EDITING PRACTICES

BLACK WOMEN'S EDITING, 1877-1919

by

Demetra McBrayer

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

Summer 2025

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project started years before I began my dissertation or doctoral program during a conversation with Dr. Maryemma Graham at the University of Kansas. I came to her as someone with a growing interest in the nineteenth-century Black press, and she asked if I had heard about Mary Ann Shadd Cary. When I said no, Dr. Graham suggested I spend the semester answering that question: Who was Mary Ann Shadd Cary and why didn't everyone know about her?

In a way, my research and dissertation are how I work through answering Dr. Graham's question. Each attempt I take a new look, a new perspective, and try to write a better recollection of Shadd Cary's work. But, and most importantly, that conversation is how I envision my work as a researcher: a sum of the many conversations and questions that emerge between myself and my community. This project is indebted to mentorship by Dr. John Ernest, whose office conversations have always been enjoyable and educational. He has pushed me to see things in new ways, question my own assumptions and that of others, and to think broadly. I am grateful for Dr. Ernest's support and the encouragement to "just try." Learning becomes immensely easier when failure is less intimidating or paralyzing and creativity is encouraged. I am indebted to Dr. Ernest for the many things I have learned as a student, a mentee, and a scholar over these past years.

I also owe a large thank you to Dr. Laura E. Helton, whose scholarship and mentorship was always a joy and boon. Dr. Helton pushed me harder than anyone I have had as a mentor and reader throughout my education. Her questions and

comments challenged me to go further, think harder, and write better. She also encouraged me to grow, and so, I sought professional opportunities and developed skills as a researcher and writer that I may not have otherwise. I remain inspired by her work and her mentorship. This dissertation and many of my achievements would have been impossible without her support.

Dr. Derrick R. Spires's and Dr. Brigitte Fielder's mentorship as readers and the community behind this dissertation cannot be understated. Talking with them, whether in their offices or over Zoom, has been delightful and educational. I am in awe of how fantastic those conversations and their feedback have been. I am lucky to have them be a part of this work, and I cannot overstate my gratitude for their time and their brilliance.

I would briefly like to acknowledge others' mentorship and contribution to my dissertation. Dr. Laura E. Mielke, who was my advisor at the University of Kansas (KU), has kept in touch with me over these years, offered me professional opportunities at conferences, and continues to support me. Dr. Jon Lamb, also at KU, supported me as a mentor and equally excited book history enthusiast. His brilliance as a scholar and his excitement about the conversations we had affirmed that I could truly, deeply love what I do and that what I was doing was both interesting and important. Dr. Maryemma Graham's brilliance cannot be overstated. Rather, I am one of the many that remain in awe of her work and indebted to her for every conversation and piece of advice she gave me. I hope that any of this work lives up to her inspiration. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Meg Cotter-Lynch, who never let me give up on graduate school and took time, after I had graduated, to help me apply for graduate

school and choose where I went. I have never forgotten how much support you gave me from the first time we met.

To the friends I have made over the years that have been there as part of the journey: I cannot thank you enough. You are all brilliant and inspirational people in your own right, and I don't think I have the words to encapsulate both how awe-inspiring you all truly are. I would have made it nowhere in graduate school without Arielle Raymos. I am so glad to have met you, to have complained about everything with you, and to have grown to be close friends and family. Brit Henry's friendship, drive, and brilliance kept me going and pushed me farther than I may have gone without her. She's a force and an inspiration, and I am lucky that she has been with me on this ride. Darby Witek, Melissa Benbow, Hannah Alpert-Abrams, Hannah Steele, Jess Maginity, Aaron Bisson, Zach Parker, Taylor Ray Donaldson, Adam Grant, Jason Dean, Andrew Marquez, Sarah Lewis, Carley Altenberger, Julie Hadsell, Melissa Tedone, Karissa Muratore, and probably more I am forgetting: You are all why I made it to this point, and I only list you here because I am going too long and incapable of adequately writing in words how much I appreciate you.

Nick. You are the greatest supporter, listener, and editor. You know this dissertation as well as I do; I read it to you and talked through it over the past year enough. But most importantly you have always been there, a stalwart supporter, who believes I am brilliant and capable even when I do not. You have an unquestioning belief in me that pushes me forward. I do not know if any of this—graduate school in its entirety—would be possible without you. You are the ground beneath me and the stars that guide me every day.

To my parents, Mary and James; my nephew and niece, Christopher and Docia; my grandparents; and many more who did not get to see the end of this journey: I am so grateful for everything you gave me, and I am so lucky to be made up of the many experiences and memories I have of you all. I hope this work is something you would be proud of. Though you cannot read it, you are woven into every fiber, and I hope it does you justice.

Much of this dissertation was completed thanks to funding and support from the University of Delaware and Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library. I completed my last exams and dissertation proposal as a graduate assistant and began work on my chapters as a graduate assistant in their book conservation lab. UD's Delaware Public Humanities Institute, or DELPHI, provided me with summer funding to write chapter four of my dissertation. And the Graduate College's Doctoral Fellowship for Excellence provided me with one year of funding to revise and prepare for my dissertation defense.

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ABSTRACT

Editing Practices: Black Women's Editing, 1880-1919 examines Black women's editing practices across several textual forms during the post-bellum, pre-Harlem—the years following the end of Reconstruction and before the Harlem Renaissance. This dissertation shows how Black women engaged in editing as both a textual act in which they arranged and recontextualized texts as well as an ideological act in which they created and supported their communities; wrote beyond the interstices into which they were relegated; explored and experimented with what Black women's voices would be and would say in print; and confronted misogynoir narratives about Black women. I trace this new understanding of Black women's editing through several textual forms: newspapers and magazines (chapter 1), nonfiction (chapter 2), lists (chapter 3), and fiction (chapter 4), expanding our understanding of what editing is and how it is being used. I tie this work to Black women's social work, Black women's organizing, and Black education initiatives of the time as well as to the modern era, as Black women editors, writers, and intellectuals continue to edit misogynoir narratives and edit space to write beyond those narratives in their own voices.

