwell describes the experience of seeing and hearing Washington's embodied free expression of his deepest thoughts and feelings as act of daguerreotyping. In doing so, Listwell taps into a popular discourse in which the word "daguerreotype" was used as a verb, one that meant "telling the literal truth of things" (Trachtenberg, "The Emergence of a Keyword" 17). In describing his memories of Washington's face "daguerreotyped on [his] memory" Listwell alludes explicitly to the faithfulness of his picture of who Washington was and what slavery meant. As a "daguerreotype" of the "mind," Listwell's remembrance of Washington once again closes the affective distance between the two men, allowing Listwell to see Douglass not in the faint outline of the runaway woodcut, but as a beloved friend.

The yoking of word and image not only reveals to Listwell Washington's interior life, but also yokes that life to his own. By using an unnamed third-person omniscient speaker, the text offers itself as the result of the combined and corroborating narratives of Madison Washington and Mr. Listwell. Indeed, *The Heroic Slave* is a single collaborative narrative, one that stresses the intertwined nature of the men's lives and life stories. For example, the novella's unnamed speaker frequently prefaces significant moments in the plot with statements like "he says," "as he said," or as "Mr. Listwell said," bringing attention to not only the constructed nature of narrative production, but also as the equity of each man's perspective in the narrative's first three sections. This narrative strategy—of combining as equal a Black man's non-narrative witnessing with a White man's narrative-based remembrance— inverts the respective roles of Black and White anti-slavery activists as Garrison and Collins preferred them. In reversing generic expectations, Douglass makes Washington a "philosopher" and Listwell a "recorder" of stories, constructing a more egalitarian slave narrative form, one in which anti-slavery activists' experiences and introspections are valued equally (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219; Ball ii).

In *The Heroic Slave*, the narratives of a Black man and a White man are entwined and impressed one upon the other, a negative and positive image that work together to reflect the fugitive narrator's interior life. This mirroring of identity is made explicit in the two men's final encounter. Listwell, while once again traveling through Virginia, runs into Washington after the fugitive has been captured, re-enslaved, and sold South. Here, Washington is for the first time featured in the company of fellow slaves. It is in this state that Listwell finds him. As the unnamed narrator relates, Listwell, "thoughtless

of the consequences ... ran up to his old friend, plac[ed] his hands upon his shoulders, and looked him in the face!” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 216). In this second moment of recognition, Washington’s face is now the index by which Listwell recalls his dynamic character. Much like the “eye of God” that “beheld” the “weeping pilgrim” in the novella’s first epigraph, Listwell is able to once again look upon Washington and *know all* (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 185). And yet in this moment, Listwell is not only the beholder, but also the beheld. Both Washington and Listwell are “speechless [as] they stood gazing at each other ...”; each man recognizes the other without the aid of his voice and, for a brief moment, each sees his own image mirrored in the face of another.

Despite the daguerreotype’s promise to spark interpersonal connection by representing the fugitive’s interior life, non-daguerreotyped images of fugitives still threatened to override African-Americans’ visual self-representation. Part IV of the novella is dedicated to a description of the revolt aboard *The Creole*, a scene that is related from the point of view of a White sailor, First Mate, Tom Grant. Grant, offers his perception of the events aboard the Creole to a gathering of fellow sailors in a coffee house in Richmond, Virginia. In this way, Douglass forges interpersonal distance between Washington and the white American interlocutors who are involved in this act of narrative production and reproduction.

Grant relates the events of the *Creole* revolt from his own perspective. Part of Grant’s narrative includes a moment in which, after seeing and hearing Washington he, like Listwell, deems the fugitive a “great character” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 235). However, the sailor’s reaction to Washington’s “greatness” leads him not to the clear revelation experienced by Listwell, but to an odd racial ambivalence. Grant describes

watching Washington and listening to his mournful tones, and is impressed by his face and form. “It seemed as if the souls of both the great dead (whose names he bore) had entered him” (235). In this direct comparison to George Washington and James Madison, Grant seems, at first, to reiterate the claims laid out in the novella’s preface. And yet, despite this recognition of Washington’s greatness as a man, Grant fails to recognize Washington as a citizen, a patriot, and his equal. Despite his regard for Washington, and his recognition of the fugitive as a “great character,” he finds it difficult to apply “the principles of 1776...to one whom [he] deemed [his] inferior” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 235). Here, Douglass makes explicit the novella’s political project—to frame the actions of the fugitive slave as the actions of a patriot.

In constructing Grant as a counterpoint to Listwell, Douglass places in relief the importance of the kind of interpersonal connection modeled in the rest of the novella. What Listwell witnessed in the pine wood forest cannot be reproduced in the racially charged atmosphere of *The Creole*. Caught up in a theatre of racialized performance, Washington and the *Creole*’s First Mate act out racialized roles that maintain the social distance between them. This social distance is amplified in the novella’s final scenes when Douglass Grant encounters the free Black soldiers ordered aboard *The Creole* to protect its “property.” Here, Grant demonstrates his continued unwillingness to see people of African descent as anything other than his “inferior[s]” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 238). The novella’s explicitly denigrating representation of the free Black soldiers who come aboard the ship to protect its “property” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 238) borrows from the racist tropes of the minstrel show. In keeping with his inability to view Washington as a man for whom “the principles of 1776” applied, Grant refers to the free

Black soldiers as “stupid blockheads [who] showed their *ivory* [and] rolled up their white eyes in horror” (Douglass, *The Heroic Slave* 238). In his description of the free Black soldiers’ droll smiles and bulging eyes, the white sailor replaces the fugitive’s woodcut stereotype with equally damaging images of free Black men as real-life Sambos and Zip Coons.

Douglass left no official record about whether or not he deemed his fictional experiment effective. His decision, however, to include a speech excerpt in the second installment of *Autographs for Freedom* instead of another work of fiction speaks to a career-long abandonment of biographical fiction as a genre. Although Douglass’s contribution to the second *Autographs* (Figure 1.8) lacks the innovative vision of the first, it extends its theme, and ruminates, at length, on the difficulty of communicating across racial divisions. An excerpt from his May 1853 speech, “The Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Negro People” (a speech given at the annual meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in New York City), Douglass’s second contribution to Griffiths gift book features a grim awareness of the limitations of his audience. In his effort to communicate freely with an audience sympathetic to the removal of freed bondsmen from the country, Washington repeats verbatim the words of his own heroic slave: “Even before I made part of this breathing world, the scourge was plaited for my back, and the fetters were forged for my limbs” (P. Foner 252). In the rest of the speech Douglass notes slavery’s most crushing effects as effects that he “would never be able fully to tell,” thoughts and feelings that ultimately lacked a medium through which they could be communicated. In his heartfelt request to “Give me leave, then in my own language to speak freely all that can be uttered of the thoughts of my

heart” (P. Foner 252), Douglass reiterates both the need for an idealized form of seeing and knowing, while questioning the limits and possibilities of former slaves’ photographic representation.

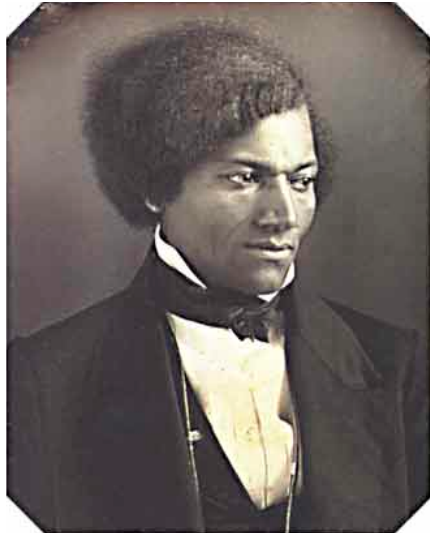


Figure 1- 1. Frederick Douglass .  
Daguerreotype 1848. (Possibly taken by  
Edward White, NY, NY). Albert Cook  
Meyers Collection, Chester County  
Historical Society.  
[www.explorepahistory.com](http://www.explorepahistory.com)



Figure 1- 2. Frederick Douglass. 1850.  
copy of a circa 1847 daguerreotype.  
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian  
Institution. NPG.80.21.

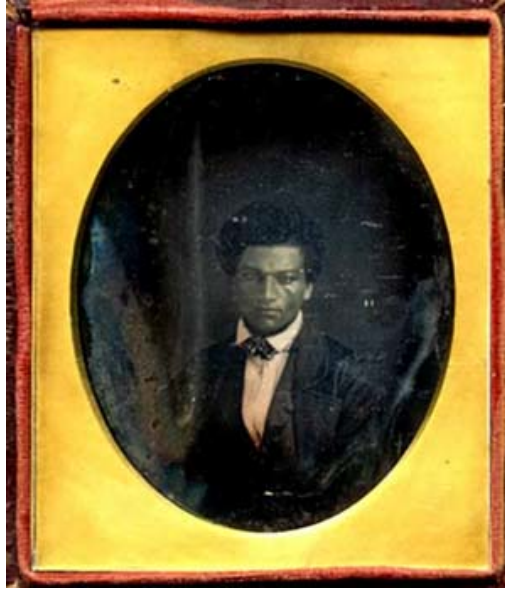


Figure 1-3. Frederick Douglass.  
Photographer Unknown. Daguerreotype.  
1845. Collection of Greg French.  
Gregory Fried, "True Pictures," *Common-Place*.



Figure 1-4. Frederick Douglass.  
Photographer Unknown. 1850. Frederick  
Douglass Collection. Howard University  
Museum. [www.howard.edu/library](http://www.howard.edu/library)





Figure 1-5. Photographer Unknown. Disassembled Daguerreotype and Case. ca. 1859. Prints and Photographs Division. Library Company of Philadelphia. [www.librarycompany.org/catchingashadow/section1/index.htm](http://www.librarycompany.org/catchingashadow/section1/index.htm).



Figure 1-6. Frederick Douglass.  
Woodcut Engraving. 1845.  
*Narrative of the Life of Frederick  
Douglass.* [www.utc.iath.virginia.edu](http://www.utc.iath.virginia.edu).

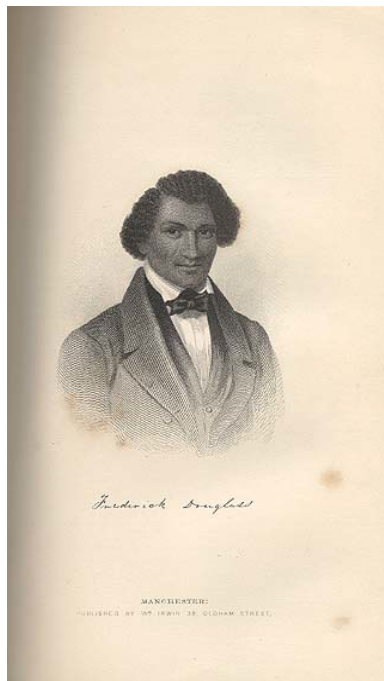


Figure 1-7. Frederick Douglass,  
Woodcut Engraving. 1848. *A  
Tribute to the Negro.* Wilson  
Armistead. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).

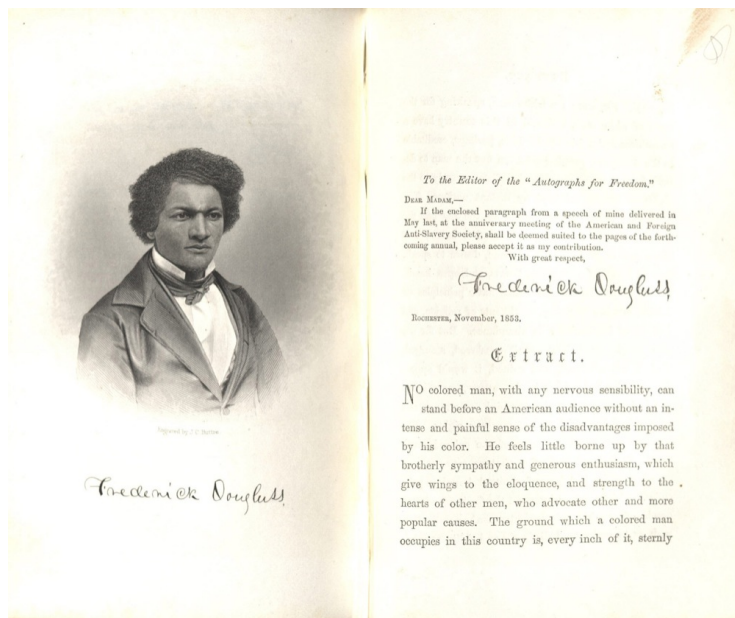


Figure 1-8. Frederick Douglass, Engraving, 1853. *Autographs for Freedom*. Marriott Library, The University of Utah. [www.lib.utah.edu/collections/rarebooks/exhibits/past/publicsentiment.php](http://www.lib.utah.edu/collections/rarebooks/exhibits/past/publicsentiment.php).

## Chapter Two

### Fictions of Progress: Visual Slave Narratives of the Civil War

With a sudden wrench [Robert] tore the shirt from neck to waist, and on his strong brown shoulders showed me furrows deeply ploughed, wounds which, though healed, were ghastlier to me than any in that house....  
—Louisa May Alcott, “Two Brothers” or “The Contraband”

Between 1861 and 1865, Douglass delivered at least three different lectures on the democratic possibilities of photographic representation. In “Pictures and Progress,” he notes that even “the smallest town now has its Daguerrian Gallery,” and that all including the humble “farmer boy gets an iron shoe for his horse, and a metallic picture for himself” (Douglass, “Pictures and Progress” 454). The “metallic picture” of which Douglass speaks is a photographic technology called the tintype, a cheap and popular descendent of the daguerreotype. The tintype, together with the 1859 advent of paper print photographic technologies like the *carte de visite*—a reproducible card photograph comprised of paper—re-defined the visual culture of the nation.

As a result of photographic technologies like the tintype and the *carte de visite*, the Civil war era is marked by an unprecedented growth in both the number and types of photographic portraits taken of formerly enslaved African-Americans (Willis 18). This rise in production was made possible by both the advent of mechanical reproduction in 1860 and the new mobility enjoyed by men, women, and children fleeing their plantations during the four years of the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> In these camps, thousands of sitters posed to have their pictures taken. The result is a rich and vast archive of African-

American portrait photographs that suggest how African-Americans looked to the photograph as a powerful mode of self-fashioning (Brown 68; Willis 1). As Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer demonstrate in their groundbreaking 2013 study *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery*, the photographs that African-Americans had taken of themselves during the Civil War era created an alternative visual archive, one that widened the possibilities for Frederick Douglass's democratic vision for the medium (Douglass, "Pictures and Progress" 454). For formerly enslaved African-Americans especially, photography offered an opportunity to broach a visual argument that challenged stereotypical images of the fugitive narrator as helpless, hopeless, and in need of saving.

And yet there is at least one collection of images in the Civil War photographic archive that works against the affirmative vision outlined by Willis and Krauthamer. My reading of the most popular photographs produced during the Civil War era reveals this darker history. By tracing the ways in which mass-produced paper prints transformed how photographs of former slaves were produced, reproduced, and circulated, I identify the advent of mechanical reproduction as a defining moment in the continual devolution of photography's democratic promise. In particular, I focus on the emerging format of the carte de visite, and the war-era invention of the before and after photograph. Circulated as exchangeable card photographs, re-drawn for publication in illustrated newspapers like *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's*, and the inspiration for at least one work of short fiction, the before and after photograph engendered a new narrative form—the before and after narrative. Although Douglass pinpoints photography at large as a site of democratic possibility, my reading of the Civil War's visual archive reads the

photographic image—specifically the mechanically reproduced photographic image—not as a site of democratic possibility, but of systematic disavowal. By taking into consideration the very specific qualities of the mechanically reproducible *carte de visite*, I lay bare the ways in which the before and after photograph—and the new narrative forms that it engendered—pictured formerly enslaved African-Americans as non-agents in their own collective emancipation.

The direct result of Lincoln’s January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, the photographically mediated before and after narrative quickly became a popular means by which White Northern cultural producers framed the social, cultural, and political meanings of emancipation. Formally, the genre consists of two or more photographs or photographically inspired drawings that were more often than not annotated with typed or hand-written captions. In this way, the written word borrowed from the evidentiary authority of the photograph so as to produce a new kind of slave narrative, one capable not only of telling slavery’s story to the eye, but also capable of doing so without the aid of the speaking Black narrator. In other words, the before and after narrative, comprised of White writers’ written “philosoph[ies]” and the visual “facts” of injured Black bodies, effaced the narrative authority of formerly enslaved African-American narrators, and supplanted the former slave’s written and spoken testimony with a picture.

My chapter challenges recent scholarship about the relatively affirmative place of the before and after narrative in war-era representations of African-American futures. In her study of the before and after narratives of formerly enslaved African-American children, Mary Niall Mitchell argues that the photographs of former slaves produced and circulated after the Emancipation Proclamation heralded a new way of imagining

African-American futures (4). I challenge Mitchell's reading by marking how the generic conventions of the before and after narrative work against more affirmative visions of African-American emancipation. By reading the historical and cultural context in which the before and after narratives of Black children and Black soldiers were produced, circulated, and read, I highlight the complicated ways in which Northern racism and the mechanically reproducible carte de visite worked together to produce a much more ambivalent vision of African-American futures.

A key part of my chapter includes the analysis of several before and after narratives that feature the stories of formerly enslaved Union soldiers. In his recent work, "Framing the Black Soldier: Image, Uplift, and the Duplicity of Pictures," Maurice Wallace argues that the Black soldier's photographed portrait offered "the possibility of a spectacular new grammar and social logic," a novel way of seeing and reading the lives of African-American men (Wallace 247). However, this "possibility" of a new way of seeing was undermined by what Wallace refers to as "the political utility" to which it was put, a "utility" that ultimately excluded the Black soldier from what historian David Blight, borrowing from Nina Silber's 1993 study, called "the romance of reunion" (Blight 4).<sup>22</sup> Key to this romance was the sentimental notion that the North and South were "both right and both wrong," a notion that followed soon after the war and had as its key legacy the wholesale disavowal of African-Americans' actions during the war. By analyzing the formal conventions by which formerly enslaved African-Americans' before and after narratives were constructed, I demonstrate how the mass reproduction of former slaves' photographed images inspired troubling comparisons between their lived experiences and the imagined lives of characters in Northern works of fiction. These

comparisons flattened each sitters' unique and dynamic narrative voice, and ultimately undermined the role of African-Americans in the post-bellum mythos of reunion.

In the pages that follow, I begin my reading of the before and after narrative with a short overview of what Willis and Krauthamer refer to as the “landscape” of African-American Civil War photography (60). By doing so, I highlight the ways in which mechanically reproducible cartes de visite were a fundamentally more public form of self-representation than other photographic formats in use during the war. Towards those ends, the chapter begins with a critical overview of the African-American Civil war archive. I then provide an extended reading of the circulation and reproduction practices surrounding a particularly powerful set of images of a man named Gordon, a former slave and Union soldier, to demonstrate how the carte de visite of Gordon's wounded back (his clothes stripped to the waist and his scarred back laid bare) stood in for the testimony of millions. This complex narrative substitution ultimately diminished the possibility that Black Union soldiers could be read by White Northerners as future patriots and citizens. My chapter ends with a reading of how in “My Contraband; or Two Brothers,” a popular war-era short story by Louisa May Alcott, the trope of Gordon's wounded back enacts a cavernous social distance between a formerly enslaved African-American and a White Northern Unionist.

### A Revolution in Pictures

The beginning of the U.S. Civil War ran parallel to the rise of one of the most influential visual technologies of the century—the mechanically reproducible photograph (Brown 68). As photo historian Joshua Brown argues, “Few moments in history have witnessed as rapid and surprising a change in the way a people have been visually



depicted as the four years that spanned the American Civil War” (Brown 68). The most widely used mechanically reproducible format—the *carte de visite*—was a key visual feature in the popular culture of the war-era North (Willis 61; Fahs 19). The *carte de visite*, or card photograph, differed from earlier technologies in that it was a mechanically reproduced paper print pasted onto a piece of cardboard (Darrah 4). With none of the protective glass coverings or framing typical of earlier technologies like the daguerreotype and ambrotype, the *carte de visite* could be slipped into a pocket, stored in a family photo album, or mailed across the country with ease (Darrah 4).

Via the use of word-based annotations, *cartes de visite* offered Northern viewers a new way of engaging with the photographed image, one that allowed average Americans a satisfying means by which to record history. The *carte de visite*’s very materiality, together with its standardized size and format and low cost of production, afforded viewers an unprecedented amount of control over how photographed images were annotated and interpreted (Darrah 4). The new technology’s paper surface—together with the blank space on the bottom of the card and on its back—invited viewers to annotate photographed sitters’ life stories with their own typed or written commentaries (Figure 2-1 and Figure 2-2). This ability to write onto the photographed image itself was a key formal feature of the new medium one that allowed the viewer to contribute his or her own individual version of a photographed sitter’s biography. For example, in the *carte de visite* portrait of two young White men with guns and the young Black woman seated between them, the use of written annotation serves both to frame and authenticate the image (Figure 2-1 and Figure 2-2). Taken in 1862 by African-American photographer, J.P. Ball, the annotations on the back of the *carte de visite* identify the two

men in the photograph as Sergeant Jesse L. Berch and Frank M. Rockwell, respectively. The hand-written caption on the back of the card identifies the men as Union soldiers (Figure 2-2). This context explains why the men so proudly display their handguns, and re-frames the significance of their physical positioning in relation to the unnamed young woman of color. As protectors of young womanhood, Berch and Rockwell's place in the historical record is clarified by the use of written annotation, while that of the young woman is forever clouded in mystery, her actions in support of her own emancipation left unrecorded.

As a paper print, the *carte de visite* not only invited new narrative forms and modes of audience interaction in domestic spaces, but also afforded sitters and viewers new modes of engagement across distance. Since the *carte de visite* itself was physically easier to produce, copy, and share, it could be transported through the newly minted United States Postal Service with greater ease than bulkier glass encased daguerreotypes and ambrotypes (Darrah 4) (See Figure 2-3 for an example of an ambrotype). Moreover, *cartes de visite* were often re-printed as drawings in popular illustrated newspapers like *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's*. In this way, *cartes de visite*, and the print based drawings that they inspired, were capable of a new kind of photographic reproduction that made it possible for many hundreds of thousands of Union readers and viewers to share a common visual culture (Fahs 7). This common visual culture made it possible for the Union North to see the war as it unfolded, and to do so as a community.

As contemporary writer and critic Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, the *carte de visite* was so widely distributed and so commonly circulated that it soon became the nation's "social currency...[the] green backs of civilization" ("Doings of the Sunbeam"

255). As a type of “currency” comparable to the first paper money or “greenbacks” issued by the U.S. treasury in 1862, the carte de visite strengthened the Union North’s cultural economy by revitalizing patriotic feeling, and helping war-weary Northerners make collective sense of both the war and emancipation. Photographs, drawings, and stories of and about formerly enslaved African-Americans soon became a part of this new cultural economy. Northern readers’ interest in formerly enslaved African-Americans—about what slavery was and what freedom might mean—created a market for stories and photographic pictures of those who had freed themselves from bondage.

From the beginning of the war until long after its end, these formerly enslaved African-American men, women, and children were often referred to in Northern popular culture as “contraband,” an all-encompassing term that defined the former slave as a material object whose confiscation was a key part of winning the war. As Civil War historian Kate Masur notes, images and stories about self-emancipated slaves (or contraband) became the backdrop against which the case for both emancipation and the possibility of citizenship was made (Masur 1052). Some images of contraband—especially non-photographic ones like those featured in cartoons and drawings—were derisive or even hostile in their treatment. For example, in an early photograph representing those men, women, and children known as contraband, an African-American toddler is personified as “Young Africa, ‘Or the Bone of Contention’” (Library Company of Philadelphia). In this image, the personified “Africa” is represented as culpable for the war between the states. That the culpable party is also represented as a child pinpoints the myriad ways in which the contraband figure was imagined as lacking agency, a burden on the nation.

Other images of contraband, however, mirrored the patriotic self-representation with which so many formerly enslaved African-Americans chose to represent themselves. These images were often produced for circulation in private spaces for personal remembrance. For example, photographs like the one featured in Figure 2-3 were most likely produced as an object of sentiment. In this 1863 ambrotype an unidentified soldier poses with a well-dressed woman and two equally well-dressed young girls (Figure 2-3). As an object of memory, this photograph of an intact and affluent African-American family provides the type of photographic self-representation that spoke to a hope and a future for African-Americans in the post-Emancipation era. Images like this one, produced with the older single print technology of the ambrotype, were not often reproduced at same rate as mechanically reproducible cartes de visite. Intended for private display in intimate spaces— a soldier’s pocket, a family’s album, a wife’s parlor table—single print technologies like this were significant in the self-fashioning of African-American selfhood within the context of African-American families and communities.<sup>23</sup> However, a few notable exceptions notwithstanding, single print photographic technologies like the daguerreotype, ambrotype, and tintype were not circulated in public spaces during the nineteenth-century, and were not a part of the visual and popular culture of the Civil war era. Indeed, these single print, privately circulated photographs have only recently become a part of U.S. public discourse with the advent of digital archives—long after anyone who knew the sitter personally was left alive to mourn the loss of the beloved (Batchen 8).<sup>24</sup>

And yet, these privately circulated images of former slaves speak strongly of their efforts at communicating their newfound agency in visual representations of themselves.

In a particularly remarkable ambrotype, a young washerwoman sports a small U.S. flag and U.S. metal brooch on her bodice, visual symbols of her political loyalties. The ambrotype's elegant beauty is amplified by both the velvet and metal case in which it is housed and the detailed and delicate coloring of the flag, aesthetic details that would have made the photograph more expensive to purchase and more precious to its owner (Figure 2-11). A carefully arranged balance of red, white, and blue, the young woman's small flag makes an important statement about the seriousness with which she embraced the possibility of democracy.

