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I present the following for your approval as the subject of my dissertation for the doctorate:

“Archiving the Future: African American Literature and the Photographic Portrait at the Turn of
the Twentieth Century.”

I request that Professor Elizabeth Alexander supervise the dissertation and that
Professors Hazel Carby and Robert Stepto serve on the committee.

Archiving the Future: African American Literature and the Photographic Portrait at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Introduction

In 1902, author and lecturer Daniel Wallace Culp published what became one of the few extant anthologies of black writing in its time.¹ *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, a collection of writing by "One Hundred of America's Greatest Negroes," offers one hundred essays and photographs publicizing African American accomplishments, progress, and perspectives on contemporary issues. As the title and figurative use of the number one hundred not so subtly suggest, the volume calls attention to the new century as a significant symbolic turning point in black and American history. The customized frame adorning each portrait is likewise explicit in its invocation of dramatic changes since Emancipation. On the left panel of the frame, a shirtless slave is whipped and a barefoot fugitive escapes; on the right, two gentlemanly figures in three-piece suits stand in for the representative twentieth century Negro. The photographs themselves enact respectable, middle-class status by making use of the conventions of the drawing-room portrait. A catalogue of one hundred gentlemen and ladies of color and their literary productions, this volume's photographs offer visual evidence of racial progress since slavery. Taken together, the images, the text (including the prefatory material outlining the book's goals as well as the essays addressing timely topics), and the printed book as object announce the

¹ Keneth Kinnamon's exhaustive review of anthologies of African American literature cites only two anthologies from the nineteenth century: the collection of French Romantic poetry by New Orleans Creoles, *Les Cenelles* (1845) and the antislavery volume, *Autographs of Freedom* (1853). Of Culp's book, Kinnamon has this to say: "The first 20th-century anthology of any kind was D.W. Culp's misleadingly titled *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* (1902). "One Hundred of America's Greatest Negroes," as they are designated on the title page, contribute as many essays on various important racial issues at the turn of the century. Though not very literary, the collection is important as a period piece. With its emphasis on uplift and achievement and with contributors like George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington, its tone is moderate. Militants like Du Bois and Trotter are conspicuous by their absence." Kinnamon, Keneth. "Anthologies of African American Literature from 1845 to 1994." *Callaloo* 20:2, 1997, 461-481, p 477-478.

arrival of "twentieth century Negro literature," an institution of intellectual and cultural production with a tradition, a status, and a purpose.

By the time of Culp's publication, as Reconstruction-era hopes for political equality and social advancement had long devolved into brutal black codes, debt peonage, unprecedented racial violence, and coerced convict labor, the first generation of African Americans born after Emancipation entered adulthood. Contemporary social scientists, African American leaders, and those otherwise interested in the "race problem" seized upon perceived social trends among this group to document either racial progress or degeneration after slavery. A widespread intellectual and popular acceptance of social Darwinist ideas provided a context for many of these inquiries. Who was this so-called "New Negro," they asked, and how could he be understood within existing conceptions of racial hierarchy? Alternately drawing on and subverting this intellectual tradition, writers like Culp perceived the growing temporal distance from the institution of slavery, as well as the symbolism of the coming new century, as a climate of opportunity within which to construct new racial images that broke definitively with nineteenth century conventions of representation. At the same time, photographic illustration became both newly available as a technology and newly authoritative as a means of categorizing human "character."² The photographically illustrated text became this era's most powerful, persuasive and culturally resonant medium for producing this new African American subject.

This project explores how late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers used the evolving technology of photographic illustration to construct both new repositories of racial

² On the popularity of the photographically illustrated book at the turn of the century, see Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image and the New Negro*, p 11. On the photograph's new authority, see Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive:" "Roughly between 1880 and 1910, the archive became the dominant institutional basis for photographic meaning. Increasingly, photographic archives were seen as central to a bewildering range of empirical disciplines, from art history to military intelligence." On the significance of "character" to turn of the century race theory, see Cathy Boeckmann, *A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction, 1892-1912*.

representation and new conceptions of African American literature as a category. I examine collections of poetry, novels, nonfiction, anthologies, and periodicals to argue that at the turn of the century, African American writers used the printed text in new ways to intervene in longstanding visual and intellectual discourses of race. The photographic portrait, as front matter, illustration, and thematic motif, is central to this intervention. African American writers use photographs strategically in their works to invoke histories of ethnographic image-making, lynching photographs, criminal and institutional portraits, the middle class portrait, and the family photo album. While recalling these official and unofficial archives, these turn of the century texts as printed artifacts also self-consciously constitute a collection of new racial images. Meanwhile, ordinary African Americans (most of whom were women) constructed their own personal visual repositories through the production of scrapbooks. These "visual biographies,"³ following emerging conventions of self- and family presentation, wrote aspiring-class African Americans into respectability, particularly by presenting images of normative masculinity, femininity, and family life.⁴ I situate the illustrated books and magazine articles of leading and lesser-known men and women of letters such as D. W. Culp, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Pauline Hopkins, Booker T. Washington, and James Weldon Johnson, as well as periodicals including *Colored American Magazine*, *Voice of the Negro*, and *Crisis*, and unpublished scrapbooks, within the larger project of producing new visual and textual archives of racial representation in this historical moment.

After a chapter on the portrait in antebellum black literature, I begin in 1896 with Paul Laurence Dunbar's publication of *Poems of Cabin and Field*, a volume that boasts an almost

³ The useful term "visual biography" comes from Jessica Helfand's *Scrapbooks: An American History*.