Chapter 1

EDITING PRACTICE, EDITING PRACTICES

On August 22, 2024, Kamala Harris addressed the Democratic National Convention and accepted her nomination for president. Before the lively Chicago crowd, Vice-President Harris reintroduced herself: the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, Harris was raised by a single mother and lived amongst her community. Her acceptance speech was centered not on a Democrat versus Republican message—partisanship was only mentioned in reference to a border bill Harris supports—but rather a starker dichotomy of "progress" and "regress."[1] She drew out competitor, former President Donald J. Trump's, connection to Project 2025, a conservative, regressive policy plan that will erode the rights of many marginalized Americans in favor of empowering a select few. It is, in no uncertain terms, a fascist, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, and transphobic policy that Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts, who published the policy, has described as "'institutionalizing Trumpism.'"[2] Vice-President Harris used this connection between Trump, Project 2025, and his presidential policies of cutting Medicare and education to substantiate her demarcation. "And we know what a second Trump term would look like. It's all laid out in 'Project 2025'…[I]ts sum total is to pull, our country back into the past. But America," she emphasized, "we are not going back."[3] Harris's address argued that the 2024 election was about more than policy and reform—it was a fight to protect the rights of all Americans, of progress versus regress. Though unstated, Harris's *firsts* are woven into this progress and regress dichotomy: the first Black

American and South Asian American vice president; the highest-ranking woman official in history; and the hope of her becoming the first woman, the first South Asian American, the first South Asian woman, and the first Black woman president of the United States make her a paragon of progress for this platform.

It is hard, however, to ignore the regressive cultural narratives that Harris's nomination and presence as political candidate has made explicit. On July 21, 2024, Matt Walsh—a right wing activist, podcaster, and writer—took to X to pen his thoughts on Kamala Harris as, at the time, a prospective democratic presidential candidate. He framed her as getting into politics by "sleeping with Willie Brown," a California Democrat that Harris had a relationship with in the 1990s while she was assistant district attorney.[4] Walsh refers to Vice-President Harris as a diversity inclusion on President Biden's 2020 ticket—he "needed a non-white female on the ticket."[5] Megyn Kelly, another conservative media personality, doubled down on Walsh's claims: "She actually did sleep her way into and upwards in California politics and most women (and men) may learn that and see it for what it is: evidence of an unqualified political aspirant getting ahead based on [something] other than merit. It's relevant and fair game."[6] In less than twenty-four hours after President Joe Biden ended his re-election campaign and before she formally announced her campaign on July 23, 2024, the right-wing and Republican media had taken on the narrative that Vice-President Kamala Harris was unqualified. She was a diversity hire, but most of all she was sexually promiscuous; she had traded her body for political advancement. The fact that this was not true did not matter. Jon Stewart, reading the current Republican strategy for denigrating Harris's character, named this narrative for what it was: "Is there anything else that could denigrate all of Kamala Harris's

accomplishments by suggesting it's merely the power of the Jezebel?"[7] The truth of the claims was never a consideration. Rather, Republican and right-wing politicians and media personalities leaned onto a historic misogynoir trope that had been used against Black women since slavery—that myth of the Jezebel.

Harris's potential presidency has brought the narratives encircling Black women back to the fore. Although it is framed as a concern for her political aptitude for the highest political position an American can hold, it is a blatant recirculation of a cultural narrative that has persisted in America since chattel slavery—one that perpetuates the sexual and moral inferiority of Black women as justification for their exclusion. The supposition of Black women's sexuality has never been based in reality. One can trace this narrative from colonialist contact with Africa to the invasive narratives about Saartjie Baartman across the Middle Passage of the slave trade and into American culture. One could also trace how naturalized the racist and patriarchal narratives about Black women are to how we understand concepts like morality. Charles W. Mills demonstrates how the Great Chain of Being from Enlightenment thought places white persons as the highest on the chain, as beings of intense knowledge and morality, while it places nonwhite persons at the lowest position, "designated as born *un*free and *un*equal" they are the farthest from being arbitrators of knowledge and morals.[8] Gloria (Akasha) T. Hull and Barbara Smith connect what Mills observes to "literature, scholarship, and the popular media," where white Americans and men have habitually "categorized all who are not like themselves as their intellectual and moral inferiors."[9] Mills, Hull, and Smith make apparent how intentional and historied this practice is of denigrating nonwhite persons are; it has become so normalized that racist and patriarchal logics underwrite politics, race,

gender, sexuality, class, religion, and more. When right-wing and Republican personalities and politicians imply that Vice-President Harris climbed the political ladder by having sex with persons, they are calling on a historied practice that has been normalized, one that presumes the moral and sexual inferiority of Black women to be an unquestionable truth of the world in which they exist. To a population of the public—those men and women Megyn Kelly calls on—this assertion will have an inherent truth to it because, as Mills, Hills, and Smith show, the groundwork for believing this narrative about Harris, and many other Black women, was laid long ago. To them controlling and negative narratives about Black women ring of a universal truth that now boxes Vice-President Harris into a narrative of political incompetence and of questionable morality.

The narrative about Vice-President Harris is representative of a vast oeuvre of misogynoir narratives about Black women that have sought to limit their possibilities in life. We may recognize overt ones, such as the Jezebel or the Mammy—roles that proscribed Black women to either be hypersexual or asexual mother figures. Yet the truth is that several narratives were proliferated to suppress Black women's expression and potential, and they circulated outside and inside their own communities as well. The intentional erasure of Black women's history and literary traditions circumscribed them as passive, non-agents in racial uplift and American history more broadly. The dismissal of a Black women's intellectual tradition or Black women's work in crafting knowledge infrastructures erased a history of Black women's intellectual work committed to theorizing racial and gender uplift as well as preserving Black culture for posterity. When Black women's lives and expressions have been accepted, they are often remolded to fit a narrative that supports male and/or white person's needs. Nell

Irvin Painter, for example, traces how this work has been done with Sojourner Truth and her life, often intentionally misrepresented as needed. She changed hands, becoming "more black, less feminist" and entirely erased from the feminist movement as it became "more and more white."[10] Cultural narratives circulate stereotypes that proscribe Black women, intentionally misrepresenting them so they can be misunderstood or, perhaps better stated, misread. They also work to erase Black women's presences or re-shape them, crafting images of "acceptable" Black women—shadows of the reformers, organizers, teachers, and agitators they were in life for what version of them is consumable and usable for white/male audiences and culture. But most destructively, they erase any representation of Black women that would be inspirational to Black women and Black girls. This is why Vice-President Harris's presidential campaign inspires such ire, for her assertion that she *can* be president puts the idea in the many Black girls at home, watching her acceptance speech. Harris's potential presidency disrupts the social and cultural order prevalent in America for centuries. Black girls and women are no longer the lowest in American hierarchy when Harris can vie for the most important political position in the country, and now many other Black girls can imagine greater possibilities for themselves.