Although some of these dignified images of former slaves were produced as cartes de visite, they were also distributed in private circles of the sitters friends, family, and associates. For example, the soldiers in Figures 2-6 and 2-7 offer instances of affirmative and dynamic self-representations in the carte de visite format. In Figure 2-10, for example, a young man poses for a full-length portrait. He holds in one hand a cane, while positioning the other hand within the fold of his weathered jacket. He wears on top of his head a worn kepi. Staring off into the distance, the young man assumes the proud stance of a man with a future in view. The young man's kepi and dignified bearing speak to both his desire to fashion himself visually and a pronounced affinity with the Union North. Images like these—given their relatively limited circulation in the public spaces of Northern visual and print culture—afford a view of formerly enslaved African-Americans very different from the views afforded by the most popular photographic prints. This ability to connect one's self-portrait with the visual markers of the U.S. patriot was, indeed, a common trope in many of the photographs taken after the Emancipation Proclamation (See Figures 2-4, 2-5, 2-9, 2-14).

As the war progressed images of “contraband” were produced, re-produced, and circulated widely by White Northern cultural producers. These mass-produced images were intended for entertainment, education, and the raising of funds for recently emancipated African-Americans. In these photographs, children and adults dramatize their recently enslaved status with poses and props that play on the phenotypical differences between the sitters. Most of the images in the series were fairly sympathetic, and pictured formerly enslaved sitters in a positive, and even patriotic light. For example, in Figures 2-14, Rosa, Charley, and Rebecca—the “white slaves of New Orleans”—share an intimate physical connection with one of the nation’s most prescient symbols, the young freed men and women are pictured as redeemed from Southern horrors and are “protect[ed]” by the flag and all that it represents.<sup>25</sup> In emphasizing the childrens’ need for “protection,” images like the one in Figure 2-14 reduce the former slaves’ agentic position to that of the supplicant.

Indeed, the frequency with which former slaves were imagined in a patriotic light did little to diminish the underlying ambivalence with which White Northerners viewed African-Americans’ ability to affect and make use of emancipation. As Civil War historians Eric Foner and James McPherson have noted, the emancipation of four million enslaved African-Americans was never a guaranteed outcome of the war. Indeed, Lincoln and his administration enacted the Emancipation Proclamation out of military expedience and the road to emancipation was an uncertain one up until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865. Lincoln himself illustrated the extent of the nation’s doubt with his desires for mass colonization of emancipated Blacks, and the continued efforts for gradual emancipation mere weeks before the Emancipation

Proclamation was to be enacted (E. Foner 234; J. Smith 16). This ambivalence is strikingly illustrated in the diverse photographic portraits of so-called contraband.

The successor of the contraband photograph was the before and after photograph, a photographic genre that represented the former slave before and after the moment of emancipation. Before and after photographs of formerly emancipated African-American children often made claims about the relative passivity of the former slave in the nation's war-time drama. Paired photographs like the ones in Figures 2-20 and 2-21, for example, quickly became a way in which to picture the meanings of slavery and freedom for recently emancipated African-Americans. In the narrative "Before Emancipation/After Emancipation," for example, the handwritten annotations of the young boy's photographs enact a visual joke that imagines the youngster as a bystander in both the war and the story of war-time emancipation (Figure 2-20 and 2-21). While the boy's downcast expression in the "Before Emancipation" photograph alludes to the sorrows of bondage, his melodramatic frown locates the terrors of slavery in one youngster's slim frame. In representing the "before" of enslavement as a child's sullen pout, the "Before Emancipation" photograph ignores the individual and collective trauma of over two hundred and forty years of chattel slavery. Similarly, the same young sitter in "After Emancipation" offers a smile so bright, and so wide, as to shed doubt on his sanity, let alone his sincerity. In its allusion to the well-known iconography of the mid-nineteenth century minstrel show, the sitter's ebullient smile, as illustrated by the photographs' hand-written captions, offers a wink to white Northern viewers well versed in the minstrel-like characterizations of formerly slaved African-Americans. In this way, the

before and after narrative of the unnamed young freedman raises questions about the ability of former slaves to take on the role of full citizens.

As Robert Toll argues in *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America*, “every part of the minstrel show—its features, its form, and content—was hammered out in the interaction between performers and the vocal audiences they sought only to please” (25). The carte’s hand-written title can be read as the sitters’ over-the-top pose, a textual mirroring and amplification of the visual joke of the young sitter’s facial expressions. In the back and forth between the semantic meanings of the juxtaposed photographs and the written captions that accompany them, the reader is meant to experience pleasure from the specious assumption that formerly enslaved African-Americans sat back and did nothing while White Union soldiers died for their freedom.

The baleful humor of “Before Emancipation and After Emancipation” notwithstanding, most before and after narratives portray former slaves with a great deal of solemnity and sympathy. And yet, in spite of their more measured and sympathetic tone, before and after narratives like the one in the 1864 cartes de visite, “As We Found Them” and “As They Are Now,” also frame the newly emancipated sitters as non-actors in their own emancipation and ambiguous figures in the future of the nation (Figures 2-22 and 2-23). In “As We Found Them” and “As They Are Now,” two children, a brother and sister are “found” in Mathews County, Virginia and although emancipated from enslavement, they are also separated from their mother. The identity of the title’s “we” is uncertain. Whether the “we” is the collective voice of the U.S. military apparatus, or the motley voice of the nation at large, the unidentified “we” of the caption’s narrative and the proprietary language of the verb “found” figure the children as lost or misplaced,



“redeemed” by an unidentified “[us]” (Eastman House). Moreover, the proprietary language used to describe the children echoes the language used to describe war-era contraband, Black Southerners whose fugitive status led to the confiscation of their labor by the Union army.

The caption on the bottom of “As We Found Them/As They Are Now” offers an overview of the children’s lives in slavery, and it expounds on the proprietary language of confiscation and possession. Although framed as an act of charity, the children’s rescue from their owners’ plantation raises difficult questions about the limits of Lincoln’s Proclamation (Eastman House):

These children were owned by Thomas White of Mathews Co., Va, until Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, when Capt. Riley, 6<sup>th</sup> U.S.C.I. took them and gave them to the Society of Friends to educate at the Orphan’s Shelter, Philadelphia.

Profits from sale, for the benefit of the children. (Eastman House)

The photograph’s caption continues this comparison of the children with confiscated property. The narrative’s primary actor, Captain Riley of the U.S.C.I., is described as having “[taken]” the children from their “owner,” so as to “[give] them” to a Northern orphanage. The use of words like “took” and “gave” echoes the proprietary language of enslavement.

The narrative’s politics of “taking” and “giving” is complicated by the figure of the children’s living (yet absent) mother. The second photograph, “As They Are Now,” leads with a rhetoric of redemption and a detailed description of the slave mother’s martyrdom (Eastman House):<sup>26</sup>

The mother of these children was beaten, branded, and sold at auction because she was kind to Union Soldiers. As she left for Richmond, Va., Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1864 bound down in a cart, she prayed “O! God send the Yankees to take my children away.”

Profits from sale, for the benefits of the children. (Eastman House)

The children’s mother, “beaten, branded, and sold at auction” suffers the physical wounds of enslavement as a result of her “kind[ness] to Union soldiers” (Eastman House). The mother’s “kindness” to Union soldiers while an enslaved person in the Southern Confederacy speaks to her willingness to act on behalf of occupying Union forces. And yet, despite her subversive aid to Union soldiers, the grieving slave mother is instead framed as a martyr whose final wish was that “the Yankees take [her] children away” (Eastman House). The mother’s dramatic final words raise difficult questions about the specifics of why the children were “taken” out of slavery, what actions the mother took on behalf of Union forces, and the sequence of event that led her owner to sell her “at auction” (Eastman House). Despite the January 1<sup>st</sup> Proclamation, the mother was nevertheless subject to the vagaries of the slave economy. Her fate—and its consequences for her children—highlights the extent to which Black agency during the war (much like the agency of White civilians in both the North and South) was enacted under complicated and, very often tragic circumstances. The narrative text of “As They Are Now,” while re-imagining the Northern military apparatus as a parental surrogate, widens the physical and relational distance of an enslaved mother and her children.

Indeed, the language of the “As We Found Them”/“As They Are Now” narrative isolates both the children and their mother from the larger imagined community of the

nation. Without the markers of identity and individuality so often used in Civil war-era portrait photographs—a book, a photograph of a distant loved one, a flag, a gun, a uniform, or patriotic backdrop—and with the text’s depiction of the children as hopelessly and forever passive, the “As We Found Them” and “As They are Now” narrative marginalize the mother’s agency and obfuscates the children’s own reactions to being “found,” then “given” (Eastman House). Whether or not they were scared or happy or ambivalent about being “taken” from their plantation and “given” to Northern charity is not addressed by the photographs’ captions. However, one element of “As We Found Them” confounds the narrative’s fiction of discovery and offers perhaps a glimpse of the children’s roles as actors in their own narratives. In her hand, at her side, the young girl holds an object that appears to be a camera. The young girl’s camera disrupts the image’s fictive framing, and illuminates the tragedy of the photographic scene, a scene in which two small children—former slaves, refugees, and motherless—are asked in the middle of their abrupt uprooting to stand still and pose for a picture. The girl’s possession of a camera, and not props typical for a little girl posing for a photograph (a book, a flag, a doll, or even another photograph) speaks to the existence of a narrative outside of the camera’s frame, a series of events that led to her possession of the camera. Whether or not the girl was given the camera to encourage her to reign in her tears, or to stand still and straight, the camera’s presence in the photograph emphasizes her individuality. The complex and/or agentic narrative that could have been is, therefore—much like Charles Ball’s “thoughts and feelings in his 1837 narrative—excised from the photographs’ visual narrative (Ball xi).

Key to reading the import of narratives like “Before the Emancipation” and “As We Found Them” is acknowledging that many nineteenth-century viewers envisioned the photograph as a mirror of reality, a visual means by which to represent “a sense of ‘history’ happening here and now” (Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 81). Nonetheless, the photograph’s claims as a visual means by which to, as Holmes terms it, sort out “lie[s]” from truth, lent the before and after narrative’s constructed meanings—e.g. the juxtaposition of artificially contrasting images; the addition of a framing caption or narrative; the often scripted mien and posture of the sitter; the signifying work of worn or tattered clothing—an air of authenticity. The presumed authenticity of these visual narratives often elided the actual testimonies of former slaves. Indeed, once former slaves’ emancipation stories were left to the representational authority of the photograph, those testimonies were ultimately left in the hands of the reader.

For Douglass, the photograph offered a potentially objective means by which Americans of all colors, classes, and castes might represent themselves as equal members of American civic society. And yet, by assuming that photographs could offer a disinterested and factual narrative, a narrative inviolate from the varied interpretations of its viewers, nineteenth-century cultural producers created a narrative form that had more in common with fiction making than it did with fact collection. In this way before and after photographs of formerly enslaved Union soldiers, like those of formerly enslaved children, led to skewed narratives about former slaves’ lives in slavery and freedom. In Figures 2-24 and 2-25, for example, a young drummer boy is pictured without accompanying captions or text. Here, the lack of written text allows for a representation of the young freedman in a way that approaches Douglass’s democratic vision (Douglass,

“Pictures and Progress” ; Wexler 20). The before and after photographs taken of Drummer Jackson offer a seemingly straightforward presentation of his progress from slave to soldier, and the photographs’ lack of narrative captions, promises the possibility of an affirmative visual narrative of the emancipated slave. And yet, the effectiveness of this more affirmative narrative depends on the reader’s ability to read Private Jackson’s story outside of the symbolic meanings embodied by popular images of contraband as well as the limiting simplicity of the before and after narrative genre.

The deleterious effects of contraband imagery as an organizing device in the construction of before and after narratives are instructively illustrated in the widely distributed narratives of Private Hubbard Pryor (Figures 2-16 and Figure 2-17). Hubbard’s “before” photograph features the former slave and Union soldier sitting on a small stool with a weathered cabin in the background. Pants torn and hat tattered, Pryor is read as a man enslaved—and not just a poor farmer or a down-and-out laborer—because of the signifying work of his blackness, and the contrasting “after” of his Union uniform. The cartes de visite of Pryor “before and after his enlistment” feature not a kneeling slave, but a sitting one, not a soldier slaughtered on the battlefield, but a living soldier, at peak physical condition and armed with a rifle. Left to their own devices, such images, even without the signifying work done by flags and other patriotic paraphernalia, might suggest to some viewers a potential threat in the image of the reformed Pryor.

This threat was neutralized, however, by the addition of written words to Pryor’s visual narrative. For example, in a July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864 *Harper’s Weekly* article entitled “The Escaped Slave and the Union Soldier,” *Harper’s Weekly* illustrators adopt Pryor’s cartes de visite as material for an article on former slaves in the Union army (*Harper’s Weekly*

422). Although the *Harper's Weekly* writer works to identify Pryor as a soldier and patriot, he does so within a vocabulary of passivity and helplessness (*Harper's Weekly* 422). Twice the writer notes the “poor fugitive’s” willingness to “figh[t] for the nation” (*Harper's Weekly* 422). Here the description of Hubbard as a “poor fugitive” echoes the visual language of the woodcut stereotype, and Hubbard the man is re-imagined as the woodcut runaway, wandering and aimless, and unaware of the reasons for his flight (Figure E). This representation of Pryor as a passive recipient of Northern largesse is amplified by the article’s emphasis on protection. For the *Harper's* writer, the freedman’s war-time service is a guarantee of Union “protect[ion]” (422). The use of the word “protections” emphasizes Pryor’s dependence on others in ways that elide what he offers the nation. In a context in which former slaves like Pryor had successfully pursued their own emancipation, the *Harper's* writer imagines armed Black soldiers equal in their dependence and as in need of “protection” as small children wrapped in Columbia’s flag (422). As a result, the escaped slave turned soldier is pictured as a passive participant in his own emancipation.

The theme of Black male dependence was paradoxically placed alongside representations of Black male courage. A key characteristic of the before and after narrative’s representations of formerly enslaved men’s post-war futures, the paradox of the submissive contraband turned effective soldier neutralized the threat of Black men with guns while assuring readers of the former slave’s willingness to “fight” and die for the Union. As if in anticipation of his readers’ skepticism, the *Harper's* writer frames his article with a series of rhetorical questions (*Harper's Weekly* 422). The writer asks “Are these not affecting pictures which are here presented to us?,” suggesting that the

“affect[ive]” quality of the images held iconic sway despite their formal identity as portrait photographs. Here the article’s writer appeals to the affective, intimate space afforded the photograph. By exploiting the photograph’s cultural identity as an object of sentiment, and reminding readers of the “pictures...presented to [them],” the writer calls upon the “pictures” themselves as a mode of suasion, a visual argument of Pryor’s willingness to serve.

However, this emphasis on Pryor’s zeal to serve is yoked with a morbid premonition of his demise. The writer first equates the “escaped slave’s” willingness to “fight” with his acceptance of a martyr’s death in an allusion to a massacre. In another multi-clause question, the writer asks:

Can we not at length have faith in that heroism which has been so gloriously illustrated at Wagner and Olustee and Petersburg, and which, in the face of the Fort Pillow massacre, yet offers itself afresh in the person of a poor fugitive, who, from the heart of the enemy’s country, gives himself, at the risk of death or of torture worse than death, to a cause simply because it is inevitably associated with the problem of his freedom?” (422)

In articulating Pryor’s “freedom” as a “problem,” the *Harper’s* writer precludes the possibility of Black men as full-fledged citizen-soldiers. In spite of the “after” photograph’s claims of Pryor’s future heroism, the articulation of the former slave’s emancipation and new role as soldier is read through the discourse of patriotic martyrdom instead of a discourse of citizenship and civil rights. Indeed, in alluding to “a fate more horrible than death” and “the risk of death or of torture worse than death,” the writer

twice marks the real dangers inherent in the escaped slave's military service given the South's frequent refusal to treat Black soldiers as POWS, promising instead to enslave them or shoot them on sight. In his anticipation of the seeming inevitability of Pryor's death, the writer foreshadows Pryor's future as that of the Fort Pillow martyrs who died "for the nation" instead of as a citizen soldier and veteran whose war-time efforts argue for his fitness for full citizenship (422). In this way, Pryor is imagined as a martyr and not a citizen in the imagined reunion of the nation, a man whose imagined death, and not his actions, contributed to the Union war effort.

In the preceding pages, I have suggested that the advent of the before and after narrative as a popular generic form subverted former slaves' free expression of their life narratives. In the pages that follow, I will demonstrate how the negative effects of the before and after narrative form negated former slaves' claims to civic belonging. This phenomenon is nowhere as clear as it is in the suite of photographs taken of a man named Gordon, a self-emancipated slave and Union soldier (Figure 2-26). Despite his tattered hat and torn trousers, Gordon exudes an air of poise, self-possession, and style (note the wry tilt of his tattered hat, the starched bright white of his Banting collar). His casually crossed legs and frank gaze contrast sharply with the chained limbs and vapid stare so common in visual representations of the fugitive (Wood 93) (See Figures A, B, and E). Taken in a Union occupied camp by travelling photographers McPherson and Oliver, Gordon's before and after portraits illustrate what seems to be the fulfillment of photography's democratic promise (Figure 2-26 and Figure 2-27).<sup>27</sup> Captured in March of 1863, this photograph was taken following Gordon's eighty-mile trek through the swamplands of Mississippi and Louisiana. At the end of his journey Gordon had



emancipated himself from slavery and once free, made the decision that so many thousands of former slaves also made in the early months of 1863—to fight for the end of slavery as a soldier in the U.S. army (Goodyear).<sup>28</sup> And yet, it is neither Gordon’s portrait of triumphant calm, nor another portrait of the newly instated Private Gordon in Union blue that captivated the visual imagination of Northern viewers (Figure 2-27). Instead, two other images of Gordon—photographs taken during Gordon’s army medical examination, and commonly referred to as “The Scourged Back”—came to have an iconic status in the visual culture of the Union North (Figure 2-28 and Figure 2-29). For the remainder of this chapter, I tell the story of how popular mass-produced photographs like “The Scourged Back” spurred a new genre of anti-slavery writing, a genre that, during the years of the U.S. Civil War, replaced the former slave’s narrative testimony with a photographic picture.

This romantic image of a mortally wounded or martyred Black soldier was central to the production and circulation of one of the most reproduced images of the war. Private Gordon, a fugitive from Mississippi, and a private in the Union army sat for at least four pictures during the war, two of which have forever changed how we imagine both slavery and emancipation (Goodyear). In March of 1863, itinerant photographers, McPherson and Oliver captured Gordon’s likeness in at least four different shots: 1) Sitting for a full frontal shot with legs crossed 2) Sitting with back towards the camera and one hand on his hip 3) Sitting, with a partially shaved head, and back turned towards the camera with one hand on his hip 4) Standing in a full frontal shot and wearing a fully-outfitted Union uniform. The photographs of Gordon’s scarred back, however, eclipsed that of nearly every other photograph of Black men mass-produced and circulated during

the Civil War.<sup>29</sup> It is this image that came to represent the meanings of the war and of emancipation for the nation.

Gordon's story—or rather, the story of what soon came to be known as “The Scourged Back”—was reprinted in at least four newspapers, and was widely circulated in *carte de visite* form. Although the original photographs were taken by McPherson and Oliver, the photographs of Gordon's back—as a result of the *carte de visite*'s unique properties—were reproduced by a number of different manufacturers (including that of the world famous brand, Mathew Brady of New York), and as a result was printed with a number of different framing stories. The single image of Gordon's scarred back, then, spurred a number of different narratives, all of which were intended to illustrate the meaning of his portrait, and privilege his photograph as a means by which to picture slavery and dramatize the need for abolition.

A key consequence of this privileging of Gordon's photograph as testimony of his experience led to a relative infrequency in the circulation of Gordon's more affirmative photographic portraits as well as his own spoken testimony (See Figure 2-28 and Figure 2-29). Indeed, the only testimony identified as being given in “his own words” is comprised of a few paragraphs on only one edition of the variously annotated versions of “The Scourged Back.” This particular version includes the photograph of Gordon's back on the front, and a typed narrative pasted onto the verso. The writer—presumably a white Northern amanuensis—described the testimony as “the very words of poor PETER [who is in every other context referred to as Gordon], taken as he sat for his picture” (U.S. National Archives). Gordon's spoken testimony resists the teleology of the before

and after narrative, and offers a sense of the extent to which slavery's picture might never be seen through the "clear glass" of abolitionist desire:

Ten days from today I left the plantation. Overseer ARTAYOU CARRIER whipped me. My master was not present. I don't remember the whipping. I was two months in bed sore from the whipping and my senses began to come—I was sort of crazy. I tried to shoot everybody. They said so, I did not know. I did not know that I had attempted to shoot every one; they told me so. I burned up all my clothes; but I don't remember that. I never was this way (crazy) before. My master come after I was whipped; saw me in bed; he discharged the overseer. I attempted to shoot my wife the first one; I did not shoot any one; I did not harm any one. My master's Capt. John Lyon, cotton planter, on Atchafalya, near Washington, La.

Whipped two months before Christmas. (U.S. National Archives)

In this testimony, Gordon communicates the difficulty of rendering slavery's picture, of making the lived reality of slavery legible not only to White Northern readers, but also to the former slave him or her self. By placing doubt about the veracity of his own narrative, and assuring his audience that he has no memory of the whipping or the events that followed it, Gordon demonstrates the uncertainty that sometimes accompanies the survivor of trauma. For example, although he is able to establish with confidence the name of his overseer, and the absence of his master at the time of his brutal beating, Gordon's testimony concerning the time of the "whipping" complicates the narrative's temporality. Gordon's temporal confusion is constitutive of an overall uncertainty about what happened on the day of the whipping and in the months of his recovery. Gordon

shares that “he was sort of crazy,” and does so in a way that places doubt on his mental and emotional stability during the course of his convalescence. His use of the modifier “sort of” adds yet another degree of uncertainty to a narrative already plagued with doubt. Indeed, Gordon repeats the phrase “I did not know” twice in the narrative. In the first instance, Gordon tells us, “They said so. I did not know,” and insists that he “never was that way (crazy) before,” suggesting that he is narrating a story that his conscious mind has blocked out. In this way, Gordon’s testimony is rife with uncertainties that challenge the notion that the events he describes might ever be described as through a clear glass window (Ball xi).

Indeed, Gordon’s verbal testimony highlights the complex ways in which a particularly traumatic event lacks the type of transparency most readers sought when they encountered the slave’s narrative. Controlled by the limits of memory, Gordon’s confusion about what happened, the temporal gaps in his narrative, and the suggestion of his own mental and emotional instability as a result of the incident, all speak to larger questions concerning the traumatic nature of former slaves’ remembrances of their enslavement, a trauma that affected not only Gordon, but also the entire nation. In Ron Eyerman’s *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African-American Identity*, Eyerman distinguishes between the personal and collective experiences of trauma, and argues that the trauma of slavery requires “time, as well as mediation, and representation” (2). The hard work of working through slavery’s trauma in order to craft a satisfactory narrative requires the narrator’s coming to terms with the impossibility of ever representing slavery’s picture in ways that are either simple or fully transparent. The fractured nature of Gordon’s narrative attests to the difficulty of talking about slavery, let

alone defining it. To admit Gordon's fractured tale into the popular culture of the era, however, would be to admit the inability to quickly and easily define, limit, and move past slavery, an admission that challenged the straightforward timeline of the former slave's linear progression from slavery to freedom.

As a result, Gordon's strange but plaintive testimony, was in fact, supplanted in later remembrances not only by his photographed pictures, but also by the narrative texts that accompanied them. For example, in "A Typical Negro," the July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1863 *Harper's Weekly* article about Gordon's escape from slavery works to present a clear narrative of progress from slavery to freedom (Figure 3-33). And yet, the *Harper's* article visual narrative is disrupted by a number of fissures and breaks that suggest that the true picture of slavery is more analogous to a cracked glass than a clear one. The first disjuncture in the article's narrative lies in the arrangement of Gordon's photographs. "A Typical Negro" features a triptych of woodcuts reprints of Gordon's carte de visite portraits. The biggest image in the triptych is the reproduction of "The Scourged Back" which is placed in the middle; before and after images of Gordon in rags then in a Union uniform bookend the centered image. A written article that details Gordon's journey from slavery to freedom surrounds the images. Although, the written words featured in the *Harper's* article offers a linear narrative of progress, the article as a whole reveals a number of temporal inconsistencies. In the first image Gordon is pictured in "tattered rags." However, in spite of his poor dress, and contrary to almost every other photograph in the genre, Gordon displays a sense of self-possession and self-awareness that is difficult to ignore. Directly facing the camera, and adopting a dignified seated pose popular in middle-class studio portraiture, Gordon reads as confident and strong, a reading at odds

with the running, beaten, helpless Gordon of the *Harper's* written text.<sup>30</sup> The fuller narrative of Black emancipation during the war, one in which Black men, women, and children worked to forge their own visual representations—even within the strictures of the before and after genre—is overshadowed by the sheer numbers of images that illustrate the helpless, hopeless, and guilty figure of the North's visual imagination. The last image in the tryptich features Gordon in his Union uniform. In this image Gordon stands at attention, with rifle in hand. As of yet, the historical archive has revealed no surviving photographs of this image, an index to the limited popular interest in the continuation of Gordon's story beyond the moment of his wounding.

Although the beating in which Gordon is scarred precedes both his harrowing escape through the swamps and his becoming a Union soldier, the image depicting the embodied memory of his enslavement is moved out of chronological time and placed on the page as spatially central. As the largest of the images, Gordon's beating takes its place as the key component of his narrative in *Harper's* as well as the key narrative of his legacy throughout the nineteenth-century and beyond. The *Harper's* article is comprised of a series of temporal rifts in which Gordon's complex positioning as freedman and soldier is marginalized in favor of a more one-dimensional representation of him as an eternally wounded man. In many ways, the moment of Gordon's wounding slides across the boundaries of before and after, of past and present, expanding slavery's claims not only on the past, but also on the future. Even though Gordon has seized a newfound autonomy by becoming a soldier in the colored regiments, he carries his "scourged back" with him in more ways than one. Despite Gordon's numerous acts of resistance, his perilous flight towards freedom, and his new status as freedman and soldier, the article's

title, “A Typical Negro,” identifies Gordon as indelibly bound up with the visible and seemingly “typical” wounds of his slave past.