⁴ Historian Michele Mitchell first used the phrase "aspiring-class" to describe turn of the century African Americans who had formal or informal education, a "little money," and were concerned with appearing "respectable." See Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction*, 2004.

equal ratio of text to image, and the first in a series of six of his works to use photographs extensively. I locate Dunbar as the first African American writer to sustain an engagement with technologies of image-making in his literature. My project closes with James Weldon Johnson, exploring both his literary commitments to the visual and his anthology's construction of a new narrative of African American literary history positing Dunbar as originary forefather. With Johnson, we spin full-circle away from turn of the century writers who situate Dunbar's achievements as the culmination of generations of African American intellectual and cultural progress. In many ways, Dunbar's legacy becomes the beginning rather than the end of the story for Johnson, who spent his career searching for innovative forms to produce new images of African American experience. If the late nineteenth century texts this dissertation studies mark a self-conscious break with a tradition of racial representation, Johnson inaugurates a new departure, particularly through the prefaces of his anthologies in the 1920s.

Theodore O. Mason, Jr., in his study of the genre in an African American context, smartly observes that the anthology is a forward-looking literary form, "at the beginning rather than the end of literary history making."⁵ It is this temporality which I wish to signal with my title phrase "archiving the future." The archives this project considers, like the anthology for Mason, inaugurate a new, modern moment for the representation of African Americans. While they meticulously collect information, stories, and biographical examples from the past ("the past," most often, refers to the antebellum period of American history), Dunbar, Culp, Hopkins, Johnson, and other archivists of the period use these historical materials to imagine the futuristic black subject that this history of accomplishment, progress, and innovation will produce.

"The future" also refers to the symbolic significance of reproduction embedded in depictions of the black family and in representations of gender roles more broadly. The major work of the

⁵ Mason, "The African American Anthology," p 187.

photographic portrait at the turn of the century was its figuration of the white, nuclear Victorian family as normative (and to document any deviance from this model). Shawn Michelle Smith, in her study of photography, gender, and race, writes convincingly of the photograph's centrality to the "social reproduction of the middle class family."⁶ Family organization and gender role differentiation were fundamental to late nineteenth century science's hierarchical ordering of the races: the polygamy, matriarchal and matrilineal order, less sharply delineated gender differences, and extended kinship networks associated with sub-Saharan Africa belonged unambiguously to a pre-civilized stage of human history. In the late nineteenth century, when demonstrating "civilization" was an unofficial prerequisite to African American claims to citizenship and human rights, the photograph's capacity to register the race's full participation in normative gender roles and family structure was of urgent and vital importance.

African American literature of the time was likewise often enlisted to present images of respectable, proper gender and family relations, particularly regarding women. Critic Claudia Tate's work links domesticity in nineteenth century African American women's fiction to the politics of uplift. Candice Jenkins, in her recent study of respectability, gender, and desire in African American literature, identifies the trope of the "salvific wish," the "longing to protect or save black women, and black communities more generally, from narratives of sexual and familial pathology, through the embrace of conventional bourgeois propriety in the arenas of sexuality and domesticity."⁷ Amidst widespread sexual violence against African American women and the lynching of African American men in the post-Reconstruction South, the photographic portrait and the literary text were enlisted to combat the widely accepted notion of

⁶⁶ Smith, *American Archives*, p 120. She traces this function to the technology's early history: "From the moment of its 1839 inception in daguerreotypy, the first photographic process, the photographic image has been conceptualized as a means of preserving family history and of documenting family genealogy" (114).

⁷ Jenkins, *Private Lives, Proper Relations: Regulating Black Intimacy*, 13.

black sexual pathology that underpinned these two brutal practices. Significantly for this project, Tate and Jenkins have identified a shift in the treatment of the domestic in African American literature, from a nineteenth and early-twentieth century uncomplicated faith in the "salvific wish" and uplift ideology more broadly, to a more critical invocation of respectability in representations of the black family after World War I.⁸

I keep in view several other relevant cultural shifts that overlap with my periodization. First, late nineteenth century advancements in print technology allowed for cheaper and higher quality reproductions of photographs. Two important developments followed: the photographic portrait moved from private, intimate display to mass circulation; and illustrated books became popular gifts and drawing-room adornments among the middle classes.⁹ Photographs were exchanged, and occasionally sold,¹⁰ as internationally circulated *cartes de visite* and illustrated texts; they also were collected and arranged in the increasingly popular family photo albums and scrapbooks. The photograph gained a new public life, and its relationship to the intimate domestic sphere was likewise altered.

Also in the late nineteenth century, the photographic archive achieved a problematic empirical authority as police and scientists labeled and catalogued their collections of images in what for Allan Sekula was the emblematic object of this period: the filing cabinet.¹¹ In 1882, a young department copyist for the Prefecture of Police in Paris, annoyed by the disorganized manner with which criminal records were handled, developed a system of identification later

⁸ Jenkins identifies three causes that bring about this shift in the treatment of family and gender in African American literature: the U.S. moves from "a producer- to a consumer-oriented economy," Victorian ideology loses its sway, and the rural, Southern black poor and working class migrate in large numbers to Northern urban centers (Jenkins 26). In this last cause, Jenkins builds on the work of Hazel Carby, who originally noted that following World War I and the Great Migration, the "Talented Tenth" could no longer "speak... from the North to the majority of blacks who lived outside it"; "No longer was it possible to mobilize an undifferentiated address to 'the black people.'" See Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 164.

⁹ See Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image and the New Negro*, p 11.

¹⁰ As in the well-known case of Sojourner Truth's sale of her own likeness.