"Editing Practices: Black Women's Editing, 1880-1919" is a study of how Black women worked against these dominant cultural narratives to express themselves fully in their own words. Black women recognized, resisted, and worked beyond these narratives, creating a vast print culture that attested to the reality of their lives, their work, and the work of those before them. They recontextualized misogynoir narratives in a variety of ways; juxtaposing their works against these narratives; contradicting them and attempting to divest them of their cultural and social power, both in the

Black community and America as a whole; and exploring new ways of expression and new discursive practices that worked beyond the language and narratives in which they were boxed. Black women did not use a singular genre for this work. Rather, as this dissertation shows, they engaged in editing in everything from newspapers and nonfiction to lists and fiction. Finally, this project examines Black women's editing and writing in the years following the failure of Reconstruction and before the Harlem Renaissance. This stretch of forty years is a complicated and important era, shaped by Black women's clubs and organizing, a proliferation of Black print, and the hope of a new century. It is also marked by the end of reparations with the Black community post-chattel slavery, the rise of lynching, the establishment of Jim Crow, and the development of neo-slavery within the American penal system. "Editing Practices" looks at Black women's editing, then, in a period central to Black women's literary and intellectual history, to Black print culture, and to racial relations where the stakes in ending these cultural narratives were high.

Looking at the Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem

Throughout this dissertation I refer to the period I examine as the post-bellum, pre-Harlem—an acknowledgment of the influence Barbara McCaskill and Caroline Gebhard's edited collection, *Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem: African American Literature and Culture, 1877-1919*, has had on my own work. McCaskill and Gebhard's collection initially drew me in because these years between Reconstruction and the Harlem Renaissance are laden with their own contradictory and competing narratives. Each new name and framing of these forty-two years "suggests the intensity of competing agendas, visions, and histories."[11] Rayford W. Logan's *The Negro in*

American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901 provided the most recited label for the period—"the nadir of the Negro's status in American society."[12] Logan's appraisal, though it shaped and continues to shape our understanding of this time, is only one of the many narratives McCaskill and Gebhard gesture to when they refer to the competing agendas, visions, and histories that attempt to define this period. The Nadir, the Age of Lynching, the Age of Jim Crow, the Age of Accommodation, the Age of Du Bois, the Age of Washington, the Age of Uplift, the Woman's Era—each defining terminology shapes a narrative and understanding of Black literary, organizing, and reform history in this transitionary moment.

These names reflect the complexity of this time—one marked by great highs and lows. Jim Crow laws emerged in the 1870s and were upheld with *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, enshrining "separate but equal" as a national policy. In 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified Black men's voting rights and, as Ida B. Wells-Barnett writes, fear of "'Negro domination'" politically threatened whiteness to such a degree that it was used as justification for lynching.[13] Yet we could easily mark this era by the number of organizations established and significant achievements of the Black community. These are the years in which Tuskegee Normal School, now Tuskegee University; the American Negro Academy; the Negro Society for Historical Research; and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History were founded. This era is also known as the Woman's Era, reflecting the women's club movement and push for women's rights at the turn of the century, a movement Black women were integral to. Black women established clubs for themselves across the country. In 1895 the First National Conference of Colored Women of America was held in Boston, and it brought together members from those clubs. They established the

National Federation of Afro-American Women during this meeting, and in 1896 it merged with other organizations to create the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Mary Church Terrell was elected the first president of the NACW, and Anna Julia Cooper spoke at the Pan African Conference in London only a few years later in 1900. Amongst these accomplishments was the production of a prolific print culture. Shirley Moody-Turner writes that by "1896 there were 150 African American newspapers and magazines, including professional journals" that printed everything from poems, essays, and letters.[14] Organizations created their own periodicals, including *The Women's Era*, the publication of the Woman's Era Club run by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, a civil rights leader, suffragist, and abolitionist. Black women engaged in interdisciplinary efforts, taking on multiple roles simultaneously during this time. They were teachers, painters, writers, playwrights, performers, poets, activists, and more. And just as diverse as their work was the print culture this work engendered. It was not just periodicals that Black Americans took to as part of the greater project for bettering Black life in America: histories, biographies, essays, poetry, bibliographies, lists, and fiction are only a few of the vast texts generated by Black Americans in this moment.

To refer to these years as a prolific and complex part of Black literary history is to work against the prevailing narratives that have overlooked this work. McCaskill and Gebhard detail how part of what shaped this era in literary history so significantly were the immediate appraisals made by the historians, writers, and critics of the Harlem Renaissance. Establishing the New Negro as a significant deviation from previous generations, persons like Alain Locke and William Stanley Braithwaite judged the period and found it wanting. Those belonging to the post-bellum, pre-

Harlem generation made feeble attempts at freedom but had not done enough—not what the New Negro could and would achieve. Though the need to distinguish one generation from the previous is understandable, these dismissive characterizations of the period were persuasive and long-lasting: "Literary historians and critics have long followed Locke and Brathwaite in formulating negative judgments of the post-bellum-pre-Harlem epoch as a whole."[15] McCaskill and Gebhard note that even assessments of the period that recognize the importance of the work done by Black Americans of the time fall back into the well-worn strides of Locke's and Braithwaite's narrative. Dickson D. Bruce Jr. recognizes the importance of the time in one breath but "still judges it as ultimately limited."[16] This narrative of a limited and almost infantile generation of Black writing remained persuasive until the recovery of and new insights into Black writing from the post-bellum, pre-Harlem that began in the 1970s and continues today. Their work follows in the footsteps of scholars like Eric Sundquist and Kevin K. Gaines, who continue to explore Black writing and activism of this era, finding new works and new readings. Yet it cannot be overstated how foundational McCaskill and Gebhard's work remains to Black literary studies of this era.