The image of Gordon’s scourged back in *carte de visite* format encouraged viewers to read the story of one man’s journey from slavery to freedom as the quintessential story of slavery itself. The image was so popular that photography studios across the nation were copying the image and selling it pasted onto their own studio mounts (Goodyear). As Surgeon S.K. Towle hand-writes on the verso of his copy of Gordon’s photograph: “Few sensation writers ever depicted worse punishments than this man must have received, though nothing in his appearance indicates any unusual viciousness—but on the contrary, he seems intelligent and well-behaved” (Goodyear). Two things stand out in Towle’s assessment. Towle compares Gordon’s image to works of fiction written by “sensation writers,” a comparison that both privileges and undercuts the photograph as a mirror of reality. However, this privileging of Gordon’s photograph—a seemingly indexical copy of reality—over the work of “sensation” fiction ignores the evidentiary potential of eighty years worth of narratives written by former slaves themselves. This neglect of the slave narrative tradition reduces Gordon’s to the status of a silent and eternal martyr. And Towle’s allusion to Gordon’s appearance as a cipher for his character—“intelligent and well-behaved”—again reveals the extent to which Gordon’s photograph was used to erase the complexity of both his personality and his life experiences. In reproducing negative stereotypes about the fugitive’s passivity, Towle’s captions limit Gordon’s ability to maintain agency over his own life narrative, and lead to the reduction of his life story to a single moment in his history.

In an 1863 ekphrastic description of “The Scourged Back,” first published in *The Independent* and reprinted in *The Liberator*, Gordon’s back is once again represented as a text by which viewers might read slavery. Indeed, for the *Independent* writer, Gordon’s photograph provided a means by which to capture the former slave’s very flesh onto the paper and ink of the carte de visite. As the writer describes it, “The eye of the sun fell on the camera which transferred [Gordon’s] torn skin to the paper” (*The Independent*). In an odd form of transubstantiation, Gordon’s wounded flesh is “taken” and “given” in a grisly act of exchange. In this writer’s metaphor, the sun’s “eye,” what Hawthorne termed “heaven’s broad and simple sunshine,” transformed the “camera” into a macabre form of teleportation, a translation that not only provided a miniature of Gordon’s visage, but “transferred his torn skin to the paper” (Hawthorne 116; *The Independent*).

The writer’s vivid description of “The Scourged Back” continues:

Five or six months after the scourging...the frightful laceration was partially healed, and only scars remained. But what must the whipping have been to leave such scars! The back looks like a plate of iron, eaten by acids and corroded by rust; or like a walnut-table honey-combed by worms...Bits as big as the hand seem to have been cut out of the flesh. No wonder that, at this distance of time, the man looks thin and ghastly, though he was a strong man, and must be a man of fine physique and presence. (*The Independent*)

In comparing Gordon’s back to a decayed “plate of iron” or decayed “walnut-table,” the writer uses similes that distance him from the article’s reader, transforming him once



again from a man who sat to have his photograph taken to a material object seemingly damaged beyond repair.

The article then ends with the famous quote printed on the backside of one of the many re-prints of the “Scourged Back” cartes:

This card-photograph should be multiplied by the hundred thousand, and scattered over the States. It tells the story in a way that even Mrs. Stowe cannot approach; because it tells the story to the eye. If seeing is believing—and it is in the immense majority of cases—seeing this card would be equivalent to believing things of the slave States which Northern men and women would move heaven and earth to abolish. (*The Independent*)

Given the article’s macabre interpretation of Gordon’s photograph as the embodiment of the man himself, its final conclusion frames the distribution of Gordon’s body as a sort of grotesque martyrdom. The result was that some readers of Gordon’s visual narrative responded to the image with hostility. One writer tells the story of looking at Gordon’s photograph on a train. A man asks him if he might buy it from him and the writer agrees since he knows where he might easily purchase another (*Liberator*). Once he pays the writer the quarter, the man angrily tears up the photo card. In purchasing the card for the express purpose of destroying it, the man on the train demonstrates the less than honorific purposes to which Gordon’s photograph was sometimes put.

The ubiquity of Gordon’s photograph as an iconic symbol of the former slave’s martyrdom was rivaled by only one other figure in Northern representations of enslaved manhood—Harriet Beecher Stowe’s fictional protagonist Uncle Tom. Indeed, this

connection of Uncle Tom with the Gordon of “The Scourged Back” carte was well-noted by Northern readers. The print of Gordon’s scarred back in Figure 2-31, for example, demonstrates the ways in which Gordon’s image was read through the lens of Stowe’s sentimental hero. With the short caption “Uncle Tom” handwritten at the bottom of the print, Gordon’s identity and testimony is completely suppressed, replaced with the iconic figure of man who died a slave. Indeed, when Towle and others place Gordon’s photograph in the same archive of meaning-making as a “sensation novel,” one “more effective than Mrs. Stowe’s,” they perhaps had in mind Hammatt Billings’s pathos-ridden drawing of Uncle Tom’s whipping and subsequent murder at the hands of Simon Legree. This is despite the material fact of Gordon’s survival of the whipping, his courageous trek towards freedom, his mustering into military service, and the possibility of his future claims as a free male citizen.

Comparing Gordon to a slave protagonist who dies in order to achieve his freedom, narrative adaptations of “The Scourged Back” offer the potential fulfillment of a particularly nefarious pipe dream—an end to slavery that left unchallenged the nation’s ideological commitment to racialized social hierarchies. I close the chapter with a meditation on how the notion of the “wounded” former slave served as a barrier to civic belonging. In addition to its popularity in war-era print culture, and frequent comparisons to Stowe’s seminal text, the photograph of Gordon’s scarred back inspired at least one work of short fiction. Louisa May Alcott, in her short story “Two Brothers” or “My Contraband,” tells the story of a Union soldier and former slave whose journey from slavery to freedom ends on the Civil War battlefield. When Alcott’s female protagonist, Tribulation Periwinkle—a young White Northern woman whose trials some scholars

argue are modeled on Alcott's own experiences as a Civil War era nurse—first meets Robert, a former slave and Union soldier, she describes him as a man of uncommon attractiveness, a man whose light skin and fine bearing made her “wan[t] to know and comfort him” (172). For Alcott's protagonist, Robert's physical attractiveness and near-whiteness, invited a moment of physical contact, a “touch...on the shoulder” (172). And yet, this act of intimacy widens the distance between them, and activates a racialized social distance. In terms that invert the logic of Frederick Douglass's classic chiasmus, Robert the man becomes a slave right before Tribulation's eyes:

In an instant the man vanished and the slave appeared. Freedom was too new a boon to have wrought its blessed changes yet, and as he started up, with his hand at his temple and an obsequious “Yes, Ma'am,” any romance that had gathered round him fled away, leaving the saddest of all sad facts in living guise before me. Not only did the manhood seem to die out of him, but the comeliness that first attracted me; for, as he turned, I saw the ghastly wound that had laid open cheek and forehead ... By one of those inexplicable processes that often teach us how little we understand ourselves, my purpose was suddenly changed, and though I went in to offer comfort as a friend, I merely gave an order as a mistress. (172)

The protagonist's attempt to forge a friendship between herself and Robert inspired “the man [to vanish] and the slave [to re-appear],” a metaphorical re-enslavement that shifts the terms of their engagement. Moreover, at least for Alcott's protagonist, “the ghastly wound that had laid open [Robert's] cheek and forehead” reduces his comeliness, the combined effects of which encourage her to “change her purpose...suddenly...and

though [she had gone] in to offer comfort as a friend” she instead “gave an order as a mistress” (Alcott 172).

It is yet another of his “ghastly wound[s]” that highlights the differences between Robert and free White men. In a later scene, Tribulation relates that “with a sudden wrench [Robert] tore the shirt from neck to waist, and on his strong brown shoulders showed me furrows deeply ploughed, wounds which, though healed, were ghastlier to me than any in that house ...” (Alcott 184). The description of a man naked “from neck to waist” alludes to the popular visual imagery of Gordon’s scourged back, an image that for most war-era Northern viewers was the photographic embodiment of slavery itself. In other words, Robert’s “ghastly” and “deeply ploughed wounds” mark him as a man not free. As a means by which to distinguish between contraband and free men, Robert’s scourged back, his “ghastly wounds,” mark him as different from any of the other soldiers in the hospital, despite the fact that many of the men were most likely badly injured (Alcott 184). In this way, Robert’s “wounds” mark him as a site upon which the nation reads the legacy of slavery, a legacy that is only laid to rest by his death on the battlefield. The death of black men on the battlefield and in the imagined visual narratives of the Union North represented one way in which to solve the problem of emancipation. In the next chapter, I will analyze how Black women’s visual narratives of mourning embraced the figure of the martyr as a catalyst for a new image of Black freedom.



Figure 2-1. James Presley Ball. 1862. Albumen Print. CDV Mount. Unnamed African-American woman with Sgt. Jesse L. Berch and Frank M. Rockwell. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-10940 (front).

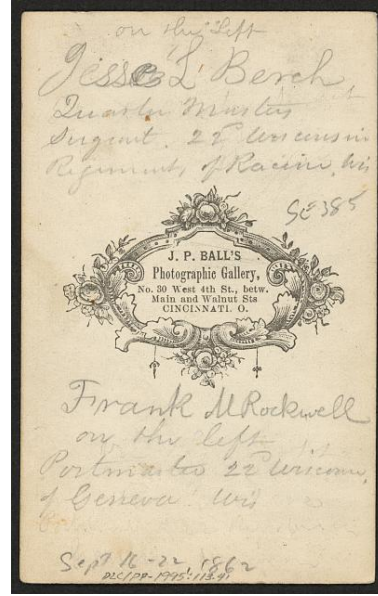


Figure 2-2. James Presley Ball. 1862. Albumen Print. CDV Mount. Unnamed African-American woman with Sgt. Jesse L. Berch and Frank M. Rockwell. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-10940 (front).



Figure 2-3. "Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters." Between 1863 and 1865. Ambrotype. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36454.



Figure 2-4. Enoch Long. "Unidentified African American Soldier in Union Uniform." Between 1863 and 1865. Tintype, hand-colored. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36456.



Figure 2-5. Unidentified African American boy standing in front of painted Backdrop Showing American Flag and Tents." Between 1861 and 1865. Tintype. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36463.



Figure 2-6. Sheperd and Smith. Between 1864 and 1865. "Kager Mays." Library of Congress. CDV. LG-DIG-ppmsca-11178.



Figure 2-7. Ball & Thomas. "Full-length Portrait of an African-American Sailor." Between 1861 and 1865. CDV. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11280.



Figure 2-8. Photographer Unknown. "Unidentified African-American Soldier." Between 1860 and 1870. CDV. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11298.



Figure 2-9. Photographer Unknown. "Unidentified African American Soldier in Union Uniform with Forage Cap." Between 1863 and 1865. LC-DIG-ppmsca-37079.

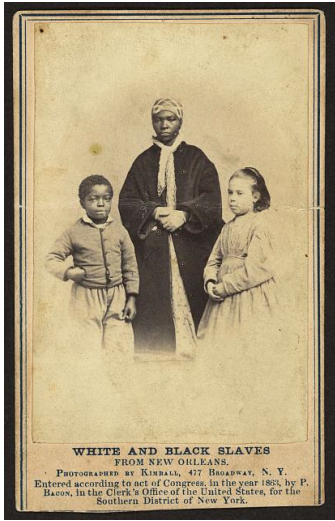


Figure 2-10. Bernard Moses. Between 1864 and 1866. CDV. "African-American Man, Full-Length Portrait, Facing Right." Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-11202.



Figure 2-11. Photographer Unknown. "Washerwoman for the Union army in Richmond, Virginia." Ambrotype, hand-colored. 1862-1865. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Photographic History Collection. [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org).





**WHITE AND BLACK SLAVES**  
FROM NEW ORLEANS.  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY KIMBALL, 477 BROADWAY, N. Y.  
Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1863, by P.  
HARRIS, in the Clerk's Office of the United States, for the  
Southern District of New York.

Figure 2-12. M.H. Kimball.  
“White and Black Slaves  
from New Orleans.” 1864.  
CDV. Prints and  
Photographs Division  
Library of Congress. LG-  
DIG-ppmsca-11244.



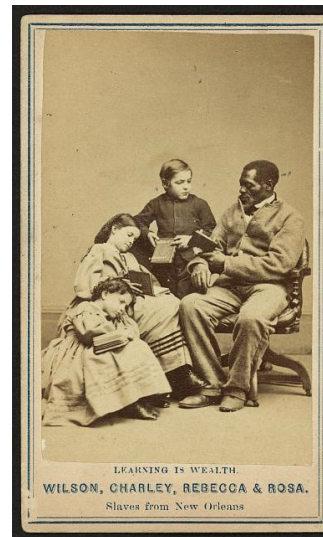
**Isaac & Rosa, Slave Children from New Orleans.**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY KIMBALL, 477 BROADWAY, N. Y.  
Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1863, by Geo. H.  
HARRIS, in the Clerk's Office of the U.S. for the So. Dist. of N. Y.

Figure 2-13. M.H. Kimball.  
“Isaac and Rosa. Slave  
Children from New Orleans.”  
1863. CDV. Prints and  
Photographs Division.  
Library of Congress. LG-DIG-ppmsca-  
11092.



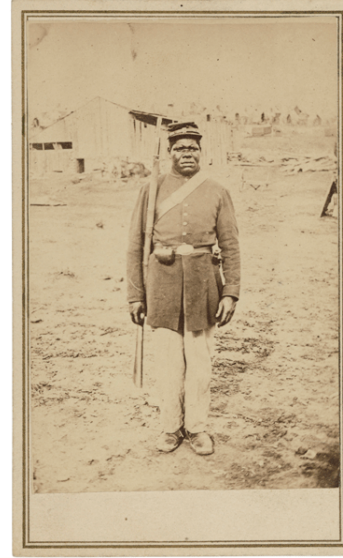
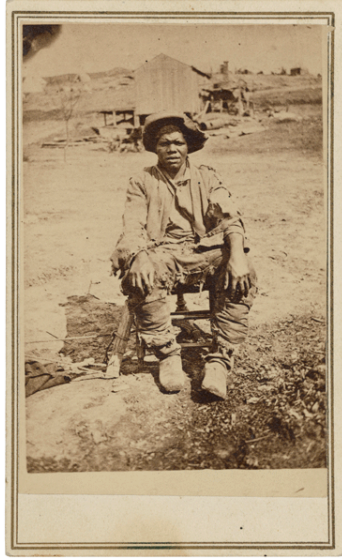
**OUR PROTECTION.**  
**ROSA, CHARLEY, REBECCA.**  
Slave Children from New Orleans.

Figure 2-14. Charles  
Paxson. “Rosa, Charley,  
Rebecca. Slave Children  
from New Orleans.” 1864.  
CDV. Library of Congress.  
LC-DIG-ppmsca-11136.



**LEARNING IS WEALTH.**  
**WILSON, CHARLEY, REBECCA & ROSA.**  
Slaves from New Orleans

Figure 2-15. Charles  
Paxson. “Wilson, Charley,  
Rebecca & Rosa. Slave  
from New Orleans.” 1864.  
CDV. Library of Congress.  
LC-DIG-ppmsca-11246.



Figures 2-16 and 2-17. T.B. Bishop. "Private Hubbard Pryor, before and after his enlistment in the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry." 1864. The National Archives. [www.http://research.archives.gov/description/849127](http://research.archives.gov/description/849127).

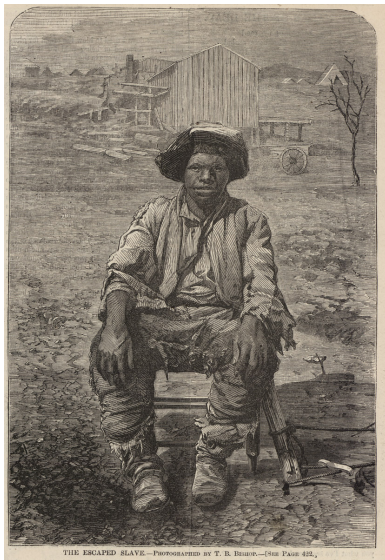


Figure 2-18. "The Escaped Slave," an illustration based on a photograph by T.B. Bishop. *Harper's Weekly*, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864.

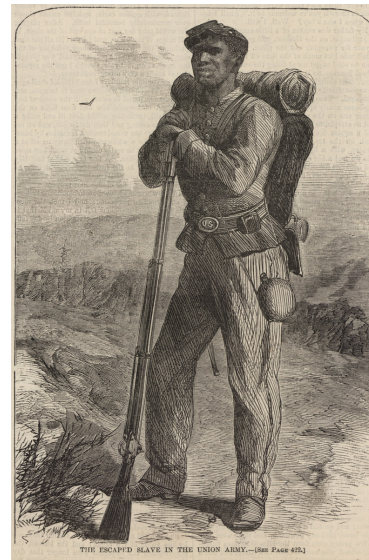


Figure 2-19. "The Escaped Slave in the Union Army," an illustration based on a photograph by T.B. Bishop. *Harper's Weekly*, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864.



Figures 2-20 and 2-21. Algenon S. Morse and William A. Peaslee. "Before the Proclamation and After the Proclamation." 1863. CDV. International Center of Photography. Accession Number: 893.1990. [www.emuseum.icp.org](http://www.emuseum.icp.org).



Figures 2-22 and 2-23. P.F. Cooper. "As We Found Them"/"As They Are Now." 1864. CDV. George Eastman House/Getty Images.



Figures 2-24 and 2-25. Photographer Unknown. Drummer Taylor, 78<sup>th</sup> Regiment, U.S.C.T. 1864. CDV. National Archives, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff.



Figure 2-26. McPherson & Oliver. "Contraband that marched 40 miles to get to our lines". 1863. CDV. Cowan's Auctions-sold to unidentified collector.



Figure 2-27. *Harper's Weekly*. 1863. "Gordon in his Uniform." Etching modeled after a photograph. Library of Congress. Pictures and Photographs Division.



Figure 2-28. McPherson and Oliver. Gordon, View of Back (Full Head of Hair). 1863. CDV. Prints and Photographs Division. Library Company of Philadelphia.

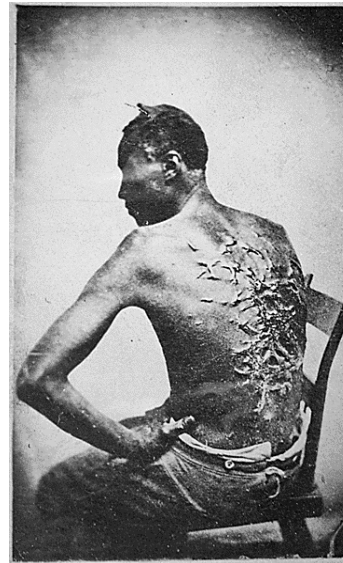


Figure 2-29. McPherson and Oliver. Gordon, View of Back (Partially Shorn Head). 1863. CDV. Prints and Photographs Division. Library Company of Philadelphia.





Figure 2-31. Unidentified Author. Gordon as "Uncle Tom." 1863. CDV. Sold by Swann Galleries to an unknown buyer.

## Chapter Three

### Mourning Becomes Political: Photographs and Politicized Self-Fashioning in Black Women's Post-Bellum Slave Narratives

A visual allusion to the Civil war-era photographs taken of Gordon's "scourged back," this post-bellum portrait of a young woman's scars seems to be, at first glance, yet another representation of a brutalized former slave (Figure 3-1). Printed in *Harper's Weekly* on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1866, the illustration used a photograph as its model, and was captioned in *Harper's* as "Marks of Punishment Inflicted Upon a Colored Servant in Virginia"(477). What the *Harper's* article fails to mention, however, is that the photograph speaks not only to the continuation of slave like-conditions nearly a year after the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, but also to the efforts of a formerly enslaved woman, Lucy Richardson, to bring the law to bear on behalf of her teenage daughter, Martha Ann Banks. A search in the Freedman's Bureau files reveals that the photograph was most likely intended as evidence in Richardson's case against her former owner, Mrs. Henry Abrahams (U.S. National Archives). On three separate occasions, Richardson brought her daughter to the Freedman's Bureau to file a complaint against Abrahams, eventually taking her to court on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1866 (U.S. National Archives).<sup>31</sup> When read within the context of Richardson's police reports and subsequent trial, the visual image of Banks's burned back is not, as the *Harper's* article suggests, merely another instance of slavery's cruelty (477). Rather, Richardson's and Banks's use of visual evidence speaks to the promise of photographic pictures in tracing formerly



enslaved Black women's varied and dynamic narratives of slavery and emancipation.

During the years following the end of the war, a not always subtle battle raged concerning both how the war would be remembered and by whom. In his incisive study, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, historian David Blight adopts Nina Silber's evocative phrase "the romance of reunion" to trace the story of how America came to remember the war as a national tragedy in which "everyone was right, and no one was wrong" (Blight 386). As Blight notes, however, this "romance" was one that unfolded along racialized lines, placing African-Americans and their contributions at the margins of national myths and official histories of the war (Blight 2). Scholars have noted how African-Americans have been excluded from national myths in ways that limit their claims to citizenship. In her 2012 book, *Sites of Slavery*, Salamishah Tillet argues that twentieth- and twenty-first century African-American writers and artists responded to national narratives that, in large part, excised Black Americans from national myths of civic belonging (Tillet 6). I contend that a similar phenomenon of cultural exclusion from stories of war-era sacrifice and post-war rituals of reunion drove the formal choices of African-American women memoirists from the end of the Civil war through the early twentieth-century.

African-Americans' exclusion from the nation's narratives of mourning reflected their broader social and political exclusion. This was especially true in the case of African-American women. Indeed, a key aspect of the "romance" was the act of re-imagining the Civil War as a war between brothers, a formulation that leaves out, by definition, the actions of African-American women (Blight 9). In response, Black women wrote narratives about slavery and freedom that used the authority of war-era

photographs to illustrate, verify, and document the many instances in which their actions actualized the late war's emancipatory promise. Unlike the before and after narratives made popular during the Civil War era, formerly enslaved Black women's post-bellum memoirs identified them as actors at the center of national histories of war, loss, and reunion. Formerly enslaved Black women wrote Civil war memoirs alongside Union and Confederate generals, Black and White male veterans, and Northern and Southern White women. Their narratives also challenged the fictional texts of writers like Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page, writers whose popular fiction offered an increasingly idyllic view of the U.S. slave past, one that minimized (and often caricatured) the role that enslaved people played in winning not only abolition, but also Union victory. Thus, the writings of formerly enslaved Black women like Mattie J. Jackson, Susie King Taylor, and Elizabeth Keckley offered what Douglass might call a "new view" of the possibilities for African-American citizenship (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219). In challenging popular assumptions about the actions of former slaves during and after the war, Jackson, Keckley, and Taylor used photographs and photographic culture to picture themselves as co-actors in the struggle for Union victory and slavery's abolition.

In short, Black women's post-bellum narratives of slavery and freedom relied not on a catalog of plaintive descriptions of Black women's physical and sexual exploitation, but instead represented African-American women's mourning as bound up with politicized resistance, necessary labor, and social activism. In direct contrast to visual representations that reify the "brutality of slavery" as "inflicted" upon the formerly enslaved woman's body, Black women made implicit arguments for a mode of representation that pictured them not as objects of pity but as agents of change (*Harper's*

*Weekly* 477). All three writers wrote with the goal of achieving political agency within the space of individual and collective mourning. In making mourning political, each woman employs photographs and the cult of mourning surrounding photographic production and reproduction to accomplish their purpose—of placing themselves in positions of political efficacy and of demonstrating their power to effect political and social change. In doing so, the women re-appropriate the slave narrative form and determine for themselves which part of their lives to picture and why.

My study brings together three memoirists who document their contributions during the war, both to demonstrate their own commitment to the pursuit of racial and gender equality, as well as to correct the relative absence of women's voices in the visual culture of the Civil war. In all three narratives, Black women employ photographs—particularly those taken of President Abraham Lincoln and Union war heroes—to illustrate how their war-time experiences were, in fact, evidence of past and present contributions to reuniting the nation. I bring new attention to the 1866 memoir of Mattie J. Jackson, especially as it relates to her employment of her mother as an exemplar of political protest in an enslaved context. Keckley's 1868 narrative, published two years after Jackson's, identifies the ways in which her own loss of her son led to the formation of the Contraband Relief Association in Washington D.C., and to Keckley's self-imposed warrant to uphold the good name of the embattled Lincoln family. The chapter closes with a reading of Susie King Taylor's 1902 memoir. In Taylor's memoir, she indicts the failed promises of Emancipation by enumerating her own—together with those of her family and friends—dynamic and persistent contributions to Union victory. Taken together, all three memoirs delineate how each woman's dual-engagement with visual

culture and nation-wide practices of mourning, transformed the slave narrative's purpose and form.

### Visual Literacy and Political Resistance

Departing from the juridical emphasis of Richardson's and Banks's photograph, Black women memoirists used their photographic evidence to tap into the wide-spread culture of loss and mourning engendered by the late Civil war. In her groundbreaking study *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust argues that the most pressing work left to those who had survived the war was learning how to cope with the consequences and legacies of death (xiv). By interrogating what she refers to as the United States' "new relationship with death," Faust delineates the ways in which the war "transformed the American nation...into a veritable 'republic of suffering,'" a republic in which the shared loss, pain, and death of the war knitted all Americans into a united whole (Faust xiii). The scale of death caused by the U.S. Civil War left survivors to contend with what Faust terms "the work of death," the complicated social rites in which the nation made sense of the Civil War's unprecedented loss (Faust xiv). As objects of memory, photographs allowed the nation to mourn the loss of individual loved ones as well as the lives of the collective war dead. In the years following the Civil War, African-American women writers demonstrated their own engagement with "the work of death" both during and after the end of the War. These writers de-emphasized their experiences while enslaved as a means by which to highlight their actions during and after the moment of emancipation. Within the widespread culture of mourning that followed the end of the U.S. Civil War, formerly enslaved women writers re-appropriated the photograph and the slave narrative as a means by

which to politicize their acts of individual and collective mourning, and to highlight their agency, activism, and resistance.