¹¹ Allan Sekula, *The Body and the Archive*.

called Bertillonage in honor of its creator. The mugshot became the most important element in Alphonse Bertillon's system, which also employed anthropometry and fingerprinting. The United States quickly adopted Bertillonage and, quickly, Rogues' Galleries circulated among the American reading public.¹² The widely held nineteenth century belief that a person's inner character could be known by his outward aspect was also bolstered by the research of scientists in Western Europe on human deviance and degeneration.¹³ Compilations of images of prostitutes, criminals, and representative racial "types" were organized to prove a correspondence between certain physical characteristics and moral and racial "character."¹⁴ The uses to which the photographic archive was put in the late nineteenth century demonstrated the critical importance of organization, the processes of inclusion and exclusion, and appended text such as caption and preface, to the construction of meaning. Turn of the century African American intellectuals were thoroughly familiar with these techniques and their history as they constructed their own interartistic archives.

In addition, black literary and visual arts trace their institutional histories to this period. The late nineteenth century enjoyed an unprecedented number of books published by African American writers, as well as a resurgence of black periodicals. The black women's club

¹² See for example Thomas Byrnes' *Professional Criminals of America*, 1886, cited by Shawn Michelle Smith in *American Archives*.

¹³ Examples of contemporary scientific works that employed the photograph to establish deviance: Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, 1883, and especially Galton's "composite portrait"; Pauline Tarnowsky, *Etude anthropometrique sur les prostituees et les voluees*, 1889; *Fisionome di prostitute russe*, 1893; Lombroso, Cesare and Ferrero, Guillaume, *La donna delinquente: La prostitute e la donna normale* (1893); For more on this subject see Sander Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late-Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," *Critical Inquiry*, 1986, Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," and Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives*, chapter three.

¹⁴ Cathy Boeckmann aptly historicizes the concept of "character" in the nineteenth century. She notes that by the late nineteenth century, debates about racial difference shifted their focus from skin color as the source to cultural and evolutionary differences signified by the term "character." Pigmentation becomes irrelevant as race theorists "shift their focus from body to character and make character the operative term for race" (*A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction*, 1892-1912, p. 37). Of course, "character" could not be measured scientifically and was essentially an uninterrogated given.

movement, central to the creation of a black reading public, also began in the 1890s.¹⁵ Scholar of black art Darby English points to the contemporaneous emergence of what he terms "black representational space" at the beginning of the twentieth century, as African American visual art makes significant gains in audience, status, and means of dissemination.¹⁶ It is within the context of the rise in circulation and authority of the photographic portrait, as well as the inauguration of black literature and the visual arts as institutional formations, that I assess the significance of the illustrated book.

An implicit issue that frames this project's inquiry is the question of what "literature" meant at this time and what it was meant to do. Carla L Peterson's intellectual history of nineteenth century African American women writers and orators highlights the importance of a historicized conceptualization of literature as a category of cultural production and argues for the inclusion of texts which might otherwise be categorized as primarily historical or sociological.¹⁷ In essays, books, and speeches on the subject, African American intellectuals consolidated a narrative at the turn of the century about a black literary tradition in English that reached backwards into the eighteenth century with an African-born literary foremother, through antebellum pamphlets, autobiographies, essays, and newspapers, to post-Reconstruction literary productions of all kinds, particularly those published in book form.¹⁸ This history of interdisciplinary "race literature" was also transnational in its embrace of foreign-born authors and texts published outside the U.S, especially those of the early national period (Olaudah Equiano and Phillis Wheatley are the most commonly cited examples). Mapped over a narrative of progress from slavery toward

¹⁵ Candice Jenkins asserts that the black women's club movement "began in 1895 with the first national conference of the Colored Women of America." Jenkins, Candice. *Private Lives, Proper Relations: Regulating Black Intimacy*, p 12.

¹⁶ See Darby English, *How to See A Work of Art in Total Darkness*, chapter one.

¹⁷ Peterson, *Doers of the Word*, p 5.

¹⁸ Examples include Victoria Earle Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," (1895), Gertrude Mossell, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* (1894, published under her husband's name, N. F. Mossell), "The Negro As A Writer" in Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* (1902).

citizenship, the movement from originary native-born African figures toward free-born African American authors in part signifies on racialized "histories" of human evolution. These turn of the century literary histories, like the illustrated books this dissertation examines, produce twentieth century African American subjects out of nineteenth century materials.¹⁹ The category of literature is meant to encapsulate a still-progressing history of intellectual development, artistic production, and political incorporation.

Certain foundational works in African American studies, although not extended treatments of the topic, take notice of the significance of the visual to black literature of this period. Henry Louis Gates' oft-cited work on the trope of the New Negro gestures toward the importance of the image to the era's project of reconstructing the "public face of the race."²⁰ Likewise, Houston Baker refers to a "graphics of minstrelsy" in the hand-drawn illustrations adorning Charles Chesnutt's 1899 edition of *The Conjure Woman*.²¹ Robert Stepto analyzes the photographs and captions appended to W. E. B. du Bois' 1901 essay, "The Negro As He Really Is," which later became two chapters in *The Souls of Black Folk*.²² Hazel Carby's *Race Men* offers a reading of the significance of the three-piece suit to the construction of the black male intellectual in her juxtaposition of the portraits of W.E.B. du Bois and Cornel West.²³ Several good studies of the photograph in African American literature of other periods have recently been published. Martha Nadell does fine work on what she terms "interartistic" texts of the Harlem Renaissance in *Enter the New Negroes*. Covering much the same historical ground, Anne Elizabeth Carroll

¹⁹ This narrative of black literary history changes significantly in the hands of James Weldon Johnson, who presents Wheatley as a figure of historical and sociological, but not literary, interest. For Johnson, it is the more recent work of Paul Laurence Dunbar that inaugurates the tradition.