Recent scholarship continues the work of McCaskill and Gebhard, recovering writers and works, and providing new perspectives on the post-bellum, pre-Harlem. Elizabeth McHenry's *To Make Negro Literature: Writing, Literary Practice, and African American Authorship* took a new turn to the work of this period, asking us how our perspectives on and understanding of Black literary history shift when we consider failure as a necessary, fruitful aspect of Black writing. McHenry's work not only continues the recovery work of McCaskill, Gebhard, and their contributors but

also of answering claims that this period of Black writing was fledgling, as Locke or Brathwaite contended. Expanding the framework of literary history to account for failures allows us to understand, McHenry argues, how failure can be "'productively occupied,'" allowing Black authors "a way to audaciously reject and refuse the place assigned to them and the disrespect shown to their intellectual lives as segregation and disenfranchisement were formalized and codified."[17] Eric Gardner and Shirley Moody-Turner's edited collections, *African American Literature in Transition, 1865-1880* and *African American Literature in Transition, 1900-1910* respectively, demonstrate the capaciousness of these years. Contributors to these volumes showcase the complexity of these years by exploring a range of topics: creative landscape, aesthetic experimentation, transnational thinking on white supremacy, explorations of citizenship, and the material production of memory to name only a few. As Moody-Turner notes in the introduction, these books provide new paradigms by recovering histories and works, while simultaneously reflecting on the challenges and methodologies behind doing so.[18] Writing of the post-bellum, pre-Harlem under a series titled as "in transition" serendipitously summarizes much of the work that McHenry, Gardner, Moody-Turner, their contributors, and others have done to re-view this period in new ways. By keeping this time active rather than stagnant—in transition rather than fixed—scholars continue to find new perspectives and correct silences.

Hazel Carby's work on this period underscores the necessity of re-evaluating this period in new ways. Narratives of "limitation" and perspectival framings overlooked the immense work of Black women. Titling her work, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* signals how her

re-appraisal of the period is a recovery of Black women's presence. She argues that the focus on great race men overlooked the great race women doing work politically and culturally. Referring to these years as only "the Age of Washington and Du Bois, marginaliz[es] the political contributions of black women," whose organizations flourished and who engaged in "intense intellectual activity and productivity" during this era.[19] Carby's work reminds us then that the agendas that have driven the re-defining of this period are also gendered agendas. Scholars like Carla L. Peterson, Elizabeth McHenry, and Claudia Tate have reinvigorated research into this period and into the work of Black women. Peterson documents how Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Charlotte Forten publish in periodicals to allow Black women the "benefits of citizenship in the newly constructed nation" as well as how Black women have written for and beyond their community, one "marked by differences of gender, class, sexuality, region, and resistant to the homogenizing forces of racial essentialism and authenticity."[20] Like Peterson, Elizabeth McHenry, in another of her works, looks at the history of literary societies and how Black women created spaces for writing, circulation, and revision to rebuke "racist discourses and represent themselves as moral and worthy of respect."[21] Claudia Tate pivots to the domestic turned political, showing how Black women politicized the domestic and, by doing so, articulated a desire for reform that would change "the quality of individual lives and whole communities."[22] Recollecting this history of Black women's writing, organizing, clubs, and activism has recovered a history obscured by the singular emphasis on great race men. Carby, and the many who follow in her footsteps, work to refute how literary history of the post-bellum, pre-Harlem Renaissance replicated the erasure of Black women.

A study of the narratives and their effect on the expression and stories of Black women is situated perfectly in the post-bellum, pre-Harlem era. These years are marked not only by the complexity of racial relations in America and the immense rise of lynching but also the work of Black Americans to combat anti-racism and agitate for racial uplift. As McCaskill and Gerhard acknowledge, however, much of this history was shaped by the immediate appraisals of literary historians and particularly the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's and Braithwaite's views that these years were fledgling attempts to explore the possibilities of freedom and were insubstantial considering what the New Negro would achieve narratively defined this moment for many. The post-bellum, pre-Harlem years were shaped and confined by a narrative set in its immediate aftermath, yet it was not just the era itself affected by this historical narrative. For many years, Locke, Braithwaite, and their successor's framework excluded the work of Black women throughout this era. Black literary historians, Black studies, and Black women's studies have worked to rectify this erasure since the 1980s onward, recovering and reprinting the work of Black women from this time. The erasure or limitation of Black women's expression from the post-bellum, pre-Harlem era is the most persuasive reason for studying their work in this moment. This dissertation shows how narratives have limited or erased Black women's expression and how they refute those narratives to carve space for their writing. This era is marked by its own limiting cultural narratives and how that narrative compounded to erase or control Black women's expression, making it a provocative time to show how Black women edited cultural narratives to resist their silencing.

Editing: Methodology and Informed Reading of the Practice

This dissertation reads editing in Black women's texts from the post-bellum, pre-Harlem. My understanding and readings of editing throughout this work are indebted to the work of scholars in the fields of editorial studies, Black women's studies, and Black feminist theory. Editorial studies engage with editing as a dynamic and subversive means of expression—one that marginalized communities used to critique power structures and oppression. Similarly, Black women's studies and Black feminist theory scholars have written on the tradition of Black women working against misogynoir narratives that shaped their lives. Bringing these together allows us to reconsider editing as not solely the action of selecting and arranging materials but as also a narrative intervention that challenges the stories or imagery about a group of people. Black women's editing occurs when they make choices about how to compose and arrange the materials in their text and when they identify, recontextualize, and deny misogynoir narratives.

To read editing then is to read it as both a tangible, physical action and an ideological engagement with texts and narratives. Much of the current work on editorship in the nineteenth century focuses on periodicals. Editors read, cut, solicited, chose, and arranged materials for their newspapers and then sent it to the printer. These actions—collecting, selecting, and placing materials—is where we find "countless experiments and formal novelties that expose the seams of editorial craft."[23] Editing has its own conventions and forms to be followed. Jim Casey and Sara H. Salter establish the concept of editorial expression from studying deviations from convention—how editors utilize, diverge, or subvert "established formats" to express themselves.[24] Casey and Salter trace this in *L'Union*, showing how the

newspaper reprinted words from Abraham Lincoln in such a way to make apparent how he did not conceptualize a Union that included Black Americans. Cynthia Lee Patterson echoes Casey and Salter in reading editorial expression as intentional. She argues editors engage in acts of selection and arrangement to shape readers' interpretations of any text.[25] She draws her example from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Forerunner*, in which Patterson observes that the materials Gilman included in her periodical influence how one may read the issue's serial fiction. The tangible act of editing is laden not just with the choice of inclusion but also the intentionality of the editor—the message they intended their audience to receive whether that be a particular reading or a critique of issues, such as anti-Blackness. Others build on the work of Casey, Salter, and Patterson. Scholars like Marianne Van Remoortel, Jacqueline Emery, and Jewon Woo demonstrate how editors of the long nineteenth century select, format, and shape materials, engaging in complex projects to share their voices, to demonstrate and document their cultural values, and to create community.[26]