In one of the first slave narratives published after the end of the war, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson: Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story* (1866), Jackson alludes to her memory of a photographic re-print of President Abraham Lincoln to highlight her mother's radical political engagement during the war (Jackson 11). The import of this scene is emphasized when Jackson establishes a familial tradition of organized and persistent resistance. Jackson was the daughter of enslaved parents Westley Jackson and Ellen Jackson Turner (Jackson 4). Jackson's father ran away when she was quite young (Jackson 6). Jackson and her mother, Ellen Turner—together with Jackson's two younger siblings—were, after a failed attempt at escape, enslaved together in St. Louis, Missouri (Jackson 7). Turner would attempt escape from slavery seven times before doing so successfully towards the end of the U.S. Civil war (Jackson 25). While still enslaved, Turner re-married an enslaved man name George Brown who, shortly before the beginning of the war, successfully escaped to the North (Jackson 8). A teenaged Jackson flees from enslavement after a cruel beating at the hands of slaveholder, Mr. Lewis (Jackson 12). Although she is re-captured, she broaches a second, and successful escape towards the end of the war, and goes to live with her step-father, Brown, and his second wife, Dr. L.S. Thompson in Lawrence, Massachusetts shortly after the war's end (Jackson 28).

Jackson's narrative is remarkable in that it traces more than a dozen attempts of escape, placing what Marcus Wood calls "the slave's most radical anti-slavery gesture" at

the center of the family's conception of self (93). Although the literal escape from slavery is a common trope in Jackson's "true tale," the narrative is fueled by her personal desire for social and economic agency. She seeks to achieve it with the help of her amanuensis and step-mother, Dr. L.S. Thompson. A prophet and a self-styled healer, Thompson's self-designated title of "Dr." flies in the face of presumptions about Black women's abilities, and demonstrates Thompson's own willingness to authorize herself with power. The inclusion of Thompson's letter is also a tacit rejection of the slave narrative convention in which the slave narrator solicits multiple letters of authentication from White supporters (Sekora 502). Jackson opts instead to have a Black female prophet authenticate her text (Moody 126). More than just a re-working of slave narrative conventions, Jackson's and Thompson's Preface stresses both women's agency in the social and cultural terrain of the post-bellum U.S. Thompson uses her authority to validate a twenty-year old Jackson's story and purpose for writing.

Although the brief letter that Thompson writes for Jackson testifies to the young woman's trustworthiness, it makes much of her ambition and her ability (Jackson 2).<sup>32</sup> As Thompson writes in a Note that follows Jackson's Preface, "I trust she may render due satisfaction and bear some humble part in removing doubts indulged by the prejudices against the natural genius and talent of our race" (Jackson 2). In crediting Jackson with the latent ability to "remov[e] doubts indulged by [prejudice]," Thompson credits her with a futurity and agency by which she might help to uplift the race (2). Unlike conventional slave narratives where the narrative's primary purpose is the end of slavery, Thompson and Jackson craft a narrative whose purpose is to right the wrongs of hundreds of years of oppression. Thompson places Jackson—a young, Black, formerly enslaved

woman—at the center of this project in a way that highlights the possibilities Black women imagined for themselves and each other in the years immediately following the end of the war.

In her Preface, Jackson states that her purpose for writing was to increase her agency as a self-emancipated woman by continuing her education:

As the links have been broken and the shackles fallen from [enslaved people] through the unwearied efforts of our beloved martyr President Lincoln, as one I feel it a duty to improve the mind, and have ever had a thirst for education to fill that vacuum for which the soul has ever yearned since my earliest remembrance... Thus I ask you to buy my little book to aid me in obtaining an education, that I may be enabled to do some good in behalf of the elevation of my emancipated brothers and sisters. (Jackson 2)

Jackson's goal—to gain agency through education—placed her in the company of thousands of recently emancipated African-Americans who saw education as a tool with which to “extend and defend their emancipation” (Anderson 3). When Jackson writes of her “thirst for education,” then, she speaks to an equally ardent “thirst” for economic wherewithal and political power, power that would “enable her to do some good” on behalf of her fellow freed men and women (Jackson 2). Moreover, Jackson demonstrates her willingness to thwart the legal sanctions that would inhibit her enjoyment of full citizenship when she shares that she is already partially literate (Jackson 10). As literary critic, Jocelyn Moody writes, when speaking to Jackson's repeated references to her ability to read, Thompson does so not to emphasize “the skills she lacks” but to highlight

the skills “that she virtuously pursues” (Moody 107). Jackson’s attainment of some reading knowledge and pursuit of further education situates her in a genealogy of agentive women who brought their will to bear in their quest for self-emancipation and economic and political power.

Jackson traces this genealogy through frequent and vivid descriptions of her mother’s continued acts of politicized protest. In her effort to demonstrate Turner’s many acts of rebellion against slavery in general, and against her owners, the Lewises, in particular, Jackson focuses the story of her own life on the life of her mother. By the beginning of the war, Turner and her young family (Jackson included) had attempted to escape from slavery but were eventually re-captured and sold. And yet, despite the extreme brutality she and her children endured at the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, Turner not only demonstrated an allegiance to the Union army, but also engaged her mistress in vigorous debates about the condition of local regiments and the outcome of nearby battles (Jackson 10). This information was likely culled from Jackson’s reading of Northern newspapers. Jackson writes that her mother often “used to sit up nights and read to keep posted about the war” using newspapers “tossed...over the fence” by passing Union soldiers (Jackson 10). Turner’s access to literacy as well as her access to Northern newspapers fueled her every-day defiance against Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, and despite her enslaved and embattled status, made it possible for her to participate in a larger community of Union loyalists. Turner’s literacy and political savvy, which she worked hard to cultivate and maintain, enraged her Master, Mr. Lewis, who “held a charge against her for reading the papers and understanding political affairs” (Jackson 16). Even in the face of her master’s fury, however, Turner continued to pursue literacy



and knowledge of the world and encouraged her children to do the same.

And yet it is not her mastery of words that leads her master to brutally beat and imprison her. In one of the most contentious episodes of the narrative, Turner's resistance centers around a photograph of Abraham Lincoln. As Jackson recalls:

On one occasion Mr. Lewis [Mrs. Jackson's owner] searched my mother's room and found a picture of President Lincoln, cut from a newspaper, hanging in her room. He asked her what she was doing with old Lincoln's picture. She replied it was there because she liked it. He then knocked her down three times, and sent her to the trader's yard for a month as punishment. (11)

The picture that Turner hung in her room stood as a testimony, first to her access to the written word, and second, to her political affinity with the most hated man in the Confederate South. As observed by literary scholar Doveanna Fulton Minor, Turner makes no effort to conceal Lincoln's image by "bur[ying] it in a drawer or under a mattress" (Fulton 19). Instead, she hangs it on the wall, and even when faced with violence and imprisonment, refuses to take it down. In giving Lincoln's picture such a prominent place in her room, Turner—an enslaved woman—takes a bold stand as a Union loyalist. Committed to keeping in her possession a "picture" that she "liked," Turner makes a dramatic statement about her political alliances in the midst of the ongoing Civil War (Jackson 11). Most likely a picture of Lincoln taken from one of the newspapers that she had received from Union soldiers passing through the area, Turner's Lincoln portrait identifies her as an outlaw and encourages Mr. Lewis to have her imprisoned in the local jail. "Cut from a newspaper and hanging in her room," Turner's

photograph demonstrates one of the many ways in which Black women aligned their politics with the Union North and against the Confederate South (11).

In the Spring of 1861—a likely timeframe for this incident—such photographically inspired reproductions of Lincoln were ubiquitous in the ante-bellum culture of the North, as too were actual photographs in the form of cartes de visite, campaign buttons, and campaign posters. Given, however, Turner’s relative isolation on a slave plantation outside of St. Louis, the newspapers that she received from passing Union soldiers were probably the place that she got her photograph. Turner’s cut-out was likely a reproduction of an image like that featured in Figure 3-2. A woodcut illustration based on a photograph by Brady (Figure 3-3), this *Harper’s Weekly* image was published soon after Lincoln took office and within months of Turner’s confrontation with her master, Lewis. Circled by printed text, the image speaks to a marriage of word and image, both of which work together (and against) one another in their efforts to communicate to their reader. Given Turner’s literacy, she is likely to have read the article that accompanied Lincoln’s picture as well as the picture itself, deepening her knowledge of Lincoln’s biography and politics and highlighting the intentionality and politicized meanings of her refusal. It is within this context—of an informed and interested partisan—that Turner displays and defends Lincoln’s picture.

The fact that her picture was “cut from a newspaper” demonstrates Turner’s employment of visual literacy as a form of radical resistance. As demonstrated by scholars like Elizabeth McHenry, the enslaved person’s insistence on participating in acts of literacy shaped the meanings of emancipation in the years following the end of the war (3). And yet, it is not, in this case, Jackson’s knowledge of the written word that threatens

her owner; it is, instead, her consumption of visual literacy and print culture that leads Lewis to “bea[t] and impriso[n]” her (11).

In “cutting” Lincoln’s picture from a newspaper and refusing to take it down when ordered to, Turner demonstrates the iconic power available to an enslaved Black woman with a pair of scissors and a scrap of newsprint. Indeed, Jackson’s mother’s newspaper clipping places her in a larger national tradition of periodical culture and memorialization. Turner’s rebellious act of displaying a photographic cut-out of the president on her wall mirrored the actions of many thousands of Americans—most of them women— who used a pair of scissors as a means to author their own narrative of the war and what it meant (4). In her book *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*, Ellen Gruber Garvey writes about the scrapbook as “a direct ancestor to our digital information management” systems (10). Gruber Garvey details the ways in which the scrapbook served as a means by which to store permanently information from ephemeral sources—like the illustrated newspaper—and as a democratizing resource by which individuals might shape their own narratives about civic life (11). Like other cutters and pasters, Turner’s mother uses scissors as a means by which to write the story of her active participation as a Union loyalist, an identity that her daughter magnifies when writing her own life story in the post-bellum U.S.

The rhetorical power of this scene, however, lies not in Turner’s use of Lincoln’s picture as a site of iconic war-time resistance, but in Jackson’s 1866 re-employment of that picture as an object of mourning. By calling attention to her mother’s refusal to remove Lincoln’s photograph five years before, Jackson invokes what was, by 1866, a

dynamic culture of mourning, one that placed her mother's past actions as evidence of her political will. In her book *This Republic of Suffering*, Faust argues that Lincoln's death served as an opportunity for Union loyalists to mourn the many lost during the four years of the war (160). Indeed, the cult of mourning surrounding the figure of the assassinated Lincoln was key to post-bellum conceptions of what it meant to remember the Civil War. The culture of mourning that sprang up as a result of Lincoln's death was in many instances mirrored in African-American visual culture. In the years immediately following his death, the visage of President Lincoln was ubiquitous in the visual and material cultures of the nation (Finnegan 35). Impressed upon gold coins, reprinted in broadsides, pasted upon mourning ribbons, and distributed as cartes de visite, Lincoln's visage, as displayed, circulated, worn, and exhibited signaled the slain President's entry into new pantheon of illustrious Americans (Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 46), one that offered Black women a discursive site in which to highlight their own identities as patriots. Since Lincoln's image "tapped directly into contested meanings of national identity" both after the war and throughout the nineteenth century (Finnegan 33), Jackson's employment of his image as a site of her enslaved mother's resistance places not only Lincoln, but also the iconic meanings of his pictured image at the center of her mother's narrative of resistance and politicized self-fashioning.

Jackson alludes to Lincoln as martyr at several different points in the narrative. The longest and most lyrical is her impassioned description of the murdered President's funeral procession through Indianapolis:

On the Saturday after the assassination of the President there was a meeting held on the Common, and a vote taken to have the President's

body brought through Indianapolis, for the people to see his dear dead face. The vote was taken by raising the hands, and when the question was put in favor of it a thousand black hands were extended in the air, seemingly higher and more visible than all the rest. Nor were their hands alone raised, for in their deep sorrow and gloom they raised their hearts to God, for well they knew that He, through martyred blood, had made them free. (Jackson 24)

This scene is notable because of the African-American voters' ability to gather with their white neighbors in the city's commons, and vote on a matter of local and national import; it is also important to note Jackson's emotional and highly visual description of the event. In writing of "a thousand black hands...extended in the air, seemingly higher and more visible" than the hands of their White peers, Jackson images a picture of a community whose solidarity and power stem, in part, from the self-conscious and unified decision to mourn Lincoln (Jackson 24).

Scholars have yet to delineate the import of Lincoln's death and the photographic reproduction of what Jackson calls his "dear dead face" in figuring former slaves' political identities (Jackson 24). And yet, the visual archive speaks to a great number of broadsides, portraits, and pictures of Lincoln in African-American visual culture of the late nineteenth-century. For example, in an encased studio portrait of a young African-American boy, a medallion of Lincoln is attached to the opposite side of the boy's photographed picture (Figure 3-4). In that the closed photographic case housed both a portrait of a boy—someone's beloved child—and an image of the nation's most salient martyr, images like this one speak to a desire to connect African-American futurity with

the reverent remembrance of Lincoln. Such imagery was popular throughout the end of the nineteenth-century, and suggests an inextricable connection between Black political agency and martyr imagery of Lincoln.<sup>33</sup> In placing Lincoln's visage alongside that of a young Black child, the producers of this image argue for a vision of African-American futurity that places Lincoln's image at its center.

The import of Lincoln iconography in the years following the war was amplified by the relative abundance of images of Lincoln available in the public sphere. Elizabeth Keckley invokes the public photographic archive of Lincoln and the Lincoln family so as to showcase her political efficacy and equal social status to Mrs. Lincoln. In her 1868 memoir, *Behind the Scenes: Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*, Keckley invokes the culture of photographically mediated-mourning by rejecting it, and repurposes the slave narrative by placing at its center the loss and pain suffered by a free, white woman—her friend and employer, Mary Todd Lincoln. A successful D.C. area modiste, business owner, and former slave, writes a narrative that minimizes her life in slavery so as to highlight her life as a confidante of Mrs. Lincoln in the midst of the First Lady's mourning for her son and husband. Keckley does so by noting the absence of mourning photographs in the Lincoln household and alluding to portraits taken of members of the family that had, by then, become a significant set of images in U.S. popular culture.

Like Mattie Jackson, Keckley intertwines the details of her life narrative with the life narrative of a loved one—her friend and confidante, Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln. Indeed, in no post-bellum memoir written by a formerly enslaved narrator are allusions to acts of private mourning so closely connected to a public assertion of civic belonging.

Although Keckley's narrative opens with her portrait as the frontispiece, it is here where the similarities between her text and the conventional slave narrative break down (Figure 3-5). Keckley's narrative speeds through her life in slavery, spending the majority of the narrative's pages in detailed descriptions of her war-time experiences. According to her Preface, which explains her reasons for writing, Keckley intends the narrative to be a revelatory text that explains the secret sorrow behind what came to be known as the old clothes scandal, the series of events that led the former first lady to sell some of her personal effects following the assassination of her husband. In her 1868 memoir, Keckley entwines her own story of suffering with the stories of the Lincolns' war-time loss—first of their young son Willie in 1862, then of the family's patriarch, President Abraham Lincoln, in April, 1865. Adopting the photo-mediated mourning of the Lincoln household as a focal point in which to center her own narrative of personal loss and civic action, Keckley makes an implicit claim for her inclusion in the nation's civic memories. By enveloping her own mourning—for her son and for the many thousands of dying, striving, and displaced contraband—within the photo-mediated mourning of the Lincoln family, Keckley inserts herself into national narratives of war-time service. In doing so, Keckley expands the boundaries of the slave narrative, and highlights the ways in which formerly enslaved women's photographically-mediated mourning invigorated their claims for civic belonging.

In Keckley's *Behind the Scenes*, participation in mourning culture makes possible acts of political resistance, opening up a democratic space in which a former slave and a former First Lady are made equal by the loss of a loved one. Keckley's narrative then tells the story of how Mrs. Lincoln's extreme mourning led to the scandal that sullied her

name. Like Jackson's narrative, *Behind the Scenes* does not open with a series of authenticating letters written by White friends and supporters. Instead Keckley writes the Preface herself, and does so in a manner that highlights the authority of her own narrative voice. While the Preface of the conventional slave narrative was used as a space in which to vouch for the writer's authenticity and reliability, Keckley uses her Preface as a warrant for penning the war-era biography of a former First Lady alongside her own life story. Rejecting the structural construct that John Sekora refers to as "a black letter within a white envelope," Keckley clothes her entire memoir in black—a blackness born equally of self-authentication and a broadly based bereavement (482). As such, Keckley's Preface does exactly that which the conventions of the slave narrative genre says not to do—it philosophizes. Via the processes and cultural weight of photographic pictures, Keckley asserts the presence of a Black mourning self into both the Lincolns' domestic space, as well as into the public space of a mourning nation.

Keckley continues her Preface with an odd extended metaphor with which she parses the "dark" and the "bright" sides of slavery. In a move that enacts a fraught resolution of slavery's effects on her life, Keckley speaks several times of light and darkness, positioning her textual narrative in the context of a visual portrait's careful balance of light and dark, and in doing so, alludes implicitly to the tradition of visual portraiture in the slave narrative genre. However, by the end of her Preface, Keckley reveals neither her own portrait, nor a picture of slavery. Instead, she frames a narrative that seeks to redeem her much maligned friend, Mrs. Lincoln in the wake of the financial instability that follows the President's assassination. In promising an ekphrastic portrait of the First Lady, Keckley (with the presumed authority of the Barthean operator),



authorizes herself as one capable of picturing Mrs. Lincoln “in a better light”:

If the world are to judge her as I have judged her, they must be introduced to the secret history of her transactions. The veil of mystery must be drawn aside; the origin of a fact must be brought to light with the naked fact itself. If I have betrayed confidence in anything I have published, it has been to place Mrs. Lincoln in a better light before the world” (xiv).

The “secret history” that Keckley reveals includes Mrs. Lincoln’s protracted mourning in light of the death of her son, Willie. Keckley’s promise to draw “the veil of mystery...aside” speaks to an insider’s knowledge of the events leading up to Mrs. Lincoln’s actions after the war (xiv). She notes her knowledge of the “secret history” of Mrs. Lincoln’s “transactions” as a means by which to place her friend and employer “in a better light before the world” (xiv).

Keckley reveals the hidden motivations that drove Mrs. Lincoln’s actions, and in doing so combines the language of almost supernatural revelation with that of another discourse common in anti-slavery literature—that of facts and fact finding. She writes of bringing “the origin of the fact” together “with the naked fact itself,” a claim that echoes what some mid-century viewers believed about the power of the photographic portrait (xiv). Keckley co-opts the common slave narrative trope of including other slaves’ stories, and instead uses that rhetorical space as a vehicle by which to tell the story of an elite White woman. In doing so, she writes beyond the slave-free dyad by arguing that the act of mourning, like death, acts as a great equalizer. In assigning herself the role of authoritative witness and scribe, Keckley—like Thompson and Jackson—flouts assumptions concerning the ability of former slaves to offer testimony about white actors

to a white audience. She provides a model of seeing in which the formerly enslaved narrator is herself the arbiter of not only her own textual portrait, but also the portraits of the White interlocutors who dot the terrain of what she calls her “eventful” life (xi). The most telling example of this is in the three-line description of her son’s death on the Civil war battlefield. Keckley cites Mrs. Lincoln’s refusal to even look upon her dead child’s photograph as evidence of the depth of her sorrow (116):

In some things, Mrs. Lincoln was an altered woman. Sometimes, when in her room, with no one present but myself, the mere mention of Willie's name would excite her emotion, and any trifling memento that recalled him would move her to tears. She could not bear to look upon his picture; and after his death she never crossed the threshold of the Guest's Room in which he died, or the Green Room in which he was embalmed. There was something supernatural in her dread of these things, and something that she could not explain. (Keckley 116)

There are very few extant photographs taken of Mrs. Lincoln with her sons. However, the photograph featured in Figure 3-6 was an image of the young family familiar to many Americans. Used as a model for a woodcut engraving that was published in the December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1860 edition of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Taken during a family vacation shortly before Willie’s death, and distributed widely by *Frank Leslie's* it is likely that the image was familiar to many Northerners. In this context, Keckley’s allusion to a picture that Mrs. Lincoln’s refuses “to look upon” might have invoked remembrance of this image of a mother and her sons before the moment of loss (Keckley 116). Moreover, Mrs. Lincoln’s rejection of Willie’s photograph must be read within a

cultural context where photographs of dead loved ones were often highly prized. As both a means by which to memorialize the lost loved one and as a source of comfort for the loved ones left behind, photographs served as a site of remembrance in which nineteenth-century mourners worked through grief (Batchen 12).

Keckley herself enacts a similar refusal when she literally inserts the narrative of her own son's death in the middle of her description of the mourning surrounding the death of Willie Lincoln. Condensing one of the central catastrophes of own life narrative into three short sentences, Keckley writes:

Previous to this I had lost my son [George Kirkland]. Leaving Wilberforce, he went to the battlefield with the three months troops, and was killed in Missouri--found his grave on the battlefield where the gallant General Lyon fell.<sup>34</sup> It was a sad blow to me, and the kind womanly letter that Mrs. Lincoln wrote to me when she heard of my bereavement was full of golden words of comfort. (105)

Keckley tells the story of her son's death in the barest of language and in the passive tense. In removing her I/eye from the narrative detailing her son's death and her own visit to his gravesite, Keckley focuses attention not on her own loss, but on her son's bravery and Mrs. Lincoln's kindness. Moreover, Keckley highlights her son's bravery by emphasizing that he was among the first soldiers to die in defense of the Union. She does this by stressing the location of his final resting place with repeated indicators of his place in Civil War memory. The August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1861 battle of Wilson Creek—the second major battle of the war and the field on “the gallant General Lyon fell”—would be recognized as a watershed event by most of Keckley's readers (105). Lyon, as the first

Union officer to die in the war, was lauded as a hero, and was deeply mourned. Like Lincoln, Lyon's body was carried to various locations across the nation so that loyal Northerners might, as a national community, mourn the Union army's first fallen officer. By stressing her son's participation in the war as a soldier in Lyon's army, as well as a fallen soldier who gave his life for the Union cause, Keckley taps in to a nationwide culture of mourning and loss.

The participation of George Kirkland, a formerly enslaved man, in the "three-months army" at Wilson Creek suggests that Keckley's son—a man whose mostly White ancestry would make him phenotypically similar to his young White comrades—passed as White in order to join his regiment.<sup>35</sup> This revelation places her son as not only among the first of the Union war heroes, but also as a subversive challenger to early prohibitions against Black men's service on the "battlefield" (105). Although Black men labored on behalf of the Union cause in the earliest days of the war, before the announcement of President Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, law and custom forbade that they do so on the battlefield (Trudeau 27). Instead, for the first half of the war, Black men who sought to contribute to Union victory and the end of slavery were forced to do so in a supportive capacity, as cooks, servants, construction workers, and grave-diggers (Smith 18). It is within this context that Keckley emphasizes her own son's sacrifice.

Keckley does all of this rhetorical work in the narrative equivalent of a parenthetical. In her terse and undeveloped picture of her son's death and her own loss, Keckley refuses to look upon the fact of George's death just as Mrs. Lincoln refuses to look at Willie's portrait. Instead, Keckley places her son's death within a larger discourse of civic belonging and collective mourning. Keckley's short epitaph to George

is followed first by the refrain, “under the sod and the dew” taken from a popular song, then an extensive word-based sketch by of Willie Lincoln written by poet, Nathaniel Parker Willis. Keckley takes the refrain “under the sod and the dew” from the popular poem turned song, “The Blue and the Gray” (Keckley 105). Written by Francis Miles Finch in 1867, the poem was his response to what he describes as a touching scene of reconciliation, one in which white Southern women in Columbus, Mississippi lay flowers on the graves of both Union and Confederate soldiers. Although Blight cites the reconciliationist sentiment as beginning near the end of Reconstruction, the national coverage of the Mississippi women’s actions along with the subsequent popularity of Finch’s poem turned song, would trace the sentimental mythos to this moment in Columbus.<sup>36</sup> By alluding to the “Blue and the Gray” right after the insertion of her son’s narrative, Keckley comments forcefully on the full extent of Black men’s contributions to reunion by including her son in national narratives of loss and reunion.

Immediately following the passage about her son’s death, Keckley returns to a narrating I with a detailed and hauntingly lyrical description of the Contraband Relief Association. The Contraband Relief Association was an organization started by Keckley and other Black women leaders in the Washington D.C. area. Its purpose was to help the many thousands of refugees fleeing the slave South. As historian, Thavolia Glymph has noted, the contraband camps were sites of death, violence and sorrow (Glymph, “Negro Outlaws”). Keckley, in her efforts to alleviate the suffering of refugees, Keckley takes up the role of advocate and activist (Keckley 113).