²⁰ Gates and Jarrett, *New Negro*.

²¹ *Modernism in the Harlem Renaissance*, p 41.

²² Stepto, *From Behind the Veil*, 1979.

²³ *Race Men*, 2000.

looks at illustrated periodicals from the 1910s through the postwar period.²⁴ Sarah Blair analyzes the engagements of key 20th century black writers with photographic practice and form, focusing mostly on the middle decades just after the traditionally periodized Harlem Renaissance.²⁵

There are several studies of this subject in nineteenth century American literature. A recent monograph by Sean Ross Meehan traces the interpenetrations of autobiography and photography in four American Renaissance authors: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, and Walt Whitman.²⁶ Meehan offers an insightful analysis of how the idea of the "representative" evolves within literary history and the technological/cultural innovations of portrait photography. His chapter on Douglass is particularly useful to my project; he makes the transcript of an 1861 lecture by Douglass, "Pictures and Progress," the center of his critical intervention into Douglass' oft-neglected commitment to a visual literacy of slavery and race. A brief analysis of the slave daguerreotypes taken in 1850 to support Louis Agassiz' research contextualizes this chapter. Stuart Burrows' *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839-1945* (2008) offers the term "photographic fiction" to link realist American fiction to the contemporaneous modernist crisis of representation. His chapter on Hurston purports to rescue *Their Eyes Were Watching God* from a longstanding critical tradition centered only on the novel's "speakerly" and aural qualities. An earlier work by Susan S. Williams does not treat works by African American authors but does include writings not published in book form. She draws on the fiction of Hawthorne and Melville, in addition to

²⁴ *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Race and Representation in the Harlem Renaissance*, 2007.

²⁵ Sarah Blair, *Harlem Crossroads: Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century* (2001).

²⁶ *Mediating American Autobiography: Photography in Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, and Whitman*, 2008

periodical fiction between 1830-1860, to examine the interrelations of American literary culture of the period and the evolving culture around photographed portraiture.²⁷

Although a significant amount of recent work has been done on photography and literature, the only extended treatments of this subject that consider race critically focus primarily on the Harlem Renaissance period or later. Growing scholarly interest in the turn of the twentieth century has not yet produced a book-length analysis on race and the illustrated text.²⁸ This dissertation pushes this framework back to the late nineteenth century to suggest that the photograph is central to the interrelated projects of producing new black subjectivities and new archives of African American literature. This critical lens recontextualizes the turn of the century flowering of African American literary production in books and periodicals and offers a new set of questions through which to read this period's literature. How should periodical fiction be read alongside the increasing number of portraits printed in this era's African American magazines? What are the emerging conventions of the photo-text, and how are they shaped by turn of the century African American writings? Does the genre of the biographical sketch summon a particular visuality, especially in light of its use of the word "sketch?" Which pictorial and textual renderings of gender were perceived as most serviceable to the production of new racial archives? How is black celebrity constructed through this media, and how does this relate to contemporary ideas about "race literature?" This dissertation should be of broad interest to Americanists and African Americanists who work on literature and visual culture, as

²⁷ Williams, Susan S. *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum Fiction* (1997).

²⁸ Among influential recent African Americanist work on this period are: Barbara McCaskill and Sandra Gebhard, *Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem*, and Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*.

Although no book-length studies on this topic exist, Shawn Michelle Smith examines W. E. B. Du Bois as an "early visual theorist of race" in *Photography on the Color Line* (2004). Her focus is primarily on his exhibit for the 1900 Paris Exposition. Smith also begins her earlier work, *American Archives: Gender Race and Class in Visual Culture* (1999), with a close reading of the gendering and racialization of middle class interiority in Hawthorne's meditation on photography and portraiture, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and includes analysis of Pauline Hopkins' *Of One Blood*.

well as historians of the period. My scope facilitates a comparative analysis of illustrated books by African American authors and other noteworthy interartistic works of the time. The genre of travel literature made particular use of the photograph; books such as Frank Brinkley and Kakuzo Okakura's ten volume *Japan: Described and Illustrated by the Japanese* (1897-8) and Alfred Leader's *Through Jamaica with a Kodak* (1907) figure nonwhite subjects at the turn of the century through the evolving medium of the illustrated book. Other experiments with the form emerged during this period. Helen E. Stevenson's curious *Pictures from Nature and Life* (1894), for example, is a collection of her twin sister's poetry paired with Stevenson's photographs that showcases sentimental family life in a volume contemporary with Dunbar's heavily illustrated volumes of poetry. I situate illustrated works by African Americans alongside both the texts they write against, and the American and European models they revise and influence.

My methodology combines archival research with close readings of visual and literary sources. While the production and editorial processes are occasionally of interest here, I treat these texts as finished products and focus my attention on what cultural work these books and magazines performed.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One: "The Woodcut That Speaks for All": Phillis Wheatley, Antebellum Image-Making and the Trope of the Featureless Face

Taking my title and thematic focus from a brief and, as far as I am aware, unexamined article by Frederick Douglass on the imagery of newspaper advertising,²⁹ I draw on the visual

²⁹ Douglass, Frederick, "Picture Advertising in South America," *Frederick Douglass Paper*, March 18th, 1852.

racial archives of antislavery and slavery, "American School" ethnography, and antebellum popular culture to contextualize the significance of the visual to black writing.