As much of the scholarship on editing and editorial expression underscores, editing involves more than its physical actions. Rather, the physical choices made when editing are often engaging in larger cultural discourses. The physical and ideological acts of editing are inseparable. Patricia Okker talks on this in her work, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors*. In her study, Okker finds editing to be how many women "carved out a space for themselves as editors of magazines and newspapers."[27] The periodicals they edited "challenged assumptions about the nature of womanhood."[28] Okker's work speaks to how women editors intentionally arrange their texts to challenge

narratives surrounding womanhood. They are, as she phrases it, carving space for themselves—space outside the normal avenues for expression, where their speech would be unacceptable. Editing is, for women and many marginalized persons, a way of engaging with these narratives that proscribed them and providing a way to speak for themselves. Marina Bilbija adds to this in her examination of Robert Campbell's editing of the Lagos *Anglo-African* newspaper. Campbell borrowed editorial practices from the U.S. *Anglo-African* and replicated in new, global contexts by using them in British-occupied Lagos. Campbell's editing destabilizes understandings of race, replicating and recontextualizing the term Anglo as a referent to his newspaper, to the U.S. counterpart, and to the readers of both magazines. Putting these referents in circulation alongside the term "Anglo" or "Anglo-Saxon" as a marker of whiteness, Campbell makes it unclear what Anglo means and to whom it refers. As Bilbija writes, Campbell's editing "stretched the meanings of 'Anglo' and 'Anglo-African,' destabilizing the racial and cultural taxonomies of Anglo-Saxon supremacy."[29] Editing is a way of engaging in cultural narratives and, as Bilbija demonstrates, destabilizing the core of those narratives. If editing could call race into question, then it is a provocative way for Black women to engage with and work beyond misogynoir narratives of the post-bellum, pre-Harlem.

Black women's editing as a series of intentional physical and narrative choices that refute misogynoir narratives is built upon the work of Black women's studies and Black feminist scholars. Most influential on this work would be Hazel Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. Carby's work is an extensive reading of nineteenth-century Black women's literature as a means of "confront[ing] the dominant domestic ideologies and literary

conventions of womanhood which excluded them from the definition 'woman.'"[30] What I refer to as cultural narratives she calls "dominant ideological codes."[31] These are the misogynoir myths that, as the title suggests, defined Black women as not women and justified their abuse and disenfranchisement. The work of confronting those narratives—what Carby identifies—is how Black women redefined womanhood in ways that were beyond purity discourse and respectability politics. Carby's work connects the ideological to the material, showing how dominant ideological codes affected Black women's physical and material realities and how their work addresses, counters, and moves beyond those ideological codes. Importantly, she makes clear a history of intentional misrepresentation of Black women designed to write them into spaces from which they were incapable of speaking and of enacting change by white and male persons. In this way, Carby's *Reconstructing Womanhood* neatly connects to Hortense Spillers's idea of interstices. Interstices, for Spillers, originate "in the historical moment when language ceases to speak, the historical moment at which hierarchies of power…simply run out of terms because the empowered meets in the black female the veritable nemesis of degree and difference."[32] Language fails to represent Black women because they are linguistically and culturally categorized as non-beings; they do not need language to represent themselves. The interstice is the missing word that "allows [Black women] to speak about and that which enables [them] to speak at all." The narratives Carby traces throughout her work could arguably be those interstices into which misogynoir throws Black women. Each dominant ideological code categorized Black women, contained them within an interstice, and moved on, maintaining a racialized hierarchy in which white/male persons retain power.

Patricia Hill Collins's work brings together Carby's and Spillers's, looking at how Black women have worked against narratives historically. Whereas Carby refers to these as "dominant ideological codes," Collins calls them "controlling images." These are the stereotypes and misogynoir narratives about Black women that "are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life."[33] Collins's term "controlling images" distinguishes from Carby's "dominant ideological codes" in their focus. Dominant ideological codes refer to the literary and ideological culture with which Black women's fiction engages while Collins is looking at narratives from a range of genres through depictions in literary, imagery, and material culture. Other than the scope of their investigations, the core of their work is the same. Like Carby and Spillers, Collins believes that controlling images of Black women "represent elite White male interests in defining Black women's sexuality and fertility" and "help justify the social practices that characterize the matrix of domination in the United States."[34] Those representations locked Black women into roles that perpetuated their oppression and disenfranchisement: "Portraying African-American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas helps justify U.S. Black women's oppression."[35] Collins believes that "[c]hallenging these controlling images has long been a core theme in Black feminist thought." Black women's refutation of controlling narratives, or dominant ideological codes, was central to Black feminist work historically.

Throughout this dissertation I use the terms of dominant ideological codes, controlling images, and cultural narratives *somewhat* interchangeably. Controlling images signals a large print, material, and ideological culture in which Black women

were embedded and through which they were read, though they were most often intentionally mis-read. Collins's term is most used in chapter four, a chapter that focuses on Black women's fiction as editing. I use it there because, usefully, Collins's term always draws us to the reality that fiction's effects were far reaching and, like editing is both physical and ideological, it had physical and material ramifications. Chapter four is also where Carby's dominant ideological codes terminology appears, as I study Black women's fiction at length, recalling her influence on this field and my understanding of Black women's editing. However, throughout the dissertation I use the term "cultural narratives" or slight variations on it, avoiding repetitions. The term "cultural narratives" does take me, briefly, out of Black feminist theory and Black women's studies in favor of Black literary studies. It stems from John Ernest's *Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature*. Ernest reads William Wells Brown as a cultural editor, who edits through his text *Clotel*; *or the President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853). Brown culturally edits by "rearrang[ing] the existing cultural materials that expose the façade of the existing cultural system while claiming authority over the philosophical grounds of the culture."[36] Those cultural materials are the narratives that Black Americans were placed. Like Carby and Collins, Ernest argues that Black writers "reshape these narratives," editing themselves out of what controlling image they were placed and into new ones "that challenge the foundational assumptions that govern collective and individual identity, public roles and private lives."[37] While I use Carby's and Collins's terms within the context they were intended and to acknowledge their contribution to this work, Ernest's "cultural narrative" is a useful terminology

that acknowledges the interrelatedness of print, editing, and ideology so central to this examination of Black women's literature.