Keckley continues her ekphrastic photo album of the Lincoln family, by emphasizing ekphrastic pictures of the Lincolns’ domestic lives as it overlapped with

their very public lives as the First family. Keckley's pictures appeal to the widespread public knowledge of the Lincolns' photographed images. As garnered through illustrated newspapers and carte de visite prints, the family's public photographs would have, by 1868, become an integral part of the nation's collective memory. Keckley appeals to the archive of mass-produced Lincoln imagery at several points in her narrative. For example, in her description of a particularly touching scene in the Lincoln household—and a critical juncture in the social and political life of the nation—Keckley describes what she calls a “striking tableau,” a moment in which the Lincoln family appears to freeze in place. By freezing this sentimental moment in time, Keckley pictures the entire Lincoln family “in a better light” by recording in words what she describes as a “striking tableau,” a remarkable “picture” (Keckley 178):

A lamp was brought, and little Tad at once rushed to his father's side, exclaiming ‘Let me hold the light! Papa! Let me hold the light! Mrs. Lincoln directed that the wish of her son be gratified, and the lamp was transferred to his hands. The father and son standing there in the presence of thousands of free citizens, the one lost in a chain of eloquent ideas, the other looking up into the speaking face with a proud, manly look, formed a beautiful and striking tableau. There were a number of distinguished gentlemen, as well as ladies, in the room, nearly all of whom remarked the picture. (Keckley 178)

Keckley's description alludes to a photograph taken of President Lincoln and his son Tad, a photograph that was later used as the model for an illustration published three weeks after the President's assassination, in the May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865 edition of *Harper's Weekly*

(Figure 3-8 and Figure 3-7). The “picture” witnessed by Keckley and “a number of distinguished gentlemen, as well as ladies,” seems then an anticipation of the one in *Harper’s*, a visual premonition that, in 1868, would have been deeply familiar with a number of Keckley’s readers (Keckley 178). In sharing her own picture of the father and son, Keckley lays claim both to an insider’s “secret” knowledge as well as the collective knowledge of President Lincoln and Tad in post-bellum visual culture (Keckley xiv).

Both Keckley’s and Jackson’s memoirs speak to a hopeful vision for Black women’s political agency. In her 1902 memoir, however, Susie King Taylor identifies the ways in which race-based and gender-based discrimination led to her exclusion in the nation’s turn-of-the-century narratives about the war and reunion. Written against the backdrop of Reconstruction’s failure and the rise of Jim Crow, Taylor’s *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33<sup>rd</sup> United States Colored Troops Late 1<sup>st</sup> S.C. Volunteers*, takes on the work of using war-time actions as an argument for Black equal rights, and uses photographs of friends and comrades to picture Taylor’s equal status to male veterans, Black and White. More than a generation after the end of the war and the abolition of slavery, Taylor writes of her experiences as a Union scout and army nurse during the U.S. Civil war. Taylor includes a number of photographs of Union army generals, men whose prominence and heroism during the war were key aspects of the romance of the reunion that permeated U.S. cultural life at the end of the nineteenth century. Taylor intersperses the story of her own life with the stories of the men featured in the photographed portraits. By doing so, Taylor aligns her life narrative with the life narratives of the nation’s heroes, making serious claims about not only her role as an actor in the war, but also as to what she argues for as the war’s ultimate purpose—to

reunite the nation by abolishing slavery and enacting equality.

Throughout the memoir, Taylor stresses the war-era contributions of former slaves in general, and of herself, her family and friends in particular. Taylor writes, “I had a number of relatives in this regiment, --several uncles, some cousins, and a husband in Company E, and a number of cousins in other companies” (17). By listing the number of male relatives in the Union army, Taylor asserts the service performed by her “several uncles, [cousins], and [husband]” to Union victory. In this way, Taylor demonstrates by association, her role as a participant in the late war. As Faust argues, the work of loss and mourning was an integral component to the life of every woman both during and after the war (Faust 144). In appealing to her status as a wife and kinswoman to Union veterans, living and dead, Taylor places herself within a national discourse of loss and sacrifice. Taylor also highlights the war-era contributions of Black men outside of her family.

Taylor enacts the same parity in describing her labor with the labor of the camp’s male soldiers. By demonstrating that the level of her commitment went beyond the level of mere association with family members, and fellow Blacks, Taylor claims her own unique veteran status as a nurse, washerwoman, and scout. Taylor even assisted in maintaining the regiments’ rifles, her description of which demonstrates not only her willingness, but also her ability to engage in acts of camp labor usually relegated to men. As Taylor describes:

I learned how to handle a musket very well while in the regiment, and could shoot straight and often hit the target. I assisted in cleaning the guns and used to fire them off, to see if the cartridges were dry, before cleaning



and reloading each day. I thought this great fun. I was also able to take a gun all apart, and put it together again. (Taylor 26)

Taylor learns to shoot a rifle with competence, and is trusted with the critical task of cleaning them and testing them. Taylor goes beyond competence to a proficiency that affords her the ability to disassemble and reassemble a gun. Taylor's work in maintaining the regiment's weapons had a direct effect on the soldiers' ability to engage in armed battle. Despite the weight of her responsibility, Taylor takes great pleasure in her work, describing it as "great fun" (26). In demonstrating how much she had earned the trust and respect of the soldiers in the camp, Taylor also demonstrates how the lines that would distinguish her because of her race and gender were eroded as a result of her labor. As literary scholar Xiomara Santamarina argues, "black women's labor" allowed them to "mediat[e] contradictory discourses of class, citizenship, race and femininity" (x). Taylor embraces the "mediating" power of her Civil war era labor to make a claim about the centrality of her participation, as well as the propriety of her claims to citizenship.

The most striking aspect of Taylor's memoir is the collection of nineteen photographic reproductions that illustrate it. Seventeen of these photographed portraits are of Union officers with whom Taylor had some connection either personally or knew of through family, friends, or acquaintances. Unlike her own frontispiece and the picture of the schoolhouse cabin that she founded, the great majority of the photographs are arranged in "groups," placed alongside one another. The photographs are arranged in a manner that suggests essential equality of the men featured. Each man's photograph is placed within the same oval frame, and all of the pictures in the arrangement are of the same size and quality (Figure 3-11 and Figure 3-12). In this way, Taylor enacts a visual

parity between Black and White soldiers, one that argues for a new vision of the meanings and consequences of the war.

Although likely taken from her own personal collection, Taylor's photographically illustrated pages mirror the format of popular autograph books like Brady's *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* and John Chester and Lillian Buttre's 1877 continuation of the bio-photo tradition, *The American Portrait Gallery With Biographical Sketches*. The Buttres' book was published in several volumes and featured illustrations and short biographies of the "nation's most prominent Americans" (Buttre ii). In addition to borrowing from the genre of the photographically illustrated biography, Taylor also seems to copy the purpose of these texts. In that texts like Brady's and Buttre's photographically-illustrated biographies were intended to document acts of heroism, as well as instruct the nation on what it took to be a great American, Taylor's photographs of Union war heroes makes very specific claims about who deserves the fruits of reunion and why.

Taylor was writing within a political, social, and cultural context in which the ideology behind the "romance of reunion" would dictate that both sides were equally right and equally wrong (Blight 9). However, throughout her narrative, Taylor explicitly pictures Union forces as repeatedly more righteous than Confederate forces. Although Taylor never alludes directly to any of the photographs in the body of her text, she takes great pains to include a written description of each of the men featured in the photographs, one that includes both the nature of their sacrifice to the Union cause, and evidence of their commitment to abolition and Black equality. In one such reference, Taylor writes, "I remember hearing Captain Heasley telling his company, one day, 'Boys,

stand up for your full pay! I am with you, and so are all the officers.’ This captain was from Pennsylvania, and was a very good man; all the men liked him” (Taylor 16). Here Taylor references both the tenacity of African-American enlisted men, as well as the support afforded them by their White Northern officers. In this way, Taylor makes strong claims about who was right and who was wrong. Taylor makes this point explicit when she includes Heasley’s place of birth—Pennsylvania—and her explicit mention of the men’s attitude towards him—“all the men liked him” (16). In this way Heasley is represented as an ally to the Black soldiers under his command, a reading that places him and the soldiers he led as advocates for not only abolition and Union victory, but also African-American economic equity.

The photographed portraits that Taylor uses to illustrate her memoir authenticate not only the truthfulness of the events she narrates, but also the centrality of her own participation in those events. In effect each of the written references of the Union officers casts each of them as “friends to the Negro,” and the well-known intimates of the writer. In a positive remembrance of White Union officer, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson—the only member of the regiment whose picture is as large and prominently displayed as her own—Taylor notes his devotion and commitment to his Black regiment as well as the regiment’s devotion and commitment to him (Figure 3-10):

Colonel Higginson had left us in May of this year, on account of wounds received at Edisto. All the men were sorry to lose him. They did not want him to go, they loved him so. He was kind and devoted to his men, thoughtful for their comfort, and we missed his genial presence from the camp. (Taylor 32)

Here Taylor begins her story about Higginson's leave-taking with statements of how the male soldiers reacted to losing him, of how "they" loved and respected him, of how "they" regretted his leave-taking (Taylor 32). The final sentence of the passage, however, switches from the use of the third-person to the use of the first-person. In going from "they" to "we," Taylor inserts herself into the story about the regiment's loss, thereby emphasizing her membership in the camp community.

Taylor again stresses the role that her labor played in the life of the camp by donning a nurse's uniform in the frontispiece portrait she uses to illustrate her memoir. In some ways similar to those used in conventional slave narratives, Taylor's frontispiece portrait frames and authenticates her narrative (Figure 3-9). Taylor's photograph, however, does not just authenticate her identity as a former slave; it also dignifies her labor. Towards these ends, Taylor displays herself and her labor in an unprecedented fashion, as not only a moral woman of modest means, but also as a woman who works in a skilled and specific capacity. Indeed, Taylor's photograph fits the genre of the occupation photograph as well as it does that of the slave narrative. As Santamarina argues in her reading of life narratives of Eliza Potter, Harriet Wilson, and Elizabeth Keckley, Taylor "reformulated her agency along the lines of her labor," and in doing so emphasized not only her contributions as a working woman, but also as a skilled laborer whose labor was essential to Union victory (8). In the photograph, Taylor is clothed entirely in black, with the white lace that edges her bonnet being the only exception. The dark color of her suit is typical of those worn by female nurses in a Union camp. However, the addition of the bonnet together with the stylish jacket, blouse, and skirt distinguishes Taylor as not only a nurse and veteran, but also as a middle-class matron,

an identity that only amplifies her claims for equal rights in the era of Jim Crow. As a corrective narrative to historical misconceptions about African-Americans' participation during the war, Taylor's photograph and her memoir emphasize the significance of Black men and women's contributions to Union victory. In the light of these sacrifices, Taylor makes a claim for equity that crosses not only racial boundaries, but also the boundaries of gender. Taylor uses the word "comrade" several times throughout her memoir. The word grew very popular after the war as a way for Civil war veterans—especially those who were members of the all-male, fraternal organization, the Grand Army of the Republic—to refer to one another. In an explicit challenge to the exclusion of women from membership in the GAR, Taylor points out the actions of women during and after the war, and asserts the need to include women's sacrifices in national narratives of reunion. As she writes in the Preface of her narrative:

I now present these reminiscences to you, hoping that it may prove of some interest and show how much service and good we can do to each other, and what sacrifices we can make for our liberty and rights, and that there were 'loyal women,' as well as men, in those days, who did not fear shell or shot, who cared for the sick and dying; women who camped and fared as the boys did, and who are still caring for the comrades in their declining years." (Taylor v)

Thereafter, Taylor writes of binding the wounds of hurt and fallen "comrades" (Taylor 43) and of reminiscing with and about "comrades" in the years following the war (Taylor 45; Taylor 54) as well as her own continued "interest in the boys in blue" including those "comrades" not connected with other Union veterans (Taylor 59). Taylor describes the

men that she worked with not merely as friends, but as embattled peers. In this sense then, the pictures that she collected is not merely a photographic album of Union notables, but a sort of friendship album, one through which she writes the details of her life in slavery and freedom.

Taylor ends her narrative with an enumeration of Southern horrors in the years following the end of the war. On her way to care for her dying son in 1898, Taylor travels to Shreveport, Mississippi. On her train ride through the post-bellum South, she hears stories about the violence and injustice engendered by Jim Crow. In one scene she describes the extra-judicial murder of a Black man by his White co-worker:

There was a man murdered in cold blood for nothing. He was a colored man and a “porter” in a store in [Shreveport]. A clerk had left his umbrella at home. It had begun to rain...and looking for his umbrella, he could not, of course, find it. He asked the porter if he had seen it. He said no, he had not. “You answer very saucy,” said the clerk, and drawing he shot the colored man dead. (Taylor 73)

Taylor’s relation of this story is the longest one in a series of outrages, including: riding in segregated railcars; being unable to buy a “berth... on a sleeper” so as to bring her son “home to die;” witnessing a man being hung (Taylor 71; Taylor 72; Taylor 74). In the face of these outrages, however, Taylor still seems hopeful and urges the nation to enact justice “so that the stars and stripes should never be polluted” (Taylor 76). She ends her memoir with a photograph that she captions “My School House in Savannah” as both a visual representation of that hope, as well as to reiterate her memoir’s primary claim—that Black women’s labor is both necessary for and worthy of full citizenship for all

Americans (Figure 3-13).

In narratives like those of Jackson, Keckley, and Taylor, Black women writers framed and documented the actions of African-American women during the U.S. Civil War. In this way, these women's memoirs sought to correct a historical record that left Black women out of the narratives of war and reunion that had so re-shaped the nation. In doing so, they also brought attention to the persistence of injustice towards African-Americans. In their allusions to photographs, real and imagined, formerly enslaved African-American women shaped the ways in which their lives were pictured. By using these photographs as sites of memory, each woman used her own remembrances of the war as an authenticating device. In this sense, it is not the photographic object, but the ways in which the photographic object prompts the narrator to "reminiscence" that affords each of the women's narratives the air of truth. In using the real and imagined photographs of the Civil War past, African-American women writers embrace the medium as a tool by which to affirm the citizenship they had already gained, and make plain the debt that those contributions place upon the rest of the nation in the era of Jim Crow.



Figure 3-1. "Marks of Punishment Inflicted Upon a Colored Servant in Richmond, Virginia." *Harper's Weekly*. July 28, 1866, p. 477. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library. <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu>





Figure 3-2. Original photo by Alexander Gardner. "President Lincoln—Photographed by Brady." Abraham Lincoln. Woodcut Illustration *Harper's Weekly*. April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1861, p.268. [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net).



Figure 3-3. Alexander Gardner, Mathew Brady's Washington Gallery. Portrait of Abraham Lincoln. CDV. February 23, 1861. Meserve-Kunhardt Collection. [www.mkfound.org](http://www.mkfound.org).



Figure 3-4. Photographer Unknown. "Unidentified African American boy standing in front of painted backdrop Showing American Flag and Tents." Tintype. Between 1861 and 1865. Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-36463.



ELIZABETH KECKLEY.

Figure 3-5. Artist Unknown. Elizabeth Keckley. 1866. *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*. University of North Carolina-Documenting the American South. [www.docsouth.net](http://www.docsouth.net).



Figure 3-6. Preston Butler. "Mary Todd with Willie and Tad." Glass Negative Print. 1863. Meserve-Kunhardt Collection. [www.mkfound.org](http://www.mkfound.org).



Figure 3-7. "President Lincoln at Home—Photographed by Mathew Brady." Woodcut Illustration. *Harper's Weekly*, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865. [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net).



Figure 3-8. Mathew Brady Studio. "Abraham Lincoln with his son, Tad." CDV. February 9, 1864. Meserve-Kunhardt Collection. [www.mkfound.org](http://www.mkfound.org).



*Susie King Taylor.*

Figure 3-9. Photographer Unknown. Susie King Taylor. Frontispiece Image, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).





THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON  
COLONEL FIRST SOUTH CAROLINA VOLUNTEERS  
*Afterwards 33d U. S. C. T.*

Figure 3-10. Artist Unknown. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Colonel First South Carolina Volunteers, Afterwards 33<sup>rd</sup> U.S.C.T. Photographer Unknown. Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author.

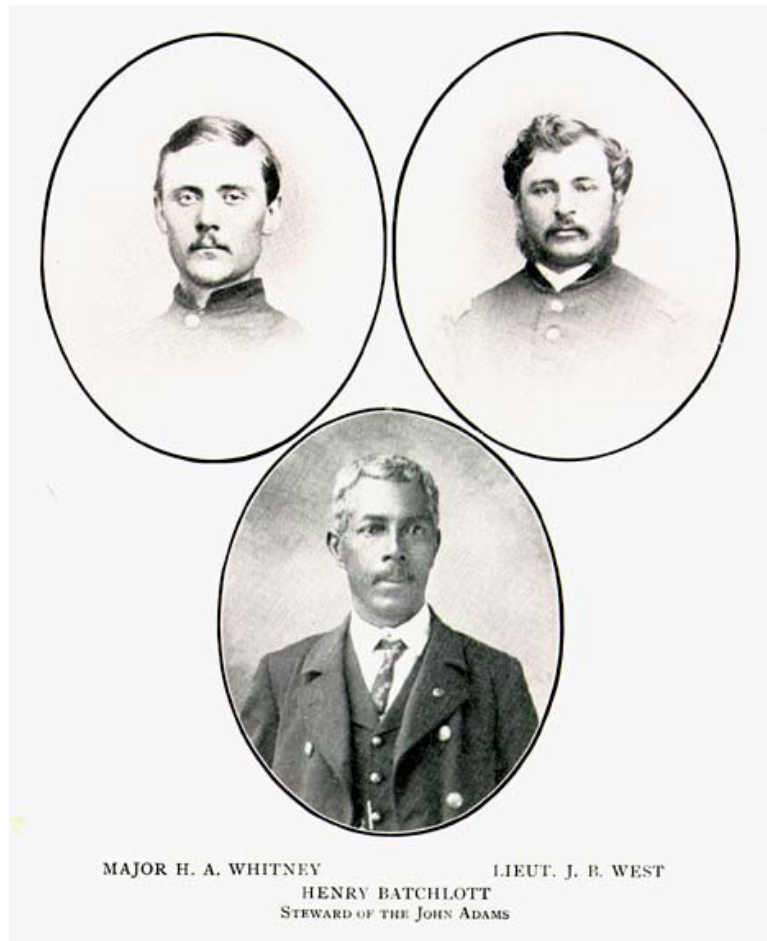
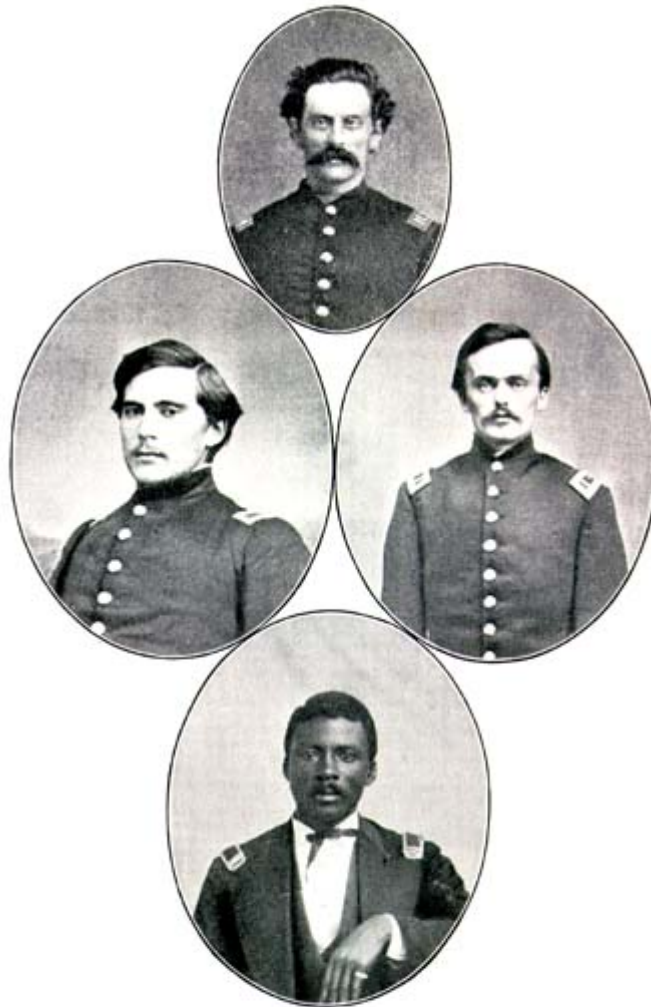


Figure 3-11. Artist Unknown. Major H.A. Whitney, Liet. J.B. West, Henry Batchlott, Steward of the John Adams. Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).



CAPT. L. W. METCALF  
CAPT. MIRON W. SAXTON      CAPT. A. W. JACKSON  
CORPORAL PETER WAGGALL.

Figure 3-12. Artist Unknown. Capt. J.W. Metcalf, Capt. Miron W. Saxton, Capt. A.W. Jackson, Corporal Peter Waggall. Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).



MY SCHOOLHOUSE IN SAVANNAH

Figure 3-13. Photographer Unknown. "My School House in Savannah." Susie King Taylor. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*. Half-Tone. 1902. Boston. Published by the Author. [www.docsouth.unc.edu](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu).

## Chapter Four

### “A Kind of Literary Archeology”: Post-Memory and the Proto-Neo-Slave Narrative in Paul Laurence Dunbar's Photo-texts

“Every phase of Negro life has been caught by [Dunbar's] pen as by a camera.”

—W.S. Scarborough

Southern trees bear a strange fruit/Blood on the leaves and blood at the root/Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze/Strange fruit hangin' from the poplar trees

—“Strange Fruit” Written by Abel Meeropol, and Sung by Billie Holiday

“A new and more dastardly slavery has arisen to replace the old.”

—Paul Laurence Dunbar

In the years following the U.S. Civil War, former slaves and their children and grandchildren worked to reconcile the promises of emancipation with the lived realities of Jim Crow segregation. In an essay re-printed in the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1903 edition of *The New York Times*, poet Paul Laurence Dunbar spoke of Jim Crow as a “new and more dastardly slavery,” citing the prevalence of debt peonage and domestic terrorism as evidence of slavery's enduring presence at the turn of the century (“Fourth of July and Race Outrages,” 2). Dunbar wrote the article in response to riots that had occurred in Evansville, Indiana on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1903. The riots were sparked by the murder of White police officer, Louis Massey in a shoot-out, and the subsequent attempted lynching of an African-American man named John Tinsley, who stood accused of the crime. In the days following the incident hundreds of African-Americans homes and businesses had been targeted by vandals, a dozen people had been killed, and 30 others injured (Madison 19). *The San Francisco Call* asserts that some White citizens in Evansville had vowed to

“exterminate the Negro population” (*The San Francisco Call*, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1903).

For Dunbar, the Evansville riot was like so many others that had taken place throughout the country in that it made clear the ubiquitous and persistent instances of lynching and other forms of racialized violence.<sup>37</sup> Dunbar uses the genre of the prose essay to identify the myriad injustices enacted upon African-Americans at the turn of the century as “a new and more dastardly” iteration of the injustices of the U.S. slave past (“Fourth of July and Race Outrages,” 2). For Dunbar the exponential increase of racialized violence and extra-judicial murders seemed not a continuation, but an amplification of slavery’s violence and terror. And yet Dunbar’s dialect poems are a far cry from the fiery indictments wrought by his prose essays, short stories, and standard English verse. This raises questions about his oeuvre, a body of work distinguished by dialect poems in which formerly enslaved narrators and their descendents narrate stories about their interpersonal connections with one another.

Known by his contemporaries and critics as primarily a writer of “negro songs,” or “negro ballads,” Dunbar’s dialect poetry has led some critics to identify Dunbar and his poetry as woefully conciliatory.<sup>38</sup> Part of my argument is that Dunbar’s dialect poems operate as first-person testimonies from formerly enslaved eye-witnesses—sentimental meditations that complicate the myth of the ante-bellum South as lost idyll. I also demonstrate how the subversive meanings of such poems were many times undercut or overwhelmed by the addition of photographic illustrations. In this chapter, I ask how we ought to read Dunbar’s photographically illustrated dialect poems in light of his 1903 condemnation of Jim Crow America? In what ways are Dunbar’s poems in conversation with the visual narratives of slavery and freedom that preceded them? And how might

Dunbar's body of work help us to locate the literary legacy between the photographically-mediated slave narratives of the nineteenth-century and African-American literature written by cultural producers who knew of slavery only through its traces—through the stories, material objects, and varied pictures of slavery as it was?

In this chapter, I engage closely with three of Dunbar's characteristic poems, all of which were photographically illustrated and published in *Poems of Cabin and Field* (1899) and *Candle Lightin' Time* (1901). Written thirty-five years after the end of slavery, Dunbar's poems conjoin with photographic images taken by the Hampton Institute Camera Club to form collaboratively produced photo-texts that illustrate the felt presence of slavery and the forgotten meanings of emancipation. Dunbar played a key part in deciding which poems would be illustrated, but had, by all accounts, a fairly limited say about which photographs would be used to illustrate his poems. In photographically-inflected ballads like "The Deserted Plantation," "A Banjo Song," and "When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers," Dunbar and the Camera Club present a series of biographies of African-American figures so as to develop a composite picture of the "domestic" life of enslaved people before and after the end of slavery. Ultimately, I argue, these photo-textual pictures of slavery simultaneously re-inscribe and refute fictions about former slaves' fitness for citizenship. At the same time, his work suggests the ongoing and complex meanings of the photographic archive as a resource for memory work by African-American writers.

One of my aims in focusing on Dunbar's ballads is to connect him more visibly with writers in the African-American tradition who are often seen to have exceeded or resisted his legacy. Those connections are particularly powerful around the problem of

remembering slavery. In her lecture “Site of Memory,” Toni Morrison tasks those who write about historical events like slavery to “a kind of literary archeology” in which a writer combines his or her own “recollections” of the past with the tangible “remains [of what was] left behind [so as] to reconstruct” the interior lives of his or her characters (92). I contend that Dunbar anticipates Morrison’s approach by nearly a hundred years. Turn-of-the-century popular literature and visual culture generally imagined African-Americans through a lens of racist iconography and with a nostalgia for a South that never was. Dunbar’s efforts to re-envision the interior lives of former slaves, however,—most notably in regard to their remembrances of things past— produced an archive that pushed the boundaries of the dialect poem or “negro ballad’s” formal conventions, and experimented with the limits and possibilities of remembering slavery after its end.