I use the case study of Phillis Wheatley to anchor my analysis. Her portrait, attributed to black artist Scipio Moorhead, has been referred to as a mythic "New World Ur story"³⁰ in African American studies. Her work remained popular well after her death (no doubt owing to the growing strength of the abolitionist movement in the 1830s); her only extant volume of poetry saw multiple reprinting throughout the nineteenth century. Her portrait was altered over the course of these reprints (and, later, re-imagined by a 19th century French artist for *Revue des Colonies*). Significantly, when her poetry was reprinted in William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* between 1831-2, her image is replaced by the frontispiece to the Ladies' Department: a woodcut engraving of a female "kneeling slave" icon. Post-emancipation, her portrait was often reprinted alongside a biographical sketch in African American books and articles detailing the accomplishments of the race. Increasingly, a narrative of black literary history was constructed around Wheatley as an untutored, African-born foremother. This section offers a close reading of Wheatley's poetry alongside the institutionalization of her literary legacy and image through the late nineteenth century.

I also hope to use this section to account for the relative lack of African American literary engagements with portraiture in the nineteenth century – particularly in light of the obsession among prominent white American literary figures with technologies of image-making. I suspect that the absence of an explicit visual thematic reflects greater ambivalence on the part of black writers toward the question of photography's potential to be a truly new technology of image making. Anxieties around what for mainstream America was a "new" loss of individuality,

³⁰ Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois, "'On Deathless Glories Fix Thine Ardent View:': Scipio Moorhead, Phillis Wheatley, and the Mythic Origins of Anglo-African Portraiture in New England," *Portraits of a People: Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century* (2006).

registered in the featureless faces of the crowd in Edgar Allen Poe's "Man of the Crowd" and the whale in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, were familiar to African Americans for more than a century of pictorial representations.³¹ Frederick Douglass emblemizes these concerns in the figure of "the woodcut that speaks for all" – the stock image indiscriminately used to represent all black bodies in print. This formulation makes an interesting forerunner to Francis Galton's composite photographic portraits of the late nineteenth century.

Chapter Two: Paul Laurence Dunbar's Phototexts and the Visual Archive of Race

This chapter undertakes several interrelated projects: it locates Paul Laurence Dunbar's work within the transition between hand-drawn illustration and photography; it reassesses existing critical appraisals of Dunbar's legacy (often limited to the question of dialect); and, it examines the relationship between word and image constructed in Dunbar's illustrated volumes.

Although Frederick Douglass has left a substantial nonfiction record taking up photography and pictorial representation, Dunbar is the first African American writer to offer a sustained literary engagement with technologies of image-making. The extent of Dunbar's interest in visual culture has only recently been explored; over the last few years, historian Ray Sapirstein has produced a dissertation and several essays on Dunbar's photographic editions of poetry.³² Between 1899 and 1906, Dunbar published six books of poetry, extensively illustrated with photographs from the predominantly white Hampton Institute Camera Club. Sapirstein estimates that "perhaps with the exception of the Farm Security Administration, the more than

³¹ For an explication of the interpenetrations of photography and American Renaissance texts, see Williams, Susan S. *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction*, U Penn Press, Philadelphia: 1997; Burrows, Stuart. *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839-1945*, U Georgia P, Georgia: 2008; Meehan, Sean Ross. *Mediating American Autobiography: Photography in Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass and Whitman*. U Missouri P, Columbia and London: 2008

³² See Sapirstein, Ray, "Picturing Dunbar's Lyrics" *African American Review*, Vol 41, No 2, 2007.

450 images that appear in Dunbar's books represent the largest body of photographs of African Americans published to date."³³

I draw on Sapirstein's historical account of the production, editorial selection, and use of these images in Dunbar's photo-texts to several ends. First, I offer a close reading of Dunbar's literary work – particularly his more explicitly visualist poems ("The Photograph," "Plantation Portrait") and his use of a portrait artist as a central character in *Sport of the Gods* (1902). Other contemporary works that thematize technologies of image-making, especially Charles Chesnutt's "The Wife of His Youth," provide a context for these readings. Hand-drawn illustrations from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, the realist photography of Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and the lesser-known experimental volume of poetry, Stevenson's *Pictures from Nature and Life* (1894) offer a historical context for Dunbar's use of images. I also ask how Dunbar's conception of the relationship between text and image compares to Du Bois' catalogues of photographic images at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Chapter Three: Visuality and the Biographical Sketch

In 1808, Henri Gregoire produced what was essentially a 287 page rejoinder to Thomas Jefferson's dismissal of black moral and intellectual capacity in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781). In *De la litterature des negres*, Gregoire recounts the lives and achievements of exceptional men and women of African descent in order to prove that human difference results from climate and circumstance rather than race.³⁴ Over the course of the nineteenth century, abolitionist writers continued to deploy the biographical sketch in books and periodicals to assert

³³ Ibid., p 328.

³⁴ Gregoire, like Culp, uses the term "litterature" to categorize this collection of biographical sketches and essays on race.

black humanity and perfectability. *The Liberator* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, for example, repeatedly printed the poetry of Phillis Wheatley alongside an account of her life.