It is also necessary to acknowledge why I particularly refer to these narratives as misogynoir narratives, another intentional distinction I make throughout the dissertation. The term misogynoir emerged from Moya Bailey's work with the Crunk Feminist Collective in 2010, and to which Trudy added, though her part in the development and popularization of "misogynoir" has often been overlooked.[38] Bailey writes that "[m]isogynoir describes the uniquely co-constitutive racialized and sexist violence that befalls Black women as a result of their simultaneous and interlocking oppression at the intersection of racial and gendered marginalization."[39] It is a portmanteau of misogyny and noir, referring both to the French for "black" and media technology, such as film noir. For Bailey and Trudy, misogynoir is naturally embedded in media. Trudy, like other scholars, connects misogynoir to what Black women have known for many years but not had the language form—the relationship between "street harassment, domestic violence, labor, media/pop culture, State violence, and more" and the unique oppression Black women experience because of their race and gender.[40] Misogynoir recognizes that the perpetuation of cultural narratives within media affects Black women's lives. It also signals the complicated reality of cultural narratives. Misogynoir can emerge from anyone—"Black men, white men and women, and even other Black women."[41] Misogynoir then recognizes what is distinct about Black women's experiences in America: that their oppression is because they are women, they are Black, and they are Black women. In a cultural hegemony based on whiteness, this places Black women at the lowest position and requires they remain there; the power of whiteness and masculinity are measured by

their distance from Black women. By using misogynoir, I gesture at how these cultural narratives about Black women reflect their experiences based upon an interlocking oppression on their race and gender. As well, it gestures to how complicated cultural narratives are, for misogynoir acknowledges that it can come from anyone, including Black women. This parallels how cultural narratives can become so normalized as to be accepted and internalized by the Black community. Naming the misogynoir in cultural narratives reflects a complexity of experience as well as the complexity of cultural narratives and editing.

Recognizing these complexities is central to this dissertation's reading of editing, as it resists reducing Black women and their writing into one essential, coherent ideology. The Black women whose works are read within this dissertation did not have the same understanding of their race, gender, class, and sexuality; each brought their own experiences, understandings, and goals for their expression as well as for their uplift or for their liberation. Reading any of their works and what they outline as necessary for the betterment of Black women's lives is interpolated by those ideas and desires. I read their ideas with Jennifer C. Nash's writings on Black feminism in mind—that Black feminism is "a varied project with theoretical, political, activist, intellectual, erotic, ethical, and creative dimensions; Black feminism is multiple, myriad, shifting, and unfolding."[42] However, I would not suggest the authors in this work are inherently Black feminists. Anna Julia Cooper is often heralded as the mother of Black feminist thought and theory, and *A Voice from the South: By A Black Woman of the South* (1892) is celebrated as one of the first Black feminist works. However, I would not label all women in this dissertation to be Black feminist, for to be a Black woman is not to inherently be a Black feminist, nor would I suggest that

these women understood themselves as Black feminists. For to identify Anna Julia Cooper to mark the beginning of a Black feminist thought is to also recognize that other Black women did not necessarily understand themselves to be Black feminist. The language had not yet solidified around *who* they were in the movement for racial uplift and their theory had not yet been codified under a term like Black feminism, if that applied—just as misogynoir finally brought language to a long-understood reality of the oppression distinct to Black women's experience. Yet Nash's words are a guiding star for the Black feminist theory I read here, and its spirit is a necessary framework for reading Black women's works. The Black feminists I cite here and throughout the dissertation all have their own approaches to Black feminist theory and their own interpretations, and the Black women's whose work I read bring their own distinct experiences and ambitions to their work. "Editing Practices" does not attempt to reconcile disagreements or smooth the contours of the work and theory with which it engages. Instead, it reads that as a necessary and provocative aspect of understanding Black women's editing and writing.

If there is, however, one key theme to "Editing Practices," then it is the importance of dispelling these dominant ideological codes, these controlling images, or these cultural narratives. In chapter four, I use a quote from Barbara Smith's "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" as an epigraph, for I think it explains the stakes of Black women's editing in fiction. Yet I would extend that outward to say that it articulates a genuine need for Black women's representation in their own words during a time when they were spoken for, forced to speak a certain way, or silenced entirely. In her treatise, Smith articulates a desire for representation, for seeing herself and a way to live: "Just one work to reflect the reality that I and the Black women

whom I love are trying to create."[43] Throughout this dissertation, I am struck by how Black women of the post-bellum, pre-Harlem Renaissance edit to restore themselves, always looking forward and hoping their work would better life for the next generation; that Black girls and young Black women would see themselves in the histories and stories Black women were editing back into culture and consciousness. They recognize the need to see, to read, oneself in a text and to imagine what oneself could be. "Editing Practices" is not only a study of Black women's editing. It is also recognition of Black women's deferred work and the atemporality of their imaginings of community, for they hoped their work editing these cultural narratives by recording their histories and stories would make lives better for future generations. They believed their work would allow Black girls and women to see themselves doing more than the generation before dreamed or achieved. They physically edited their materials, intentionally formatting texts and stories, to engage in editing ideologically, where they challenged these cultural narratives. In turn, they asserted the power of their voices and wrote materials that collected histories and experiences for future generations. The culmination of this work is the end of narratives that shaped or silenced Black women's expression and allowed them to be understood on their own terms, in their own language, and from their own experiences. This, they hoped, would realize what Barbara Smith's words ache for—a world where Black women could "not only know better how to live, but how to dream."[44]

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation's argument progresses from the familiar to the increasingly unfamiliar, starting at the form most studied for editing to more abstract forms where

editing is unexpected. As such, it begins with periodicals and the work of Black women editors to Black women's nonfiction, where Black women shaped history and the American intellectual tradition. It then proceeds to how Black women used lists to preserve and keep Black literary history, and then ends with a look at Black women's fiction as editing, refuting and moving beyond misogynoir narratives. Each chapter builds on the previous in that my analysis on Black women's editing in periodicals establishes a methodology for reading editing, and each subsequent chapter unmoors that methodology from periodicals and transposes it onto new forms, exploring what we learn when we do so. Overall, I show how Black women edited cultural narratives, and though they brought their own purpose to that work, they always coalesce around a belief that this work was necessary for future generations of Black girls and women.