This experiment was hindered, however, by the generic conventions of the form as well as the expectations of Dunbar’s audience. As Michael Cohen notes, even though Dunbar was born after Emancipation and lived most of his life in the North and Midwest, “he became the poet of Southern rural Black folk because pre-existing modes of thought about folk genres provided readers with paradigms to read him as such” (248). Cohen describes the ways in which Dunbar’s dialect poetry was re-imagined by his reading public within the context of the “negro ballad,” a generic designation whose meanings extended from the ballad to the negro spiritual to the minstrel song (248). For Cohen, the negro ballad was used to substitute or “stand [-in] for” the experiences of individual Black Americans (248). As the turn-of-the-century cipher for Black life, the “negro ballad” served a function similar to that of the U.S. slave narrative. In this way, Dunbar’s embrace of the form places him in a predicament similar to literary predecessors like



Frederick Douglass and Charles Ball in that it limited Dunbar's artistic license and failed to give him—as Douglass might put it— “room to grow” (Douglass, *Life and Times* 219).

Dunbar himself recognized many of his poems as narratives in function if not in form, entry-points into the storyscapes of the people and places of the slave past. As he states in a 1902 interview with the *Chicago Tribune* when asked his thoughts on the dialect poem, otherwise known as “the negro song”:

Sometimes I am fascinated by the negro song. It carries me along—writes or sings itself. But the form is so purely lyrical that it is limited. . . . the negro ballad is well adapted to be narrative, but it must be simple narrative. It cannot be epic. . . . [W]hatever is most charming about the negro dialect is in the way of endearing words. Its genre is domestic, so to speak. (qtd. in Cohen 247)

Dunbar re-names the interviewer's term “the negro song” to what he refers to again and again as “the negro ballad” (qtd. in Cohen 247). A genre that Dunbar describes as incapable of “epic” tales, the “negro ballad” is instead relegated to narrating instances of the “domestic” (qtd. in Cohen 247). As Dunbar notes, the “simple narrative” generated by the genre was the direct consequence of its limitations (qtd. in Cohen 247). Here Dunbar makes a connection between content and form, suggesting that the poetry on which his fame was founded—“the negro song”/“the negro ballad”— not only elides the dynamic life narratives of former slaves and their descendents, but also lacks the narrative structure needed to do otherwise. Dunbar offers no clear sense of what kind of narrative might be used to narrate “a new and dastardly slavery” (qtd. in Cohen 247). He does, however, work to subvert the “limit[at]ions” of the genre by using the “domestic”

qualities of “the negro ballad” as a site of memory (Dunbar, as qtd. in Cohen 247).

Dunbar’s use of the forms and conventions of the “negro ballad” might productively be read within the context of his photographically illustrated editions of poetry. Indeed, his early readers were likely to encounter his poetry within the context of this multi-medial form.<sup>39</sup> In many of the illustrated poems that Dunbar published between 1899 and 1906 the poet’s ballads were juxtaposed against a number of staged photographic portraits. Such portraits, because of their efforts to be faithful to Dunbar’s ballads, offer pictures of African-Americans that—like the visual slave narratives of the Civil war—try and fail to use the former slave’s face and form as an epistemological tool, a text by which to read the experience of African-Americans writ large. In what follows, I trace the resonances of the photographically-inflected slave narrative in the photo-texts produced by Dunbar and the Hampton Institute’s Camera Club.

The Hampton Institute Camera Club embarked on a notable project of image-making in their collaboration with Dunbar and his publishers, a project that produced “the largest discrete body of images published of African-Americans to date” (Sapirstein, “Out From Behind the Mask” 168). By looking at the unique interplay between Dunbar’s poems and the Photo Club’s photographs, I demonstrate how the photographically-mediated slave narrative inflected the meanings of Dunbar’s words and the Camera Club’s pictures. I intervene in contemporary conversations about Dunbar’s varied body of work by looking at the ways in which the Hampton photo-texts contest the memory of slavery a generation after its abolition. I extend, for example the argument that literary scholar Andrew Heisel advances in his 2012 article, “What to do with ‘Southern Negro Types’ in Dunbar’s Hampton Volumes.” Heisel argues that scholars

who identify affirmative visions of Black family life in Dunbar's poetry fail to take into account the often negative connotations of the photographs that accompany them. Citing minstrel show figures and Currier and Ives *Darktown* series, Heisel argues that the photographs in the Dunbar/Hampton photo-texts offer a conception of the "real" that relegates Black life to mere caricature, thus diminishing any subversive or revisionary aim in Dunbar's dialect poetry. Heisel rightly notes the ways in which the juxtaposition of text and image cause Dunbar's photo-texts to "alternately" support and challenge the ideologies of writers like Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page (243). He does not, however, take into account the varied literary and visual archives to which Dunbar's oeuvre is indebted (243). I read Dunbar's photo-texts as borrowing from literary traditions that were already highly mediated (e.g. the visual slave narratives of the Civil war as published in cartes de visite and in illustrated newspapers) and by doing so demonstrate the enduring power of the photographically-mediated slave's narrative in ballads like "When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers."

I also challenge readings that argue that the six collections offer a subversively triumphant vision of Black life. For example, Ray Sapirstein reads the Dunbar/Hampton volumes as "implicitly critiq[ing] racial and cultural hierarchies from under cover within established forms" (170). Although Dunbar does accomplish this work, and the accompanying photographs sometimes do, both rarely "critique racial and cultural hierarchies" at the same time or in synergy. By thinking through the tension wrought by the photographs' employment as illustrations or extensions of the poems, I aim to demonstrate how photographic representations of former slaves had their own unique meanings, meanings that are not merely illustrated, but rather are by turns amplified and

undercut by the addition of written text.

My chapter extends Hiesel's and Sapirstein's readings by identifying the poems' simultaneous acts of subversion and conciliation as the result of both the tension inherent between word and image, as well as the shifting meanings of photographic pictures in different cultural and historical contexts. I locate the specific ways in which a generation of stories and pictures influenced how the Dunbar/Hampton photo-texts might be read as a retrospective re-tooling of the visual slave narrative's conventions. By employing Morrison's theory about memory as a "site," a place one returns to via the material remains of the past, I argue that the tensions that exists between Dunbar's photographs and the Camera Club's pictures demonstrate the danger of mistaking photographs for indexical markers of lived or historical reality, or a poet's verse—however vernacular its key—as a straightforward description of the real. In other words, I argue that the photo-texts produced by Dunbar and the Hampton Photo Club uncover both the intricate semantics of the photo-text as a genre, and the complicated legacy of slavery's narrative representation. At its farthest reaches, such a reading helps us better understand the offices of the photograph and its critical role in the ongoing efforts of African-American writers and subjects to represent themselves as participants and contributors in the life of the nation. This chapter, then, will pick up where the last one left off—on the role of photographic illustration and African-American literary intervention in imagining the future of Black Americans.

### Picturing the Poet of a People

Born seven years after the end of the Civil war, Paul Laurence Dunbar was raised in Dayton, Ohio and was educated in the all white Central High School (University of

Dayton). Dunbar early on demonstrated literary gifts. Serving as the editor of the school newspaper and president of the school's literary society, Dunbar published his first poems, "Our Martyred Soldiers" and "On the River" at the age of 16 (University of Dayton). Dunbar was the son of former slaves; his mother Matilda had been freed in Kentucky, and his father Joshua emancipated himself and soon after he joined the Union army. Dunbar often culled material for his poems from the stories told to him by former slaves (Rice 89). The stories that Dunbar heard as a young man, then, undoubtedly influenced how he wrote about slavery. I emphasize this formative experience to mark a difference from earlier readings of Dunbar which tend to identify his primary influence as the plantation literature tradition. Although Dunbar was undoubtedly influenced by the popular literature of the plantation writers, there is also evidence that he was just as influenced by the men and women whose lives in slavery became the narrative backdrop of his own life narrative. Via the stories of loved ones and friends, Dunbar heard stories about slavery and the Civil war—stories of rank injustice as well as agentive tales of heroism—that were worlds away from the plantation literature popular at the turn of the century.

Indeed, personal recollections, scrapbooks, and photo albums about U.S. slavery and the Civil War, no doubt influenced how Dunbar and his interlocutors—his reviewers, his readers, and his Hampton Photo Club collaborators—represented the past. When one frames Dunbar's turn of the century photo-texts in this light—as a young poet's attempt to conduct a "kind of literary archeology" with the stories and pictures of the past—we more accurately read the complicated meanings latent in Dunbar's poetry, particularly as they intersect with the dynamic meanings of the Camera Club's pictures. As the indexical

evidence of a particular time and place, photographs wield the uncanny ability to convince us that we can access the past in ways that words cannot. What, however, are the limits of these beliefs? What happens if we rely on the photograph to transport us to the past? Or, to put it another way, how does the illusion of “having been there” affect the lived realities of the here and now?

Focusing on Dunbar’s photo-texts, I conclude *Picturing Slavery* with a look at the larger implications of the photographically inspired slave narrative for African-American literature at the turn of the century. By concluding in this way, I hope to demonstrate how interrogating the medial and generic boundaries of the slave narrative might change the way we think about its literary after-lives. Specifically, I explore the idea of Dunbar’s photo-texts as a turn-of-the-century precursor to the neo-slave narrative genre. I thereby aim to expand how we think of not only the nineteenth-century slave narrative, but also their twentieth-century after-lives.

To demonstrate how the photographically inflected slave narrative influenced the meanings of Dunbar’s verse, I will begin with an account of how writer and literary critic, William Dean Howells read Dunbar’s photographed portrait, and by extension, Dunbar himself. In doing so, I interrogate the meanings of photographic representation, especially as it relates to the photograph’s supposed ability to demonstrate what is real or authentic about a photographed sitter. The remainder of the chapter includes a reading of selected poems from the first two collections. I end the chapter with a meditation on the limits of photographic representation and the dangers of representing slavery’s after-lives with a “picture”.

In the first major review of his career, Dunbar’s face and form transports both his

reviewer and the young poet back in time (Figure 4-2). Based on Dunbar's second volume of published poems *Majors and Minors*, and published in 1896 in *Harper's Weekly*, William Dean Howells's book review of Dunbar's work positions the photographed portrait of the young poet as a "site of memory," one that operates in reverse. For Howells, Dunbar's photographed portrait encourages him to imaginatively transport the free Northern-born Dunbar back in time and through space to the U.S. antebellum South (630). When he reads the free-born, Ohio native within the visual and discursive framework of the ante-bellum South, Howells inhabits slavery's memory in a way that assesses Dunbar and his poetry against the rubric of racist ideologies about physical appearance and an enslaved status:

The face that confronted me when I opened the volume was the face of a young negro, with the race traits strangely accented: the black skin, the woolly hair, the thick outrolling lips, and the mild soft eyes of the pure African type...I suppose that a generation ago he would have been worth, apart from the literary gift, twelve or fifteen hundred dollars, under the hammer. (Howells 630)

Upon seeing the young poet's photographed portrait, and despite his dignified dress and pose, Howells looks upon Dunbar and imagines him as for sale to the highest bidder (Fig. 4-2). When Howells muses that Dunbar's face and form would have earned "twelve or fifteen hundred dollars, under the hammer," he speaks explicitly to Dunbar's contemporary cultural value not only as an authenticated representative of former slaves, but also as himself a slave in form if not in fact. Dunbar's form, then, his "black skin, woolly hair, thick outrolling lips," and "mild soft eyes" all form a picture of the "pure

African type,” an identity that Howells sees as always already “under the hammer” of the U.S. slave past. In a review that became a defining moment in Dunbar’s career, Howells looks upon Dunbar’s photographed portrait and sees a slave, an estimation that for Howell equates Dunbar’s identity as a “true African” with his imagined identity as a potential slave.

And yet Dunbar’s possible designation as chattel is, for Howells, exactly what marks the young poet’s work as “authorat[ative]” (630). And, what might at first be considered a bizarre blip in Howells’ otherwise glowing review of Dunbar’s work is instead the key by which the rest of the review ought to be read. Indeed, Howells makes an explicit connection between the authority of Dunbar’s physicality and the authority of Dunbar’s use of dialect. For Howells, the “direct and fresh authority” of Dunbar’s dialect is only “intensified” by his photographed portrait (630). As several scholars have noted Howells identifies Dunbar’s use of dialect as evidence of his “literary gift.” However, he authenticates Dunbar via his photographed portrait before doing so. In this way, Dunbar’s authority to speak is affirmed by his image in the book’s frontispiece. Via a tacit invocation of slave narrative conventions, Howells derives Dunbar’s authenticity as a writer from the visual affirmation of his African ancestry as well as his use of Southern Black dialect, what Frederick Douglass, fifty years earlier, described as “a little bit of the plantation speech” (qtd. in McFeely 95). In addition to the use of dialect on the lecture circuit, slave narrators were usually encouraged to include their portrait in the beginning of their written narratives.

The logic of Howells’s review then interprets Dunbar’s frontispiece portrait as a sort of odd continuation of the slave narrative tradition, one that was repeated in



Dunbar's next book of poems, *Lyrics of Lowly Life: With an Introduction by W.D. Howells* (Figure 4-3). For the rest of his career, Dunbar would be praised as a son of the Black South, his birth and upbringing in Ohio, notwithstanding. Howells's evocation of his photographed portrait and use of dialect, in other words, set the tone of Dunbar's reception; they worked together to make Dunbar famous, a fame that brought the poet to the attention of Virginia's Hampton Institute, a school dedicated both to the vocational education of former slaves and their descendents, as well as to the (problematic) assimilation and re-education of Native-American youth. The school sponsored a photo club called the Hampton Institute Camera Club—whose members facetiously referred to themselves as the Kiquotan Kamera Klub, or the KKK—and consisted of mostly White Hampton faculty who were avid amateur photographers. After having engaged in a series of photographic projects, one of which was a character study of the “Auntie,” “Uncle,” and “Mammy” figures ubiquitous in minstrel and popular American imagery, the Camera Club, in response to Dunbar's growing popularity, decided to illustrate Dunbar's “The Deserted Plantation,” a poem that had been previously published in *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896), Dunbar's third book of poems. (Oswald 216).

Members of the club eventually sent the illustrated version of the poem to Dunbar's publishers at Dodd, Mead, and Company. In response to this, Dunbar's publishers approached the poet with the idea of photographically illustrating a book of poems; that book, *Poems of Cabin and Field* was published in 1899. It is unclear whether or not Dunbar saw or approved of “The Deserted Plantation” before beginning what would become a seven-year collaboration. Ray Sapirstein's study of the Dodd/Dunbar correspondence, however, does reveal that Dunbar sent his publishers

poems that he would like to have illustrated, and that the publishers forwarded those poems on to the Camera Club. The Hampton photographers, at least in the case of *Poems of Cabin and Field*, rejected some poems as inappropriate for illustration while accepting others (Saperstein, *Out From Behind the Mask*, 142).

The popularity of *Poems of Cabin and Field* led to the production of five other photographically illustrated collections of Dunbar's verse: *Candle Lightin' Time* (1901); *When Malindy Sings* (1903); *L'il Gal* (1904); *Howdy, Honey, Howdy* (1905); and, *Joggin' Erlong* (1906) (Sapirstein 197). Although photographically-illustrated books of poetry were a popular form at the turn of the century, the texts produced by Dunbar and the Hampton Camera Club had a distinctive aim; they sought to envision for its post-bellum audience what slavery was like and how it might be remembered (Oswald 213). The first edition of *Poems of Cabin and Field* were popular enough to warrant multiple editions and six separate collections, and lucrative enough to support the poet when illness kept him from his usual prolific output. Working collaboratively with Dunbar, members of the Hampton Camera Club enlivened Dunbar's verse with images of local Black men, women, and children, a number of whom were either survivors of U.S. slavery or the children and grandchildren of survivors (Sapirstein 169). The Camera Club members engaged this cast of actors to produce a series of photo-texts that consisted, mostly, of photographically illustrated versions of Dunbar's ballads. The resulting photo-texts were, in effect, culled from an "archeolog[ical] site" of living survivors, people whose lives, stories, and photographed images draw a complex picture of how slavery and emancipation were remembered (and forgotten) at the turn of the century.

Although Dunbar's poems in many ways cater to the "limitations" of the "negro ballad," he nonetheless uses the genre as a means by which to take seriously the enslaved person's interior life. In "The Deserted Plantation," the poem is told from the first-person perspective of an elderly man who remembers lost friendships. By focusing on the speaker's loss rather than on an imagined and vacuous embrace of slavery for slavery's sake, Dunbar frames the plantation as a site of memory, one in which the "negro ballad" might be transformed in subtle, but meaningful ways. In this way, Dunbar's invocation of interpersonal relationships goes beyond a mere sentimental gesture. In the photographically illustrated version of the "The Deserted Plantation," however, Dunbar's subtle subversion is overwhelmed by the Camera Club's uneven attempts at mimetic representation.

Written in dialect, the poem, might be read as the prototypical "negro ballad" in that it explores the formerly enslaved speaker's memories of enslavement within the framework of sentiment, nostalgia, and happy times gone by. However, the poem's insists that it is the accoutrements of plantation life that act as an entry point into the speaker's inner life, and in so doing makes complex and tragic the stereotype of the faithful Negro servant. In an otherwise "simple narrative," the poem's first stanza describes the plantation's decay (Dunbar, qtd. In Cohen 247):

Oh, de grubbin'-hoe's a-rustin' in de co'nah  
An' de plow's a-tumblin' down in the fiel'  
While the whippo'will's a wailin like a mou'nah  
When his stubbo'n hea't is tryin' ha'd to yiel'  
(Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 13)

The speaker begins the poem by describing the dilapidated state of the plantation's work tools. Given the centrality of the "hoe" and "plow" in the life of the antebellum plantation, a lack of usable tools speaks to a lack of an available work force to maintain them (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 13). For the poem's speaker, however, the tools serve as relics, the evocative remains of the past which encourage the speaker to speak about his loss, a connection that is made evident by the whippoorwill's plaintive moans. In the second line of the quatrain, the poem's speaker makes a shift in perceptual register to describe not what he can see, but what he can hear, and does so to identify the missing laborers as the reason behind his own personal sense of lament. When the speaker attributes agency and will to the whippoorwill's incessant song, suggesting that its "stubborn h'eat is tryin' ha'd to yiel'," Dunbar alludes both to the association of the whippoorwill with mourning and loss, as well as to the employment of the bird's call as a means of covert communication between enslaved people (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 13). In this way, the speaker shares his sorrow through the whippoorwill's cries, a sort of mediated mourning that reveals part of the speaker's hidden interiority.

In "The Deserted Plantation" there is a photograph that accompanies each stanza as well as a photograph that precedes the poem and frames it. The frontispiece for "The Deserted Plantation" is not the speaker's portrait, but a landscape scene, a photograph of a river flanked by trees and bushes (Figure 4-4). The photograph of the river sets the actions of the poem in a rural location, one in which the presence of the river alludes to both the possibility of mobility alongside the likelihood of stability, a rootedness magnified by the large tree in the upper left-hand corner. This tension between mobility and stability is played out in the rest of the poem in which a solitary speaker questions the

reasons behind the plantation's "desert[ion]" (11). The poem's speaker, set against an Edenic natural landscape, is represented as merely a feature of that landscape, a notion that is amplified in the poem's second photographic illustration, which shows a man standing behind a pile of old and broken work tools, (Figure 4-5). Although placed at the center of the image, the speaker takes up little space in the photograph's frame, and his humble pose—hands crossed, legs together, head down—makes him appear to take up even less. Whether he is in mourning or adopting the obsequious pose of the faithful and ready servant, the poem's representation of Dunbar's first-person speaker fails to represent him in a manner true to his song.

Metaphorically mired in memories that pin him between the spatial and temporal lacunae of the past, the speaker walks the plantation grounds and laments the loss of those he loved. In a number of stanzas that call by name those no longer there—"Uncle Mordecai," "Uncle Aaron," "Aunt Doshy, Sam, and Kit" (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 23)—the speaker affects a sense of loss and longing that is not tied to a desire to serve a slaveholding master, but is instead linked to membership in a community:

Whah's ol' Uncle Mordecai an' Uncle Aaron?

Whah's Aunty Doshy, Sam, an' Kit, an' all de re'?

Whah's ol' Tom de da'ky fiddlah, how's he farin'?

Whah's de gals dat used to sing an' dance de bes'? (Dunbar 23)

In this particular "negro ballad," when the speaker sings a song of lament for friends and family, he places his voice and their memory at the center of the poem's narrative. Each line in the stanza is phrased as a question about the location and condition of the men and women he once knew. The speaker's questioning, however, speaks to his concern and to

his desire for reunion, and not to a servile desire for slavery's return.

The theme of desertion is thus complicated by the speaker's professed interest in wanting to remain on the plantation:

Dey have lef de ol' plantation to de swallers

But it hol's in me a lover till de las':

Fu' I fin' hyeah in de memory dat follers

All dat loved me an' dat I loved in de pas'. (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 27)

Contrary to vague presumptions about former slaves love of service and devotion to slaveholders, the speaker clarifies that it is the people "dat [he] loved" that has tied him to the plantation and to the past (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field*, 27). In other words, the speaker loves the plantation ("it hol's in me a lover till de las'") because it is through engagement with its material remains—the broken tools and plaintive cries of mourning whippoorwills—that he can re-animate the relationships of his antebellum past.

Understanding the plantation, then, as a site of memory, the speaker remains there because of the memories that it invokes.

When the Camera Club's photographs are added to Dunbar's poems, however, the resulting photo-text transforms the speaker's memories into a narrative so simple that its simplicity leads to its being totally transparent, absolutely accessible. In doing so, the poem's photographic illustrations work to transport the reader to the plantation of antebellum days. Once excised from the photographs' visual narrative, the speaker is relegated to the position of "recorder," he whose memories allows readers to experience the picture of slavery's past. This is accomplished by the speaker's absence from the

visual narrative that accompanies his spoken words. In tandem with the portraits, the speaker's words appear to transport readers of the volume to the past to see slavery's "happy times" for themselves:

Whah's de da'kies den dat used to be a-dancin'  
Ev'ry night befo' de ol' cabin do'?'  
Whah's de chillun, den date used to be a-prancin'  
Er a-rollin' in de san' er on de flo'?'  
(Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 21)

In this stanza, the reader is not only given direct access to the speaker's interior life, but also enters the speaker's memories so as to see what he has seen. Each photograph's composition mirrors this intrusion. The memories that have been illustrated by the Hampton photographers include those of "de chillun" that the speaker describes as "a-rollin' in de san' er on de flo'" (Dunbar 21). In the photograph, however, the song, dance, and play of the speaker's loved ones appear stiff and constructed. In Figure 4-6, for example, a group of children sit idly on the dirt-covered ground in a manner that suggests they had been given instructions on how to pose. The children do not, however, "danc[e]" and "pranc[e]" in the ways that the speaker remembers (Dunbar 21). Although the lack of actual movement was likely required so as to create a clean print of the scene, the camera's inability to capture the sportiveness of the scene that Dunbar's speaker recalls, undercuts the meanings of Dunbar's poem. Assembled demurely in ways that better resemble a genre painting of the old South than a candid representation of young children at play, the photograph illustration to Dunbar's verse fails to translate Dunbar's poem into picture-form. In its efforts to picture in visual form the speaker's orally

transmitted memories, the Camera Club photographers create a parallel visual narrative, one that, when read alongside Dunbar's verse, presents a much less nuanced defense of the speaker's decision to remain on the plantation.

The use of material objects as sites of memory is a key feature of Dunbar's "A Banjo Song," the poem that ends the volume. While "The Deserted Plantation" demonstrates how its formerly enslaved speaker uses sites of memory as a means by which to preserve intimate connection to the past, "A Banjo Song" shows how acts of intimacy and friendship might imbue an object with memorial power. Illustrated with nine separate photographs, the poem is written in dialect and was originally published in Dunbar's 1895 book of poems, *Majors and Minors*. Set in the ante-bellum South, "A Banjo Song"—unlike "The Deserted Plantation"—offers us a view of how a site of memory is forged. In this poem, the banjo that hangs on the speaker's wall is a source of pleasure, a part of a lived reality that allows its listener to escape from the troubles of his world. As the speaker describes:

Oh, dere's lots o' keer an' trouble  
In dis world to swaller down;  
An' ol' Sorrer's purty lively  
In her way o' gittin' roun'  
Yet dere's time when I furgit 'em,—  
Aches an' pains an' troubles all,—  
An' it's when I tek at ebenin'  
My ol' banjo f'om de wall  
(Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 111)



As a material reminder of future pleasures, the banjo—and the intimate connections that it engenders—acts as an antidote to the “pains and troubles” of the speaker’s daily life (111). For the speaker, the banjo is significant not because it reminds him of the past, but because it allows him to forget the “cares and troubles” of today. The speaker describes how the act of playing the banjo is shared exclusively with family and friends (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field*, 115):

An’ my wife an’ all de othahs,—  
Male an’ female, small an’ big,—  
Even up to gray-haired granny,  
Seem jes buon’ to do a jig;  
Twell I change de style o’ music,  
Change de movement an’ de time,  
An’ de ringin’ little banjo  
Plays an ol’ hea’t-feelin’ hime  
(Dubar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 117)

The party of singers and merry-makers that the speaker describes represent a diverse group of men, women, and children, all of whom share a variety of interpersonal ties with the speaker. Unlike the “used to” of “The Deserted Plantation’s” song, the speaker’s remembrances are written in the present tense. The banjo is not yet a site of memory, it is becoming one—a designation that is emphasized by its prominent placement on the wall.