While abolitionists used biography to advance a political cause, other nineteenth-century Americans also imbued the genre with a pedagogic function. History was recast as usable material for the present. Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Representative Men* (1850) signals the all-pervading relevance of the "great men" of the past, whose names are used to name "our children and our lands" and "are wrought into the verbs of language."³⁵ Yet even as Emerson reverently asserts the recounting of exceptional lives as an edifying cultural force, his sketches of Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Goethe barely adhere to the conventions associated with biography. Often confining details of his subjects' lives to a single paragraph, Emerson dismisses these facts as beside the point in his early declaration that "Great geniuses have the shortest biographies."³⁶ Instead, Emerson's sweeping remarks concerning world history frame these historical portraits as a testament to Western intellectual progress. Like the achievements detailed by Gregoire fifty years earlier, the six "representative" figures stand in at once for the pinnacle of racial achievement and the promise of future advancement – for "great men exist that there may be greater men."³⁷ This synecdochic use of the biographical sketch becomes an especially appealing strategy to African American writers later in the century.³⁸

After Emancipation, Lydia Maria Child published a book intending to instruct and inspire the newly freed through stories of individual lives. *The Freedmen's Book* (1865)³⁹ intersperses literary selections with accounts of exceptional black men and women. Child clearly preferred to

³⁵ "Uses of Great Men," *Representative Men*.

³⁶ "Plato; or, The Philosopher," *Representative Men*.

³⁷ "Uses of Great Men," *Representative Men*.

³⁸ For the concept of the "synecdochic sense" of African American biography I am indebted to Anthony Foy's 2002 doctoral dissertation, *The Dark Brotherhood: Autobiography, Ideology, Masculinity, Blackness*.

³⁹ With its inclusion of selections authored by Frederick Douglass, Frances Harper, Harriet Jacobs, and Phillis Wheatley, this is also one of the earliest collections of African American writing.

present uplifting stories of success in the face of great obstacles, usually achieved through a combination of industriousness and innate talent. This narrative, while acknowledging and protesting injustice, implicitly places the onus of responsibility for improving the conditions faced by African Americans on the individual. Indeed, the biographical sketch as genre seems to empower the individual to such an extent that it erases or minimizes the effects of structural forces outside the subject's control. In addition to the industriousness of all her subjects, Child's biographies emphasize the piety, long-suffering, and maternal strengths of women like Phillis Wheatley and Harriet Jacobs' grandmother. Likewise, male subjects are praised for their thrift and property accumulation. Historian Michele Mitchell's reading of post-Reconstruction reformist literature by African Americans is just as accurately applied to Child's work: "For reformist authors, the production and distribution of prescriptive literature were effective means of promoting specific [middle] class values among the masses."⁴⁰

In addition to these nineteenth century precedents, it is necessary to mention one final and fairly obvious influence on the African American biographical sketch: the slave narrative. William L. Andrews summarizes the two basic aims of ex-slave autobiography: "(1) that the slave was, as the inscription of a famous antislavery medallion put it, a 'man and a brother' to whites... and (2) that the black narrator was, despite all prejudice and propaganda, a truth-teller, a reliable transcriber of the experience and character of black folk."⁴¹ While the volumes of Gregoire, Emerson, and Child were not illustrated, the engraved portrait was of central importance to the antebellum slave narrative as an authenticating text. The image of the enslaved person attested to the existence of the witness and the veracity of his or her narrative.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, p 138.

⁴¹ William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*, p 1.

The turn of the century sketch inherits its visual iconography, in part, from the slave autobiography.

As these examples illustrate, there have been a variety of reasons behind the collection and publication of accounts of black lives: advocating for human rights, educating and policing the masses, and producing the black self as a human and free subject. Post-emancipation, African American writers became newly invested in the biographical sketch's potential. No longer concerned with nominal freedom or mere humanity, turn of the century African Americans mobilized the personal histories of exemplary race men and women to reconstruct the terms by which racial difference was imagined and visualized. This chapter looks at Booker T. Washington's *A New Negro for a New Century*, D.W. Culp's *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, and Gertrude Bustill Mossell's *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* to explore the significance of the biographical sketch to post-Reconstruction writers. Does the genre inevitably summon a particular visuality? How are the biographical sketch and the photographic portrait used together to reproduce gender norms? To what extent does the coupling of personal information with personal likeness confirm the Victorian belief in the ability to know one's inner character by one's outward appearance?

Chapter Four: Pauline Hopkins and *Colored American Magazine*: The Photograph and the Black Literary Periodical

This chapter examines the interplay between text and image in *Colored American Magazine*. Writer, dramatist, and public intellectual Pauline Hopkins edited the periodical between 1901 and 1904, and contributed extensively to its content. As the "first national magazine written, published, and cooperatively owned by an African American community, and addressed to an

African American audience," *Colored American Magazine*, which ran from 1901-1909, is a rich source for studying the production of African American images by and for African Americans in the early twentieth century.⁴² The magazine is also at the center of the history of the development of an international black magazine reading public at the turn of the century.⁴³ Its innovations in visual design accounted for at least some of its success – in a time when many literary magazines were still using a text-only format, *Colored American* incorporated photographs and other illustrations. Ira Dworkin's introduction to his edited collection of Hopkins' nonfiction writing urges scholars to attend to this aspect of the publication: "The visual significance of the [*Colored American*] magazine deserves additional attention that requires a return to the source since the illustrations reproduced here do not even skim the surface of a rich, unexplored archive."⁴⁴

As editor, evidence suggests Pauline Hopkins held considerable sway over the selection of images. Dworkin points out that when Hopkins was forced to leave the magazine due to her conflict with Booker T. Washington, *Colored American* was given a telling makeover:

The March 1904 issue also represented a visual turning point for the *Colored American Magazine*. [New York publisher and Booker T. Washington supporter John C.] Freund's dissatisfaction with the magazine commenced with the cover photographs of young African American women, mostly representatives of women's clubs. Whereas women appeared on thirty-six of the first forty-one covers (and three of the five exceptions were in the first five issues), Freund got his wish and men took over beginning in March 1904. A new cover design even replaced long-running cameo sketches of Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass with

⁴² Smith, *American Archives*, p 187. Smith's chapter on Hopkins is extremely useful in its illumination of the thematic of blood and heritage in her fiction.