I start with the most apparent work of Black women's editing—their work as periodical editors. Chapter one, "The Path of the Editor: Black Women's Editorial Practice and Expression" looks at influential Black women activists and editors as well as their publications. The Black press was an impressive enterprise by post-bellum, pre-Harlem Renaissance. As I noted earlier, Shirley Moody-Turner cites that there were "150 African American newspapers and magazines" by 1896.[45] Yet even as editors, Black women experienced misogynoir narratives within the Black press and the white press as well. They found themselves constrained in women's departments, literary departments, or children departments, and when they were chief editors, they faced backlash from others for what they published. I argue that Black women editors selected and arranged materials to address dominant narratives that dictated their expressions within the Black press. Black women periodical editors criticized power and empowered their own communities of Black women, creating networks and

communities of support, though issues of class interplay with how they approach creating networks or communities. To show this, I look at the editorial work of Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell in her *New York Freeman* (1884-87) column, "Our Women's Department"; Pauline E. Hopkins in *The Colored American Magazine* (1900-09); Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin in *The Women's Era* (1894-97); and Ida B. Wells in the *Free Speech and Headlight* (1881-1892). Each woman faced marginalization or silencing and used editing to carve a space to speak against the disenfranchisement and erasure—whether that be Pauline E. Hopkins's editorial work to critique Booker T. Washington and resist censure by his associates during the takeover of the *Colored American* or Ida B. Wells's work to create a newspaper that was accessible to her audience, especially illiterate or less-literate community members, both visually and linguistically. Editing empowered Black women, allowing them to express themselves and to document their experiences unmediated.

I build on the documentary aspect of editing in chapter 2, "Truth Stronger than Fiction: Black Women's Nonfiction and Dominant Cultural Narratives." Here I read Black women's editing in nonfiction, a broad umbrella term that allows me to examine histories, essay collections, and collective biographies. Black women were often omitted or selectively included from histories, biographies, and intellectual treatises despite their active presence. John Ernest writes about the corrective labor of Black historiography. He writes that Black Americans "recognized their experience was variously both ignored in and incorporated into white historical writing, and they wrote both to record their experience and to correct the misinformation that extended from and served the white supremacist assumption of the inferiority of those of African origins."[46] I extend Ernest's observations to the broad field I refer to as

nonfiction. Black women saw their presence in American history and their intellectual tradition erased by white/male histories or reshaped as dominant cultural narratives that benefited white Americans and men, both white and Black. I demonstrate how Black women selected and arranged nonfiction materials to counter directly narratives that erased them as historical agents and as part of American intellectual traditions. I return to Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, examining her history, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* (1894) as well as Anna Julia Cooper's essay collection, *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892), and Lucy Wilmot Smith's collective biography, "Women as Journalists: Portraits and Sketches of a Few of the Women Journalists of the Race" (1889). Mossell's work provides us a history of Black women, and Cooper exemplifies Black women's intellectual traditions and argues for their recognition as theorists on race, gender, and oppression. Smith's biography coalesces the work of Mossell and Cooper, recording Black women's literary and intellectual history. By editing against their erasure, Black women's nonfiction preserved their literary and intellectual history in perpetuity—work they believed would shape the lives of future generations of Black women.

Nonfiction was not the only means by which Black women's editing preserved their literary history. A precursor to the bibliographic turn at the turn of the century, Black women created lists of Black writers, editors, and their works as a means of recording and of remembering. "Listing and Accounting: Documenting Black Writers and Works" marks the beginning of more abstract considerations of editing—where editing is not always marked by clear reference to particular narratives but gestures at a large print culture and American culture laden with misogynoir narratives. I look at Black women's lists, the sequential listing of persons or works in nonfiction texts, that

record Black literary history. I read the lists within Victoria Earle Matthews's speech and essay, *The Value of Race Literature* (1895), and S. Elizabeth Frazier's collective biography, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" (1892), as proto-bibliographies—a first attempt at some way to collect and enumerate Black literary history that encouraged recitation as a means of remembrance. I argue that Black women create lists to combat narratives that proclaimed they could not write or must write their stories in certain ways if they wished to be heard at all, collecting and enumerating a historied tradition of Black women's writing to the contrary. The sheer volume of the lists they created edited cultural narratives that erased and minimized Black women's literary history, and by preserving this history for posterity; whereas discourse on selection and arrangement—editing—has often involved cutting or attrition, lists beg us to consider abundance as an editorial praxis. Reading lists as a form in which Black women edit provides a gleam into the early work of compiling indices for users to search through and to learn about Black writers and literature. Matthews believes her lists convey the importance of Black literature to her audience, as a means of resistance, expression, and elevation, and Frazier believes that, by knowing Black women writers and their lives, future generations of Black girls and women would lead the race to bright futures. Black women's lists as an editorial act provides us insight into a lesser studied form of Black print culture that shines a light on Black women's work to collect, enumerate, and preserve Black literary history and how they attempted to make a functional knowledge infrastructure for learning and knowing that Black literary history by doing so.

My final chapter marks the most expansive and abstract consideration of editing, looking at how Black women's fiction edits cultural narratives. "'The Quality

of Light': Black Women's Fiction as Editing" takes inspiration from Audre Lorde's essay, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in which she remarks: "The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives."[47] This chapter explores how Black women's fiction is an editorial act that attempts to better the "quality of light" by which Black girls and women could understand their lives and envision change. I read editing in Frances E. W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph* (1888-89); Pauline E. Hopkins's *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1899); and Jessie R. Fauset's "Emmy," published in *The Crisis* (1912-13). I look at how these Black women chart complex stories of Black women's lives under these narratives as well as the struggle to live beyond them, and the importance of this editorial work in, hopefully, achieving what Barbara Smith asks for in her essay, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism"—stories that would reflect the lives of Black women and teach them to live and to dream.[48] Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset craft stories that engage with stereotypes, like the Jezebel or the Mammy, and they engage with prevailing white supremacist narratives that believe that their race and gender marks them as inherently sinful and lesser. And these stories are stories of what it means to move beyond misogynoir cultural narratives. Black women's fiction shows Black women's lives to be far more dynamic than dominant narratives would reduce them to, and they show Black girls and women that they have the power to move beyond and live lives that are not strangled by those narratives. Reading editing in Black women's fiction underscores how editing was a practice and a praxis—one that was intrinsic to their work toward racial and gender uplift.