In its visual call to interpersonal connection, the banjo elicits emotions from the speaker that brings tears to his eyes in the here and now (Dunbar, *Poems of Cabin and Field* 119). However, the photographs that illustrate “A Banjo Song” begin with a

retrospective approach. The switch in time is suggested in the first photograph, where an elderly man sits on top of a small barrel (Figure 4-8). Legs crossed and arms resting lightly upon one knee, the man gazes up at a banjo resting on a fireplace mantel. The fireplace mantel and the banjo appear to be the only sources of comfort in a domestic space as damaged as it is bare. Unfinished walls and debris mark the space as inhospitable, at odds with the type of bucolic domestic scenes suggested by the poem's stanzas. Then, on the very next page, the banjo crosses generational boundaries to become a site of domestic comfort for a much younger viewer (Figure 4-7). With the photograph of a young boy, the camera frames what appears to be the same room from a different point of view. Standing with his back to the camera, the boy uses a single finger to touch the banjo's fingerboard. In what appears to be a moment of reverence and respect, the boy provides a parallel image to the old man's reverie. Indeed, the photographic imagery departs from the poem's meanings in each its preceding stanzas. For example, the photograph that should be illustrating a jig danced by old and young, instead features a group of awkwardly posed small children, whose awareness of the camera—one child looks over his shoulder to return the camera's gaze—speak to the obvious constructedness of the scene (Figure 4-9). A far cry from the scene described in Dunbar's verse, the photograph departs from the poem's affirmative representations of African-American community in the context of slavery's brutality, and instead inadvertently highlights the complicated racial relations of the postbellum South.

The poem and photographs do, however, seem to corroborate each other in the next stanza. Here, the speaker notes the emotional impact of remembering his "po' ol' granny's" singing to the music of the banjo. The photograph used to illustrate the stanza

features one of the women from the group portrait, an older woman draped in a white shawl (Figure 4-11). In this moment of remembrance, the poem and photograph both center on the banjo as an *objet de m*ori, with the song offering the nostalgic speaker access to a loved one lost to death or time. In the poem's final stanzas, Dunbar's speaker re-iterates earlier ideas about the necessity of the banjo to the enslaved person's few and limited opportunities for "joy."

Like the final photograph in "The Deserted Plantation," the second to last photograph of "A Banjo Song" features the speaker alone. In seeming reverie, the elderly man—the same man featured in the poem's framing images—sits outside of the cabin, holds his banjo in one hand, and cups his tilted head in the other. Dunbar's "A Banjo Song" ends where it begins—with the banjo at the center of the speaker's musings. The photographs offer a poor simulacra to the vibrant, complex experiences that the speaker himself describes. In this way, the photograph not only reinforces negative notions about how survivors of slavery did or ought to have remembered the slave past, but it also hides the depth of social relations that were so essential to African-American survival in the antebellum South.

Dunbar's focus on the domestic sphere become of national consequence in his Civil war era poem, "When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers". One of the few Dunbar poems that feature a female speaker, "When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers," describes how an enslaved woman undergoes a transformation of thought and action whose implications go beyond home and hearth. In the stanza that begins the poem, Dunbar's female protagonist speaks of her general disinterest about the war before her lover, Lias' tells her that he plans to join the Union army. She speaks of overhearing her mistresses "talkin' in

the cabin” and “talkin’ in the hall.” For her the mistresses concerns—about their Confederate male family members—meant little to the still enslaved speaker. However, when Lias’ shares his plans to escape from enslavement so as to join the Union army, the speaker’s view of the war and emancipation changes dramatically. In seeing the war via the perspective of the man she loves, she is drawn to the war and its outcomes by affective ties, and her love and devotion for Lias’ leads to her love for the Union blue.

Indeed, when she first sees Lias’ in his Union army uniform, she shares that “my hea’t nigh broke wid greivin’ twell I seed him on de street;/Den I felt lak I could go an’ th’ow my body at his feet,” suggesting the centrality of seeing in the speaker’s engagement with the war. In “see[ing][‘Lias] on de street,” the speaker is moved from grief at the loss of her loved one’s presence to joy in light of his new identity, an adoration that visually echoes the supplicant kneeling of slaves at the foot of Union soldiers, so common in the visual culture of the war. The speaker’s imagined image of the kneeling slave, however, is soon replaced with a verbal “hollah” that spurs the speaker to her feet, and moves her toward a new way of seeing. Much more than a mere replacement of a racial hierarchy with a gendered one, the speaker’s “hea’t br[eak]” is translated not into a menial kneeling but into a verbal affirmation in support of “Lias.” This focus on the speaker’s new way of seeing is explicated in the poem’s middle stanzas. When the speaker shares that the sight of her beloved seemed to her a cure for heartbreak, she reveals the ways in which the formerly enslaved person’s politicized consciousness sought to construct a sort of shadow archive to replace visual images of happy, beaten, or kneeling slaves.

Dunbar explicates this point at the end of the poem when the speaker compares

her mourning over the death of her beloved with the mourning of her mistress and her mistress's daughter over the death and serious injury of their father and brother (Terry 270). In one of the most surprising moments of the poem, the protagonist speaks of how her attempts to mourn for the deaths of her masters was thwarted by her love of 'Lias and "de Yankee blue":

Ol' Mis' cried w'en mastah lef' huh, young Miss mou'ned huh brotah  
Ned,  
An' I did n't know dey feelin's is de ve'y wo'ds dey said  
W'en I tol' 'em I was so'y. De had done gin up dey all;  
But dey only seemed mo' proudah dat dey men had hyeahded de call.  
Bofe my mastahs went in gray suits, an' I loved de Yankee blue,  
But I t'ought dat I could sorer for de losin' of 'em too;  
But I could n't, for I did n't know de ha'f o' whut I saw,  
'Twell dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my 'Lias went to wah.

Indeed, in reserving her sorrow for 'Lias and the "Yankee blue" only, Dunbar's speaker details her transformation from an enslaved member of a Southern household into an active political subject. Her expressed love for him, then, reconstructs not only the relevance of her own interior life, but his as well. When the speaker notes that she "did n't know de ha'f o' what [she] saw" until "dey 'listed colo'ed sojers," she notes the ways in which "gray suits" and the "Yankee blue" represented two very different possibilities for enslaved people like her and 'Lias. Although she feels "sorry" for her mourning mistresses, she fails to sorrow for her imperiled masters, a distinction that reveals a compassionate and sophisticated reading of the politics surrounding the South's secession

and the impending war. In withholding sorrow, the speaker does much more than challenge the reasons behind White men's fighting in the Confederate army. Rather, she marks a new and improved way of seeing, one which makes transparent a murky vision of the slave system and of her place in it—and ultimately her way out of it.

The nature of the speaker's mourning (and her understanding of it) is made even more explicit in the poem's final stanza. On receiving the news of 'Lias's death, the speaker remarks:

Den dey tol' me dey had laid him some'r's way down souf to res',  
Wid de flag dat he had fit for shinin' daih acrost his breas'.  
Well, I cried, but den I reckon dat's what Gawd had called him for,  
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an'my 'Lias went to wah.

In this final stanza, the speaker marks 'Lias's death as redemptive in ways that her masters' deaths were not. While her master is described as "broken," and his son is buried in an unmarked grave, 'Lias is described as laid to rest "wid de flag dat he had fit for shinin' daih acrost his breas'," a verbal description that marks the flag as not only something they "[ought]" to protect, but also as something to possess. In that he sports the Union flag on his breast, 'Lias differs from war era descriptions of both White Confederate slaveholders, and the fictional Black martyrs of Civil War popular culture, men whose identities as citizen-soldier were repeatedly denied via the flag's conspicuous absence. In having "fit for" the flag in battle, 'Lias proves himself fit for citizenship in death, a fact asserted by the speaker's subversive acts of mourning and narration. Dunbar's speaker further separates the quality of her mourning from that of her White mistresses by the inclusion of her casually resigned "Well" in the second to last line. The

speaker brackets her “tears” between the narrative’s temporal marker “Well,” and the seemingly tentative assertion that ‘Lias’s death was the perfect will of God, a divine “call” to end not only the war, but slavery itself.

Like the women memoirists in my previous chapter, Dunbar’s speaker challenges the racist logic of the before and after narrative by re-inscribing former slaves as full actors in the late war, and reconstructing the imagined interior (as well as the interpersonal connections) of a single soldier. The speaker’s politicized re-seeing must, however, be read within the context of her Camera Club’s photographic illustrations. The first photograph of the poem features a young Black man in Union military regalia. Sporting a kepi cap, cape, and mini rifle, the young soldier stands alongside a white picket fence. In the contemporary image that immediately follows this photograph illustrated the speaker’s ideological awakening, a young Black man poses as “Lias” in the same uniform that was featured in the beginning of the poem (Figure 4-14).

Taken by the Hampton Camera Club photographers in 1901, the image—in both composition and design—mirrors the popular photographs taken of Black soldiers from 1863 through the end of the Civil War in 1865. In the second chapter of my dissertation, I noted the rise of a new sub-genre of the slave narrative, a genre made possible by the popular portrait photographs of self-emancipated former slaves. These cartes de visite featured an image of a former slave taken before and after the moment of emancipation, and they accomplished the dual purposes of increasing mainstream support for emancipation while maintaining racial stereotypes that disqualified former slaves as future citizens. Via visual narratives that stressed the limiting negative stereotypes of Blacks as perpetually child-like (and therefore malleable) and hopelessly dependent (and

therefore loyal to their superiors), former slaves were imagined as ideal future laborers and soldiers, but not as equals capable of donning the role of citizen.

The Camera Club's re-mix of the before and after narrative is explicitly called forth in the photograph illustrating the poem's fourth stanza. Here "Lias" is photographed in profile, a stance and context similar to that of an 1864 photograph taken of Hubbard Pryor, a former slave and Union soldier. And yet, the photographs complex meanings change and shift depending on the words that accompany one's encounter with Hubbard's image. These myriad narratives and meanings were familiar to Dunbar's 1902 audience. Indeed, in Figure 4-17, 'Lias's image is augmented with shadows that soften the image, and make it seem more like a woodcut re-print than a modern-day photograph. In this way, the photograph's producer's make clear the picture's visual genealogy—a woodcut illustration published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1864 (Figure 4-15). The photographs' heroic meanings start to break down, when one considers that the *Harper's* article that accompanied that reproduced image of Hubbard was riddled with a series of questions concerning the Negro's ability to fight, and ends without proffering an answer.

The article's lack of an answer concerning the question of Black equality casts a shadow on how photographic reproductions of Hubbard might have been read by readers who still remembered the war. In that photographs of African-Americans were imbued with the racist ideologies of the U.S. slave past—consider William Dean Howells's reading of Dunbar's photographic portrait—readers who were alive during the time of the war, are in danger of misreading Hubbard's picture, and therefore, the Camera Club's homage to it. In other words, the danger of the image's re-production is that the meanings which readers attached to Pryor's images might be carried over from their 1864



contexts as a invisible partner text that influence negatively how readers interpret both the Camera Club's photographs and Dunbar's poem. In this way, the subversive meanings of Dunbar's poem are at risk of being lost or misinterpreted as a result of the echoes of not slavery itself, but its attendant racist ideologies, ideologies that were resonant and resounding in the visual culture of twentieth-century America.

Although "When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers" is one of Dunbar's most subversive ballads, it is by no means an aberration in his oeuvre. And yet, it is, however, one of the few of his subversive poems to be chosen for illustration. Indeed, letters between Dunbar and Dodd suggest that some poems were more adequate for photographic illustration than others. The archive is essentially silent, however, about the politics surrounding which poems would be illustrated and how. It is interesting to note, however, that most of the poems deemed appropriate for the photo-text volumes were written in dialect and took up sentimental topics. Dunbar's standard English poems as well as his short stories, and essays often protested the oppression and violence wrought by Jim Crow.<sup>40</sup> In poems like "To the South—On its New Slavery" and "The Haunted Oak," for example, Dunbar writes about the unfulfilled promises of Emancipation. As a means by which to discover why poems like the aforementioned might have resisted photographic illustration, I close the chapter with a reading of "The Haunted Oak."

In his poem "The Haunted Oak," a personified oak tree tells the story of a man who was arrested, kidnapped from prison, then murdered for a crime that he didn't commit. First published in *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*, "The Haunted Oak" was published with poems like "Dinah Kneading Dough," "Fishin'," and "When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers" all of which were picked up for re-publication in Dunbar's first

photographically illustrated book of poems. Dunbar heard the story that led to the writing of "The Haunted Oak" from an elderly friend who was once enslaved. Dunbar's friend told him of a tree with a withered bough that sat at the crossroads of the man's hometown in ante-bellum Georgia. This tree was said to be haunted by the spirit of an enslaved African-American man who was wrongfully murdered. Although "The Haunted Oak" is written in ballad form, it is—unlike the majority of Dunbar's ballads—written in standard English. In the poem, Dunbar uses the first-person perspective of a personified tree to construct a harrowing tale of haunting and subsequent revenge. Dunbar makes a series of bold claims about the injustice of lynching and the moral culpability of the ones who enact it. Based on the first-person testimony of one who had been there, he names the guilty parties by their professions—easy identifiers considering that the events took place in a small country town (Wagner 102).

Describing itself as "curse[d] [by] a guiltless man," the tree recounts the event in detail. On describing his kidnapping from the jail, the tree speaks directly to the condemned man:

Oh, foolish man, why weep you now?

'Tis but a little space,

And the time will come when these shall dread

The mem'ry of your face. (155)

In calling attention to the "mem'ry of [his] face," the oak anticipates the condemned man's "face" as an image that will haunt the lives of the men who killed him (155). In alluding to the condemned man's visage moments before narrating his murder, the personified oak evokes the modern day practice of photographing the condemned after

the moment of their death. Like Dunbar's antebellum protagonist, thousands of African-Americans were wrongfully murdered after false accusations of rape, theft, or no accusations at all. And the photographs, postcards, and newspaper stories that featured the dead and mutilated bodies of lynched men, women, and children soon became a ubiquitous part of U.S. visual culture. As literary critic, Sandra Gunning notes in her book *Race, Rape, and Lynching*, the many thousands of extra-judicial murders of African-Americans "proved particularly useful for White Americans seeking to come to terms with post-Civil War anxieties" (6). Indeed, a part of overcoming these "post-Civil War anxieties" included not only the selective forgetting of the slave past, but also the grotesque inclusion of lynching as a technology of terror, a site of memory in which the violence of Jim Crow American was almost indistinguishable from the violence of antebellum Georgia.

At the dawn of the century, African-American leaders, artists, and intellectuals also condemned the similarities between slavery and the domestic terrorism of Jim Crow. The ocular spectacle of the lynched Black body—what Blues singer Billie Holiday would later sing of as a "strange and bitter fruit"—became the new visual icon by which Americans came to understand the twentieth-century's racialized hierarchies. Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Dubois, and Mary Church Terrell, all of whom deemed lynching "the aftermath of slavery," all connected the social inequities of turn-of-the-century America with the ideologies, habits, and practices of a hundreds-years old institution (Rice 99). Like Dunbar, all three figures—DuBois most particularly—tested the usefulness of photographic illustration in written protests against oppression.

To conclude, Dunbar's explicit comparison with slavery and the Jim Crow era suggests

that, overall, formerly enslaved peoples' life stories—especially those that were mediated by photographic pictures—enjoyed limited success in buttressing their claims for full citizenship. In *Picturing Slavery's* final pages, I point towards the effects of African-American images and image-making in the literary after-lives of the slave narrative genre.



Figure 4-1. Photographer Unknown. "Paul Laurence Dunbar." Half-Tone. 1892. Ohio Historical Society. [www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Paul\\_L.\\_Dunbar](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Paul_L._Dunbar)



*Paul Laurence Dunbar.*



Figure 4-2. Photographer Unknown. "Paul Laurence Dunbar." 1895. Half-tone. *Majors and Minors: Poems*. HaithiTrust Digital Library.

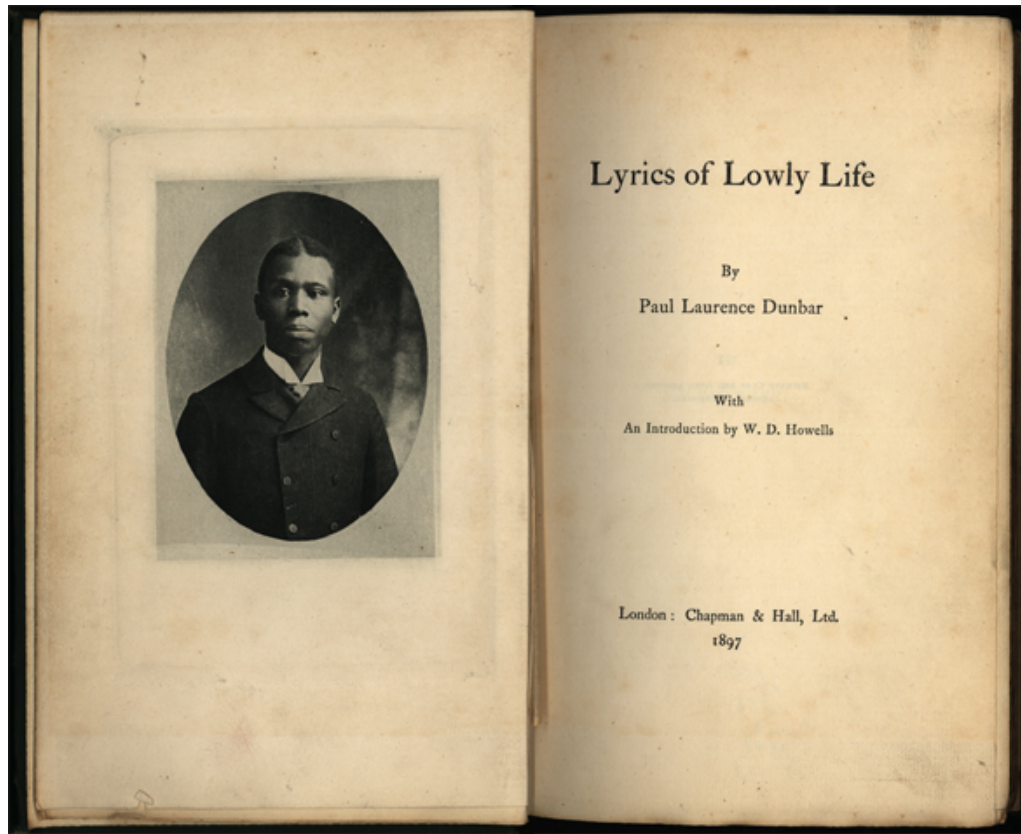


Figure 4-3. Photographer Unknown. "Paul Laurence Dunbar." Half-tone. 1897. Frontispiece from *Lyrics of Lowly Life: With an Introduction by W.D. Howells*. University of Delaware Library. [www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/londonbound/sect4.html](http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/londonbound/sect4.html).

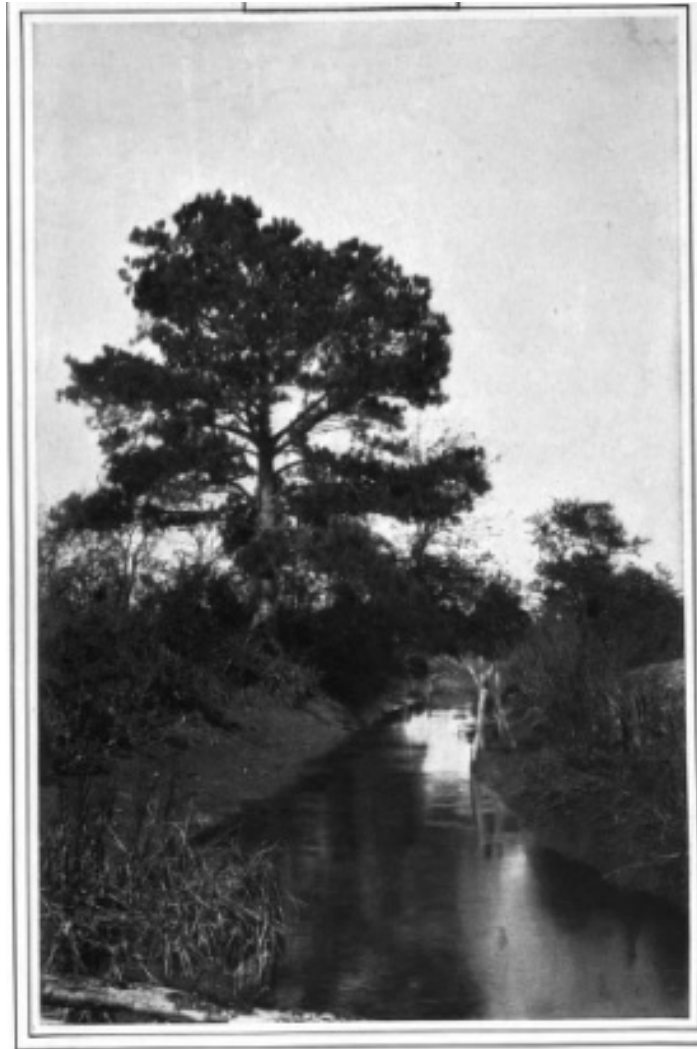


Figure 4-4. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Landscape in Deserted Planation." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.





Figure 4-5. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Man." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-6. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Children." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-7. Hampton Institute Photo Club.  
“Unidentified African-American Child.” Half-  
tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field:  
Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence  
Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University  
of Michigan.



Figure 4-8. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Man." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-9. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Children." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-10. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-Americans." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-11. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Woman." Half-tone. 1900. *Poems of Cabin and Field: Illustrated with Photographs*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-12. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Woman." Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin' Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-13. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Woman." Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin' Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.





Figure 4-14. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Unidentified African-American Man in Union Uniform." Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin' Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club.* Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-15. T.B. Bishop. "Private Hubbard Pryor, after his enlistment in the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry." CDV. 1864. The National Archives. [www.http://research.archives.gov](http://research.archives.gov).



Figure 4-16. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Female Speaker after 'Lias tells her he is enlisting" Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin' Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club.* Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.



Figure 4-17. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Lias." Half-tone. 1901.  
*Candle Lightin' Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute  
Camera Club.* Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library.  
University of Michigan.



- Figure 4-18. "The Escaped Slave in the Union Army," based on a photograph by T.B. Bishop. *Harper's Weekly*, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864. [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net).



Figure 4-19. Hampton Institute Photo Club. "Lias's Burial Mound." Half-tone. 1901. *Candle Lightin' Time: Illustrated with Photographs by the Hampton Institute Camera Club*. Paul Laurence Dunbar. HaithiTrust Digital Library. University of Michigan.

## Conclusion

We are expected to look through a photograph as if it were a sort of window, to penetrate its limpid, transparent surface with our eyes and see only what lies within. Posing as pure sign or even as no sign at all, the 'good' photograph offers minimal resistance to this look. It appears to provide a representation generated by the referent itself.

—Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance*

In the preceding pages I have demonstrated the necessity of thinking about nineteenth-century photographs of former slaves as more than mere illustrations to narrative text or demonstrations of indexical fact. Rather, nineteenth-century photographs of former slaves were often integral components in both telling a free story, and in re-inscribing damaging stereotypes that inhibited full citizenship. By demonstrating the protean nature of photographic representation—particularly as it intersects with the written word—I have shown that photographs that claim to represent slaves or slavery should be met with caution. Indeed, the advent of the photograph as a mode of narrative construction created a vast archive of multi-medial narratives whose meanings morphed and shifted depending on their relationship with the written word. While the photograph's meanings were (and are) themselves unstable and shifting, their instability is amplified by the equally contingent meanings of written prose and verse. The mercurial meanings of photographic pictures—and the written captions, life narratives, newspaper articles, short fiction, and poetry that attended them—engendered a dynamic archive of narrative representations, an archive whose diversity, complexity, and ubiquity calls for a revision and expansion of how we define the U.S. slave narrative and its literary after-lives.

In my reading of Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*, for example, I have shown how Douglass took on the task of biographical reconstruction of a fugitive slave's hidden thoughts and feelings. Using the structural and cultural peculiarities of the daguerreotype, Douglass anticipates by over a century Morrison's injunction to reconstruct the interior life of enslaved people via the act of fiction-making. Douglass does so by rejecting the notion that visual proof of physical suffering should serve as the barometer for "faithful" representations of slavery. Instead, he urges a multi-medial approach, one that combines sight and sound to reveal not only the enslaved person's body, but also his dynamic interior life.

In doing so, Douglass explicitly connects the idealized photographic portrait with the possibility of a democratic future for formerly enslaved narrators. The inter-dependent relationship of words and images is apparent, for example, in the photo-narratives of former slaves taken during the Civil War. The affirmative promise of the before and after photograph was, however, undercut by the addition of written words, words that re-inscribed racist visions of African-Americans' innate inferiority. Formerly enslaved African-Americans' agentive narratives of slavery and emancipation took on different meanings depending on the specific contexts in which the text that accompanied their photographs was written.

The result was that formerly enslaved African-Americans' pivotal role in winning the war for the Union and ending their own enslavement was subsumed in largely White, largely male national myths of reunion. I have shown how the post-bellum memoirs of Elizabeth Keckley, Mattie J. Jackson, and Susie King Taylor framed photographs taken during the Civil-war era as evidence of formerly enslaved African-Americans' claims for



full citizenship. By connecting their own life narratives with the narratives of the nation and its most lauded citizens, Black women used popular photographic images and practices to showcase their own contributions to the nation, and re-purpose the slave narrative's form from the mere recording of slavery's facts, to a nuanced argument against racism, sexism, and second-class citizenship. By illustrating the ways in which former slaves and their White interlocutors employed photographs and photographic practices in their innovation of new narrative forms, I have shown that the U.S. slave narrative of the nineteenth-century was a much more diverse and dynamic form than we have heretofore believed.

In my chapter on Dunbar and the Hampton Camera Club, I have demonstrated how the photographs and visual narratives of the U.S. slave past offered a complex set of meanings to early twentieth-century narratives of slavery. By showing how the photographs and other visual images of previous generations influenced the ways in which twentieth-century readers and viewers imagined the U.S. slave past, I have suggested that the words and images of former slaves and their descendents were burdened with the problem of representing the slave past long before the rise of the neo-slave narrative.