⁴³See Hazel Carby's introduction to *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*. For more on the development of black reading publics, see Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, Duke University Press, 2002.

⁴⁴ See Dworkin, Ira, "Introduction," *Daughter of the Revolution: The Major Nonfiction Works of Pauline Hopkins*, Rutgers U P 2007, Introduction."

two male figures, one representing industrial labor and the other classical education.⁴⁵

Amidst widespread post-Reconstruction violence against black women, often justified by historically entrenched images of African Americans as beneath the protections and privileges of the category "woman," Hopkins used *Colored American Magazine* to visualize and write African American women into respectability on a monthly basis. The intertextual play between these cover photographs and other illustrations, including advertisements, deserves further study.

Apart from her novels, Hopkins' major literary contribution to the magazine is her series of biographical sketches. Historian Carole Doreski usefully summarizes her commitment to biography: Hopkins' work, she argues, "move[s] from the inherited rhetoric of the representative biographical sketch to a culturally defined, intertextually enriched vision of the way in which all history *is* biography."⁴⁶ Drawing on the previous chapter, I locate Hopkins' belief in the historical and political significance of biography alongside her commitment to the photographic portrait.⁴⁷ "Famous Men of the Negro Race" and "Famous Women of the Negro Race" (which, combined, total more than 75,000 words) are both interartistic works that present the subject's visual likeness alongside a narrative of his or her life and accomplishments. Ira Dworkin calls attention to the liberties Hopkins takes by reconstructing her subjects' voices, inserting didactic asides and direct addresses, changing words, and altering passages of text.⁴⁸ How did she use the

⁴⁵ Ira Dworkin, "Introduction," in *Daughter of the Revolution: The Major Nonfiction Works of Pauline Hopkins*, Rutgers University Press, 2007. Also, the new frontispiece, with the two male figures, acts as a frame around the portraits selected monthly for the cover. With the image of the industrial laborer on the left and the male figure in cap and gown to the right, one cannot help but recall the customized frames adorning the portraits in Culp's *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*. With these images as precedent, it is not clear whether "industry" and "education" are presented side by side as contemporaneous facets of black life, or if there is a hierarchy and progression implied, as with Culp.

⁴⁶ Doreski, C.K. *Race Rhetoric in the Public Sphere*. Cambridge UP, 1998.

⁴⁷ Hopkins also wrote biographical series for *Voice of the Negro* and, a decade later, in the short-lived *New Era Magazine*.

⁴⁸ These liberties are not limited to Hopkins' work in biography; her nonfiction also borrows directly from published works without citation. It should be pointed out that protocols concerning citation were different in her day. Ira Dworkin offers a fair assessment: "Many passages that appear under Hopkins' byline are culled directly

photographic portrait to legitimize the heroic narratives she constructed out of her potent blend of biography, history, and fiction? Does illustration perform the same work for Hopkins as it does for D. W. Culp and Booker T. Washington?

Pauline Hopkins' fiction is also of interest in this chapter. Her short story, "The Test of Manhood," raises the question of to what extent the nineteenth century past from which aspiring-class African Americans endeavor to break is figured visually by an older, dark-skinned black woman. Her story, like Charles Chesnutt's "The Wife of His Youth," tells of a young light-skinned man who must abandon a black woman, in this case his mother (in Chesnutt's text the woman is his first wife from slavery times), to attain material success and class advancement. These narratives call attention to the importance of skin color and gender to the production of new racial images.

Though all of her serialized novels have something to teach us about the significance of the visual to the production of race at the turn of the century, *Hagar's Daughter* seems especially relevant. *Hagar's Daughter* is a detective narrative structured around questions of genealogy and race, much like Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, which was also serialized eight years earlier in *Century Magazine*. The detective narrative has a particular relationship to visibility that centers on the issue of evidence. What can be known by looking, and what remains hopelessly occluded? Underpinning this question were growing anxieties around race's tenuous connection to the visual. Pauline Hopkins addresses these issues while blending history with the conventions of popular fiction.

Chapter Five: Reimagining the African American Tradition: James Weldon Johnson

from other writers. The voice that emerges is not strictly that of an essayist, but also that of an editor, compiler, and arranger as she credited herself on the title page of her 1905 pamphlet," Dworkin, *Daughter of the Revolution*.

In 1893, more than twenty seven million visitors flocked to Chicago to take in the spectacle of the modern, urban, industrial American nation as embodied in the aptly named "White City" of the World's Fair. Among those visitors was a twenty year old African American elevator operator from Dayton, Ohio who had traveled north to write an article on the fair for the *Herald* and to establish himself professionally as a writer. Within weeks, the entrepreneurial, self-possessed young man found himself sharing his recently published and lamentably ignored volume of poetry, *Oak and Ivy*, with eminent human rights leader and representative race man Frederick Douglass. So impressed was Douglass that he christened Paul Laurence Dunbar "the most promising young colored man in America" and invited him to recite original verse on the fair's intensely controversial Colored American Day.

Also drawn to Chicago that summer was James Johnson, on vacation from his studies at Atlanta University and hoping to earn some money before returning as a senior the following fall. Johnson, who would not take on the middle name "Weldon" until 1913, arrived with friends from university in time for Colored American Day festivities. Unknowingly on the cusp of national acclaim, Dunbar read selections from his book of verse to a receptive crowd that August afternoon. What an impression this performance must have made on Johnson, who would later write extensively of Dunbar's foundational place in the African American literary tradition. Amid the White City's uncritical celebration of social Darwinist "progress," industrial capitalism's mobilization of romantic racialism embodied in the fair's display of a living, pancake-selling "Aunt Jemima," and the lively intraracial debate around the merits of participating in Colored American Day, how can one begin to assess the significance of Dunbar's recitation for someone as astute as Johnson? What was the place of black poetry at the

World's Fair? Did either man sense any irony as Dunbar recited these lines just a short walk from the ethnographic sideshow constructed around the Fon people of Dahomey?⁴⁹

The place that nurtured men of savage mien
 Now teems with men of Nature's noblest types;
 Where moved the forest-foliage banner green,
 Now flutters in the breeze the stars and stripes!"⁵⁰

What did Paul Laurence Dunbar mean to James Weldon Johnson? The many brilliant editorial prefaces, the innovations in form, and the intricate theorizing of dialect that Johnson would author over the course of his career all return to Dunbar's work and legacy. Nearly thirty years after Chicago's World Fair, and sixteen years after Dunbar's death, Johnson published the groundbreaking *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922). Johnson is of particular interest as an anthologist, because it is in this capacity that he both constructs a foundational history of black cultural production and inaugurates a new, modern moment in African American arts and letters.⁵¹ The preface to his anthology of poetry does just this in its revision of late nineteenth century literary histories that posit Phillis Wheatley as the foremother of the African American tradition. Not unlike the displacement of Wheatley's image after Hopkins leaves *Colored American Magazine*, Johnson relegates the early American poet to a sort of pre-history while Dunbar becomes the founding father of African American poetry.⁵² The narratives of literary history that, in the beginning of the twentieth century, culminated with the success of Dunbar, now *begin* with the body of work of this formidable literary icon who, for Johnson, must be transcended by the next generation of black writers.

⁴⁹ See the photograph books that circulated after the widely popular displays of the Fon people, cited in Reed, *All The World Was There!*

⁵⁰ From "Columbian Ode," written by Dunbar in commemoration of the World's Fair.

⁵¹ His other two anthologies, the *Books of American Negro Spirituals*, were collaborations with his brother, musician J. Rosamond Johnson.

⁵² Without reading too much into the displacement of Wheatley by *Colored American Magazine* and James Weldon Johnson, it does call to mind the short stories of Chesnutt and Hopkins that examine the moral implications of breaking ties with the dark-skinned, formerly enslaved black wife or mother, respectively, in order to become a modern, upwardly mobile "New Negro" man.

Did Johnson take up Dunbar's legacy of commitment to the visual? Like Dunbar, Johnson experiments with illustration in his published work. *God's Trombones* (1927) includes hand-drawn illustrations by Aaron Douglas. These modernist illustrations do decidedly different cultural work than the social realism of the Hampton Camera Club's photographs in Dunbar's books. Like the turn of the century illustrated volumes, they announce a break with the conventions of traditional racial representation. Attempting to move at once within and beyond the rich historical and cultural tradition so thoroughly promoted by the turn of the century writers, anthologists, and archivists this dissertation discusses, Johnson and Douglas' collaborative project calls attention to (another) new era of African American cultural production. Johnson self-consciously and explicitly breaks with the outdated romantic racialism embedded in visual representations of Southern rural African Americans and the eye dialect⁵³ associated with the plantation.

As is the case with Hopkins, Johnson's work in newspapers and magazines are important to any consideration of the significance of the visual in his writing. During Johnson's decades-long commitment to journalism he published articles in many major national and regional periodicals including *The Nation*, *Century*, *Harper's*, *Mercury*, *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Herald Tribune*, *The Crisis*, *Amsterdam News*, *Opportunity*, and *New York Age*. As a prominent activist, public intellectual, and man of society, Johnson was also frequently the subject of news publications. In 1924, for example, the *Baltimore Afro-American* pronounced him one of the "ten greatest Negroes America has produced" and announced a forthcoming

⁵³ "Eye dialect" refers to the transcription of speech that emphasizes social and status difference by transcribing words using nonstandard spelling, which often does not necessarily alter pronunciation.

article in which short biographies of all ten distinguished individuals would be printed alongside the portrait of each.⁵⁴

Johnson had thorough knowledge of the tradition of black biography and autobiography and its strategic deployment of the portrait. While his autobiography and his novel, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), are not illustrated, these texts demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the image to this genre within an African American context. While Johnson's experience as a musician has been used to contextualize his writing, his novel, autobiography, poetry, and nonfiction can likewise be usefully read out of the late nineteenth century literary preoccupation with producing new racial images.

Coda: Word, Image and the Production of Race after the New Negroes

Here, I will examine the phototext as a genre of African American literature through the twentieth century, suggesting the different kinds of cultural work these later texts perform in the context of new political and historical conditions. I read works such as Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices* (1941) and Langston Hughes and Roy DeCarava's *Sweet Flypaper of Life* (1955) out of the interartistic tradition this dissertation traces to the late nineteenth century. A central question will be how these texts reimagine "the past," which is still, by and large, figured by the rural folk South, and in the case of Hughes, by an elderly, female subjectivity.

⁵⁴ "Madame Walker and James Weldon Johnson among Mythical Ten" *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 4 1924 p 10.

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