All four chapters engender a new set of questions concerning the effects of the photographically-inflected slave narrative on twentieth- and twenty-first century representations of U.S. slavery. How might a revised vision of the nineteenth-century slave narrative change the ways in which we think about the genre? How should it influence how we envision the vast and diverse terrain of twentieth- and twenty-first century African-American literature? And what might be gained by foregrounding the

original historical and cultural contexts of photographic representations of slavery and emancipation?

As a means by which to gesture towards the possibilities opened up by the rich body of archives I have assembled here, I offer a short reading of W.E.B. DuBois's children's magazine, *The Brownies*. The role of slavery's picture remained a topic of concern for writers well into the twentieth-century. And throughout the beginning of the new century, photographic images of African-Americans remained a contentious site of memory through and around which struggles for Black equal rights would play out. In order to suss out what this revision might mean for our understanding of African-American literature broadly construed, I would like to highlight the use of photographic portraiture in *The Brownies Book*, W.E.B. DuBois's illustrated children's magazine. Visual culture scholar Shawn Michelle Smith has demonstrated DuBois's keen and sustained interest in the democratic promise of photographic representation. Specifically, Smith argues that projects like the 1900 Paris Exhibition offered an archive of African-American images that represented African-Americans—particularly African-American youth—as dignified, capable, and worthy of citizenship.

Twenty years after his Paris Exhibition project, DuBois again turned to the representation of African-American futurity by creating a magazine designed specifically for African-American children. *The Brownies Book*, which embraced photographic portraiture as a key part of the magazine's structure, was modeled after and engendered by DuBois's adult-centered magazine, *The Crisis*. DuBois started *The Crisis* in 1910 as the literary arm of the NAACP. As both a "record of the darker races" and a manual for the "advancement" of its African-American readers, *The Crisis* included a monthly list of

historical events relevant to Black America, a list of suggested books to read, advertisements for colleges like Fisk and Tuskegee, and articles about notable African-Americans.

Articles written about notable African-Americans were oftentimes illustrated by photographic portraits using half-tone print technology. Via the photographic portraits of dignified, well-dressed African-Americans, *The Crisis* made a claim for citizenship similar to the claims made by Douglass, Keckley, and Taylor generations before its inception—that affirmative photographs of African-Americans when accompanied by their own words served might be employed as a tool for social justice. The power of photographic imagery was imagined as extending beyond the representation of present accomplishments to the illustration of a more hopeful future. For this reason, *Crisis* readers were encouraged to send in their own family photographs, many of which included quasi-ethereal images of beautiful, well-dressed children (Phillips 595).

In a desire to create a journal specifically designed for the needs of Black children, DuBois started *The Brownies Book*; the magazine ran from 1920-1921.<sup>41</sup> With *The Brownies Book*, DuBois combined photographs and words to imagine a new future for African-Americans. For DuBois, part of this new future was remembering the horrors of slavery and the promise of freedom. Young brownies read the biographies of former slaves like Frederick Douglass and Phillis Wheatley. And in short fiction, youthful readers were encouraged to study hard in remembrance of the sacrifices of their formerly enslaved ancestors. Whether or not DuBois's *The Brownies Book* successfully employed the memory of slavery for racial uplift is a subject for future study. However, what can be surmised here is that whatever photo-texts were included in *The Brownies Book* were

in some way in conversation with a now eighty-year old tradition of representing former slaves' and their descendents' memories of the slave past with photographically-inflected life narratives. If we take into account the role of photographs and photographic practice in the evolution of the slave narrative genre, we better understand not only how African-American writers embraced visual culture as a means by which to critique U.S. democracy, but also the myriad ways in which photographs excluded African-Americans from the nation's picture of itself.

Read against the rubric of the Harlem Renaissance's conception of the New Negro, *The Brownies Book* suggests that one key to progress lay in excising formerly enslaved people and their memories from visual and literary representations of African-American life. Notable exceptions notwithstanding—the work of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, for example—formerly enslaved peoples' life narratives proved an invisible shibboleth against which Renaissance writers defined the new. And although the richness of the U.S. slave narrative was recognized in the latter part of the Civil Rights Movement, criticism by scholars like Kenneth Warren would question as to the efficacy of slavery's picture in African-American literature. Despite the doubt over whether or not slavery's picture can or should be a cipher by which to make legible the complicated terrain of African-American life and culture, slavery is, nevertheless, at the center of conversations about race both in the academy and in U.S. popular culture. In light of this, I call for a re-evaluation of the slave narrative genre, one that takes into consideration the complicated visual cultures surrounding literary production throughout the nineteenth-century and into our own.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In his 1988 study, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*, William L. Andrews notes that beginning in the 1840s with the slave narratives of writers like Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, and James W.C. Pennington in which writers conveyed “a distinctive authorizing voice,” a voice distinct from the slave narratives of earlier eras (99). This shift in “voice,” according to Andrews, was accompanied by a shift in narrative structure.

<sup>2</sup> See William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*.

<sup>3</sup> The establishment of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1831, and the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, invigorated what would later be recognized as the advent of organized abolition in the U.S. (Gould 18). As a part of its efforts to abolish U.S. slavery, activists required the slave narrator to enumerate the details of his or her life while enslaved in ways that focused on the detailed descriptions of life on a Southern plantation (Gould 19).

<sup>4</sup> Such titles were used in the British abolitionist movement as early as 1817 with Jesse Toney’s *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery* and the 1828 monograph *A Picture of Colonial Slavery*. The trope continues in the U.S. abolitionist movement with a slew of

---

titles that appeal to the eye. The following is a representative selection of this phenomenon: Abigail Mott's *Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Colour. To Which is Added a Selection of Pieces in Poetry* (1826) H.G. Adams's *God's Image in Ebony: Being a series of Biographical Sketches, Facts, Anecdotes, etc., Demonstrative of the Mental Powers and Intellectual Capacities of the Negro Race* (1854); Peter Randolph's *Sketches of Slave Life: Or, Illustrations of the 'Peculiar Institution'* (1855); John Dixon Long's *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State* (1857); Louisa Picquet's *Louisa Picquet, the Octoroon, or Inside Views of Southern Domestic Life* (1861); *A Sketch of the Life of Thomas Green Bethune* (1865); Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes: Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (1868).

<sup>5</sup> See Henry Louis Gates's "Introduction" to the *Classic Slave Narrative*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Emancipator*, a New York based abolitionist newspaper, praised Weld and Grimke's text as "a mass of well-attested and harmonious evidence, altogether beyond the ingenuity of words to question". And in comparing it to the *Narrative of James Williams*, a text whose descriptions of slavery's horrors were so macabre as to invite skepticism from Northern readers, the article's writer states: Let the Narrative of James Williams go for a fiction! We are now inclined to think that it must have been. The picture was not dark enough" (*The Emancipator*, June 06, 1839, pg. 23; Issue 6; Col. D).

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Weld and Angelina Grimke took a similar approach in their 1839 text *American Slavery As it Is* by surveying hundreds of Southern newspapers for graphic descriptions of enslaved peoples' wounded bodies. And just as Bourne sought to represent "things as they are" using ekphrastic description and illustration, so too did

---

Weld and Grimke seek to picture “slavery as it is” by compiling an archive or database of visually relevant “facts” about slaves’ physical abuse in the U.S. South.

<sup>8</sup> Bourne actually published three separate editions of *Picture of Slavery in the United States* between 1830 and 1840.

<sup>9</sup> For more information see Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America*.

<sup>10</sup> Colin Westerbeck. “Frederick Douglass Chooses His Moment.” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*. Vol. 24, No. 2, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Scholars have, however, evinced a marked interest in the nature of the visual and the photographic in the abolition movement, writ large. See Radiclan Clytus’s, “Envisioning Slavery: American Abolitionism and the Primacy of the Visual,” as well as Jessica Morgan-Owens’s “Black and White: Photographic Writing in the Literature of Abolition.”

<sup>12</sup> Scholars have identified the specific ways in which the advent of photography influenced the formal choices of American writers, writ large. In her 1997 book, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Ante-Bellum American Literature*, Susan S. Williams argues that the advent of photography “redefine[d] the pictorial power of narrative” (Williams xi). And in her 2007 dissertation, “Narrating Vision, Visualizing Nation: The American Nineteenth Century After 1839,” Shelly Jarenski, notes the ways in which new visual technologies “fundamentally changed the way writers wrote their stories” (Jarenski v).

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Pamela Powell, photo archivist at the Chester County Historical Society, “a note that was placed inside the case by the donor Albert Cook Myers [states that] the daguerreotype was a gift from Douglass to Susan B. Anthony.” The note’s authenticity is corroborated by the testimony of Miss Lucy Anthony (Susan Anthony’s niece) who gave the daguerreotype to historian Albert Cook Myers, and noted that Douglass’s daguerreotype used to sit on the mantelpiece of Anthony’s parlor (e-mail, 1/17/2012). The inscription on the inside of the case “E. White maker, NY” leads me to believe that the daguerreotype was taken in the New York City studio of daguerreotypist, Edward White, whose gallery featured “1, 000 Daguerreotype Miniatures from life, of nearly all our eminent men.”

<sup>14</sup> After the 1853 publication of Douglass’s novella, works of fiction like Martin Delaney’s *Blake: Or the Huts of America* and William Wells Brown’s 1853 novel *Clotel, Or the President’s Daughter* offered alternatives to the slave narrative form.

<sup>15</sup> For more see Geoffrey Batchen. *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> I’m thinking here of Richard Hildreth’s *The Slave or Memoirs of Archie Moore* (1834), Thomas Weld’s and Angelina Grimke’s *American Slavery as it Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), and, of course Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 blockbuster, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly*.

<sup>17</sup> The plate was polished to a mirror finish, sensitized with iodine and then placed into a camera. Once the image is exposed to light, the plate is developed, resulting in an image so diaphanous that the swipe of a single finger might destroy it.

<sup>18</sup> Douglass refers to Washington in at least two different speeches.



---

<sup>19</sup> Garrison refuses to allow *The North Star* a place in Anti-Slavery Society' publications because of its editor's views about the Constitution, going so far, when hearing that Douglass had experienced a change of heart, to proclaim that "there is roguery some where."

<sup>20</sup> Examples include Charles Wilson Peale's *Gallery of Distinguished Personages*," Joseph Delephaine's "National Panzographia," and a printed collection of the *National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*. See Williams, *Confounding Images* for more (19-24).

<sup>21</sup> See Eric Foner and Joshua Brown, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Nina Silber. *Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> The tintype and the ambrotype were also popular photographic formats during the war. Like the daguerreotype, these two technologies produced single print, one-of-a-kind photographic images .

<sup>24</sup> One of these rare instances is when Amos Humiston, a white Union soldier, after having died in battle, is found with an ambrotype of his three young children in his front pocket. This image was titled, "The Children of the Battlefield, and was re-adapted as a carte de visite, and written about in newspapers. See Bob Zeller's *The Blue and Gray in Black and White: A History of Civil War Photography*. Westport: Praeger, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Another archive of non-contraband photographs of formerly enslaved African-Americans were circulated alongside contraband images (Figures 3-10 through 3-14). For example, public figures like Sojourner Truth (Figure 3-22) and Nick Biddle (Figure

---

3-21)—the first Union patriot to shed blood on the Civil War battlefield—were a part of the nation’s growing archive of mass-circulated African-American portraiture.

<sup>26</sup> Such visual imagery is fairly common during the years of the war. Envelopes and collecting cards, especially those made after the first months of the war, feature former slaves who escape to Union lines and there find their freedom.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter One of this dissertation for an extensive discussion of Douglass’s notions about the democratizing potential of the photographic portrait.

<sup>28</sup> According to an article published in the July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1863 article in *Harper’s Weekly*, Gordon covers himself with onions so as to hide his scent from his master’s bloodhounds. He arrives, months later, at a Union camp.

<sup>29</sup> I base this claim on the number of extant copies of this image. There are at least eleven unique copies of the photographic print housed at libraries and archives across the nation. Photo archivist at the Library Company of Philadelphia, Erika Pekola, follows the same line of thought (Conversation, July 2012).

<sup>30</sup> As of June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 all available information suggests that only one of these images is currently in circulation, a fact that they were printed and/or archived in far fewer numbers than the image of Gordon’s back.

<sup>31</sup> A June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1866 report from The Freedmen’s Bureau’s records report that Abrahams, Banks’s former owner, had beaten the young teen so badly that she required hospitalization. A second report filed two days late indicates that Banks had been seen by A.A. Surg. D.R. Brower. Four days later, charges were brought against the former slaveholder.

---

<sup>32</sup> Thompson, also known as Mrs. Schuyler, was the second wife of Turner's former husband, George Brown. Following his successful escape from enslavement, Brown changed his name to John G. Thompson, he married Lucy Schuyler, a prophet and self-taught physician, and the same Dr. L.S. Thompson who wrote Jackson's narrative (Fulton 19).

<sup>33</sup> The link between Lincoln and the Black community's conception of the meanings of emancipation lasted long after the end of the Civil war. In another instance of Lincoln's memory being employed in defense of Black equal rights, Lincoln is featured as standing side by side with former slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth. A memorial to Lincoln's and Truth's real life meeting in the White House, the 1893 painting by Franklin C. Courter was photographed for posterity by Frank Perry, and re-produced as a card photograph. Courter's painting and Perry's photographic reproduction both demonstrate the staying power of Lincoln imagery in representations of African-Americans during the war.

<sup>34</sup> Civil War service records indicate that there was a George W. Kirkland who fought at the Battle of Wilson Creek.

<sup>35</sup> As historian James McPherson noted in his seminal history of the Civil war, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, African-American soldiers did not participate as soldiers before 1862, and not in large numbers until Lincoln's second Emancipation Proclamation in January of 1863. Therefore, Keckley's son would not have been legally allowed to join the Three Months' forces that fought in 1861.

---

<sup>36</sup> In his 2001 book, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, Blight identifies an earlier instance of Black Southerners reconciling at the graves of fallen soldiers.

<sup>37</sup> For historical context on turn-of-the-century racial violence more generally see C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. For more on lynching violence, in particular, see William Fitzhugh Brundage's, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930*.

<sup>38</sup> In recent years, scholars have returned to Paul Laurence Dunbar and his body of work as a site of critical study. In 2007, for example, the *African-American Review* published a special issue on Dunbar that worked to re-establish the poet as a complex and relevant figure in the African-American literary canon. These new readings challenge the readings of earlier scholars who had dismissed Dunbar's oeuvre as hopelessly conciliatory. Scholars in this special issue demonstrate the sophisticated ways in which Dunbar navigated the fraught representational politics of the post-bellum literary terrain. Meaning, that within the context of a plantation fiction tradition—a tradition that provided fictional representations of slavery and the war that largely eclipsed the thoughts and feelings of former slaves—Dunbar's poetry provides an alternative archive of fictional narratives, narratives that highlight enslaved peoples' relationship with one another as a defining feature of the U.S. slave past.

<sup>39</sup> Literary scholar, Ray Sapirostein notes that half of Dunbar's published poems were re-produced in the photo-text format, and that the photographically illustrated books of poems were among Dunbar's most popular volumes (Sapirostein 167). Sapirostein

---

contends that the volumes comprise one of the largest extant archives of African-American photographic portraiture (167).

<sup>40</sup> See Felton O. Best, "Paul Laurence Dunbar's Protest Literature: The Final Years." *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 17.1 (Spring 1993).

<sup>41</sup> Michelle H. Phillips states that *The Brownies Book* was started in response to the popularity of *The Crisis*'s October editions, editions that since 1912 had focused its attention on the needs and interests of a child audience (4).

## Works Cited

- Abruzzo, Margaret Nicola. *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2011. Print.
- Alcott, Louisa May. *Hospital Sketches and Camp and Fireside Stories*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896. Web.
- Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988. Print.
- Andrews, William L. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988. Print.
- Anonymous. "God is Love." *The Cottager's Monthly Visitor*. London: Francis & John Rivington, 1849. Web.
- Ball, Charles. *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures Of Charles Ball*. New York: Published by John S. Taylor, 1837.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980. Print.
- Batchen, Geoffrey. *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility." *Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Janovich, 1968. Print.

- Blackwood, Sarah. "Fugitive Obscura: Runaway Slave Portraiture and Early American Literature." *American Literature* 81.1: 93-126, March 2009. Web.
- Blair, Sara. *Harlem Crossroads: Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Print.
- Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002.
- Bourne, George. *Slavery Illustrated in its Effects Upon Women and Domestic Society*. Boston: Published by Isaac Knapp, 1837. Print.
- . *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America: Being a Practical Illustration of Voluntaryism and Republicanism*. Middleton, Connecticut: Edwin Hunt, 1834. Glasgow: Re-printed for W.R. M'Phun, 1835. Print.
- . *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America*. Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838. Print.
- Buttre, J.C. and Lillian C. Buttre. *The American Portrait Gallery*, Vol. 1. New York: J.C. Buttre, 1877. Web.
- Camp, Stephanie. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Charlotte: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004. Print.
- Carico, Aaron Yeats. "The Free Plantation: Slavery's Institution in American, 1865-1910. (PhD Diss, Yale University, 2012). Web.
- Chaney, Michael A. *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. Print.
- Clark, Lewis Gaylord. "The Daguerreotype". *The Knickerbocker*. New York: 1839. The Daguerreian Society. Web.

- Cohen, Michael. "Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Genres of Dialect." *African American Review*. Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer, 2007. 247-257.
- Crain, Caleb. *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship and Literature in the New Nation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. Print.
- Clytus, Radiclani. "Envisioning Slavery: American Abolitionism and the Primacy of the Visual." (PhD Diss, Yale University, 2007). Web.
- Darrah, William C. *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth Century Photography*. W.C. Darrah Publisher Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1981. Print.
- Davis, Mary Kemp. *The Historical Slave Revolt and the Literary Imagination*. Diss. The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1984. Print.
- DeLombard, Jeannine. "'Eye-Witness to the Cruelty': Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative." *American Literature* Vol. 73, Issue 2, 2001. 245-247. Web.
- Dinius, Marcy. *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012. Print.
- Douglass, Frederick. "Pictures and Progress." *Frederick Douglass: Speeches and Writings*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999. Print.
- . "The Heroic Slave". *The Autographs for Freedom*. Ed. Julia Griffiths. P. 174-239. Cleveland: John P. Jewett and Company, 1853. Web.
- . "Lecture on Slavery, No.1". *Frederick Douglass: Speeches and Writings*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999. Print.
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence. *Candle Lightin' Time*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1901. HaitiTrust, University of Michigan. Web.
- . *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1903. HaitiTrust, University of Michigan. Web.



- . *Poems of Cabin and Field*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1900.
- HaitiTrust, University of Michigan. Web.
- Eyerman, Ron. *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Fahs, Alice. *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.
- Foner, Eric and Joshua Brown. *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.
- Foner, Eric and Yuval Taylor. *Frederick Douglass: Speeches and Writings*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999. Print.
- Foster-Smith, Frances. *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.
- Frederickson, George. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. Print.
- Fulton-Minor, Doveanna and Reginald H. Pitts. *Speaking Lives, Authoring Texts: Three African American Women's Oral Slave Narratives*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Glymph, Thavolia. "Noncombatant Military Laborers in the Civil War." *Magazine of History*. 26.2 (April 2012): 25. Web.
- . "Rose's War and the Gendered Politics of Insurgency in the Civil

- War.” *The Journal of the Civil War Era*. Volume 3, Number 4,  
December 2013. Web.
- Gold, Matthew K. *The Culture of Proof: Science, Religion, and Photography in America, 1780-1875*. Dissertation. City University of New York, 2006. Web.
- Gould, Philip. “The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative.” *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Ed. Audrey Fisch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Goodyear, Frank H. “Photography Changes the Way We Record and Respond to Social Issues.” <http://click.si.edu/Story.aspx?story=297>. Web.
- Gunning, Sandra. *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Lynching, 1890-1912*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- Hannavy, John. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2008. Print.
- Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Heisel, Andrew. “What to do with ‘Southern Negro Types’ in Dunbar’s Hampton Volumes.” *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*. Volume 28, Issue 3, 2012. 243-256.
- Hendrick, George and Willene Hendrick. *The Creole Mutiny: A Tale of Revolt Aboard A Slave Ship*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003. Print.
- Holmes, Oliver Wendell. “Doings of the Sunbeam.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 12, Issue 69, July 1863. Web.
- Howells, William Dean. Review of Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *Majors and Minors*.

- Harper's Weekly*, June 27, 1896, 630-631. Publishers Bindings Online. Web.
- Hunter, Tera. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998. Print.
- Jackson, Mattie J. *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson: Her Parentage, Experience of Eighteen Years in Slavery, Incidents During the War, Her Escape from Slavery: A True Story*. Lawrence, Mass.: Sentinel Office, 1866. Documenting the American South. Web.
- Jarenski, Shelly. "Narrating Vision, Visualizing Nation: The American Nineteenth Century After 1839." (PhD Diss, Loyola University, 2007).
- Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 2010. Print.
- Keckley, Elizabeth. *Behind the Scenes, or Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*. New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1868. Documenting the American South. Web.
- Kennon, Raquel Deborah. "Transforming Trauma: Memory and Slavery in Black Atlantic Literature since 1830" (PhD Diss, Harvard University, 2012). Web.
- Lott, Patricia A. "Bearing Witness to a History of Erasures and Traces: The Public Collective Memory of Racial Slavery in the Antebellum North." (PhD Diss, Northwestern University, 2013). Web.
- Masur, Kate. "'A Rare Phenomenon': The Philological Vegetation of the Word Contraband and the Meanings of Emancipation in the United States." *The Journal of American History* 93.4 (Mar 2007): 1050-1084. Web.

- McFeely, William S. *Frederick Douglass*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991. Print.
- Mitchell, Mary Niall. *Raising Freedom's Child: Black Children and Visions of The Future after Slavery*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2008. Print.
- Moody, Joycelyn. *Sentimental Confessions: Spiritual Narratives of Nineteenth-Century African-American Women*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003. Print.
- Morgan-Owens, Jessica J. "Black and White: Photographic Writing in the Literature Of Abolition" (PhD Diss, New York University, 2009). Web.
- Morrison, Toni. "Site of Memory." *What Moves at the Margins: Selected Non-Fiction*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008.
- Morton, J.H Rev. "Photography as an Authority." *The Philadelphia Photographer*, Vol. 1, No 12 (Dec 1864): 180-183. Web.
- Naish, Paul D. "Safe Distance: U.S. Slavery, Latin America, and American Culture" (PhD Diss, City University of New York, 2011). Web.
- Newhall, Beaumont. *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1964.
- Noble, Marianne. "Sympathetic Listening in Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave," and My Bondage and My Freedom." *Studies in American Fiction* 34.1 (Spring 2006): 53-68.
- Olney, James. "I Was Born": Slave Narratives, Their Status As Autobiography and as Literature." *Callaloo*. No. 20 (Winter 1984), pp. 46-73. Web.
- Oswald, Emily. "Imagining Race: Illustrating the Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar."

- Book History* 9 (2006) 213-233.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Daguerreotype." *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*. 15 January 1840. pg. 2 Daguerreian Society. Web.
- Powell, Pamela. "Re: Frederick Douglass—Daguerreotype." Message to the Author. 1/17/2012. E-mail.
- Putzi, Jennifer. "The Skin of an American Slave: African-American Manhood and The Marked Body." *Studies in American Literature*. 2002. Web.
- Rizzo, Therese. "The Sentimental Slave Body in Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*." *America and the Black Body: Identity Politics in Print and Visual Culture*. Ed. Carol E. Henderson. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999. Web.
- Santamarina, Xiomara. *Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Sekora, John. "Black Message, White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in The Antebellum Slave Narrative." *Callaloo*, No. 32 (Summer, 1987), pp. 482-515. Print.
- Siegel, Elizabeth. *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: A History of Nineteenth-Century American Photograph Albums*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print.
- Nina Silber. *Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993. Print.

- Smith, John David. "Let Us All Be Grateful That We Have Colored Troops That Will Fight." *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*. Ed. John David Smith. Charlotte: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Smith, Shawn Michelle. *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Print.
- Stauffer, John. "Interracial Friendship and the Aesthetics of Freedom." *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*. Ed. By Robert S. Levine And Samuel Otter. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Print.
- Stepto, Robert. "Storytelling in Early African-American Fiction: Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave*." *Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass*. ed. William L. Andrews. Boston, G.K Hall & Co., 1991. Web.
- Taft, Robert. *Photography and the American Scene: A Social History, 1839-1889*. 1938. New York: Dover Publications, 1964. Print.
- Taylor, Susie King. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33<sup>rd</sup> United States Colored Troops, Late 1<sup>st</sup> S.C. Volunteers*. Boston: Published by Author, 1902. Documenting the American South, 1902. Web.
- Terry, Jennifer. "'When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers': Paul Laurence Dunbar's Poetic Engagement with The Civil War, Masculinity, and Violence." *African American Review*. Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer 2007) 269-275. Web.
- Tillet, Salamishah. *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989. Print.
- . "Likeness as Identity: Reflections on the Daguerrean Mystique." *American Studies: An Anthology*. Ed. Janice A. Radway, Kevin Gaines, et.al. Web.
- . *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989.
- Wallace, Maurice O. *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African-American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775-1995*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.
- . "Framing the Black Soldier: Image, Uplift, and the Duplicity of Images." *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African-American Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print.
- Wallis, Brian. "Black Bodies, White Science." *American Art*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1995. Web.
- Wexler, Laura. "'A More Perfect Likeness: Frederick Douglass and the Image of the Nation'". *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and The Making of African-American Identity*. Ed. Shawn Michelle Smith and Maurice O. Wallace. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print.
- Williams, Susan S. *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. Print.
- Willis, Deborah and Barbara Krauthamer. *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013. Print.
- Wood, Marcus. *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

---. *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation*. University of Georgia Press: Athens, 2010. Print.

Yarborough, Richard. "Race, Violence, and Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave'." *Frederick Douglass: New Literary And Historical Essays*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Print.