I conclude with a look at editing then and now in my coda. I trace the work of one of the most famous Black women editors of the twentieth century, Toni Morrison. I review her career as an editor for Random House and how she viewed her editorship as her form of activism within the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. I look at her work to acquire and distribute Black authors' work as well as her work to edit collections on Black literature were integral acts of editing that resemble the work of the many Black women editors within this dissertation. Morrison helps to connect this conversation across time. I see the throughlines from Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell's editorial work to connect her community to Anna Julia Cooper's Black womanist theorizations to Lucy Wilmot Smith's lists that collect Black literary history and, finally, to the fiction of Pauline E. Hopkins's novel in which she showed how Black girls and women can always redefine themselves and their possibilities in new ways. Connecting the post-bellum, pre-Harlem to the twentieth century, though I gesture more broadly throughout chapters, reminds us that Black women continue to work against misogynoir and totalizing narratives, and that they have always and continue to imagine as well as embody new discursive possibilities for themselves.

ENDNOTES

[1] Weissert et al., “Harris Summons Americans to Reject Political Divisions and Warns of Consequences Posed by a Trump Win.”

[2] ACLU, “Project 2025, Explained.”

[3] “Vice President Harris’ Acceptance Speech,” 6.

[4] “Kamala Harris got her start in politics by sleeping with Willie Brown. She became Vice President because Biden needed a non-white female on the ticket. Now she likely becomes the Democratic nominee for president because the guy at the top of the ticket has dementia. She’s made a.”

[5] Matt Walsh [@MattWalshBlog], “Kamala Harris got her start in politics by sleeping with Willie Brown. She became Vice President because Biden needed a non-white female on the ticket. Now she likely becomes the Democratic nominee for president because the guy at the top of the ticket has dementia. She’s made a.”

[6] “Disagree. She actually did sleep her way into and upwards in California politics and most women (and men) may learn that and see it for what it is: evidence of an unqualified political aspirant getting ahead based on smthg other than merit. It’s relevant, and fair game.”

[7] *The Daily Show*, “The Daily Show.”

[8] *Racial Contract*, 16.

[9] “Introduction,” xviii.

[10] *Sojourner Truth*, 264.

[11] McCaskill and Gebhard, “Introduction,” 2.

[12] *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901*, 52.

[13] “A Red Record. Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894,” 223.

[14] “Introduction,” ed. Moody-Turner (2021), 3.

[15] McCaskill and Gebhard, “Introduction,” 3.

[16] McCaskill and Gebhard, "Introduction," 3.

[17] *To Make Negro Literature*, 6.

[18] "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2021), 7.

[19] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 7.

[20] "Reconstructing the Nation," 304–5; *Doers of the Word*, 238.

[21] *Forgotten Readers*, 19.

[22] *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 20.

[23] Casey and Salter, "With, Without, Even Still," 247.

[24] "With, Without, Even Still," 248.

[25] "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Living in Periodicals," 142.

[26] See Marianne Van Remoortel's "Scissors, Paste, and the Female Editor: The Making of the Dutch Woman's Magazine *de Gracieuse* (1862-64)." *Women's History Review* 30, no. 4 (2021): 555-573; Jacqueline Emery's "'News-Paper Making Isn't Play': Native American Schoolgirl Editors and the *Hallaquah*." *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism* 30, no. 2 (2020): 114-117; and Jewon Woo's "The Colored Citizen: Collaborative Editorship in Progress." *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism* 30, no. 2 (2020): 110-113.

[27] *Our Sister Editors*, 4.

[28] Okker, *Our Sister Editors*, 5.

[29] "'Dear Anglo,'" 646.

[30] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 6.

[31] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 21.

[32] *Black, White, and in Color*, 156.

[33] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 77. Charles Mills explores this from a philosophical framework, particularly the normalization of whiteness and white supremacy in foundational philosophical ideas that have gone on to shape law, legislation, and more. See, Charles Mill's *The Racial Contract*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022, pp. 15-16.

[34] *Black Feminist Thought*, 93.

[35] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 76.

[36] Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*, 9.

[37] *Resistance and Reformation*, 15.

[38] In her opening to *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance*, Moya Bailey notes that she coined the term "misogynoir" in 2008, but her first publication on the work appears in a *Crunk Feminist Collective* blog titled, "They Aren't Talking about Me…".

[39] "What Is Misogynoir?," 1.

[40] "On Misogynoir," 763.

[41] Bailey and Trudy, "On Misogynoir," 762.

[42] *Black Feminism Reimagined*, 5.

[43] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 173.

[44] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 173.

[45] Moody-Turner, "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2021), 3.

[46] *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 22.

[47] *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*, 1.

[48] Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 73.

Chapter 2

THE PATH OF THE EDITOR: BACK WOMEN'S EDITORIAL PRACTICE AND EXPRESSION

In 1891, I. Garland Penn created a Black press collective biography, *The Afro-American Press, and Its Editors*. In it, he details several Black periodicals and Black editors, and though he covers both men and women, the number of male editors covered is significantly higher than the number of women editors. There are 64 male editors included and 19 women—less than one-third the number of male editors. Despite the relatively small number of Black women editors, those included are prolific: he includes Victoria Earle Matthews (as Mrs. W.E. Matthews), Josephine T. Washington, Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell (under the name Mrs. N.F. Mossell, her penname), and Ida B. Wells. Yet other notable Black women editors are excluded, such as Pauline E. Hopkins, editor of the *Colored American Magazine*, and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, editor of *The Woman's Era*. In his preface, Penn notes the difficulties of doing collective biographies and of printing a book—he could not list everyone, or he would have to publish several volumes.[49] He hopes they will accept his apologizes, for they are "able and efficient." Their exclusion is gestured away as an unfortunate reality of book production.

However, the disparity in coverage of Black women editors to Black male editors hints at more than a simple issue of cost. Penn acknowledges this within his preface: "To the hundreds of men and women laboring in journalism, the author owes an apology for not making personal mention of all of our papers now published, and

their editors."[50] He even acknowledges the numerous women correspondents excluded from the *Afro-American Press*.[51] If there are hundreds of women who are journalists, correspondents, and, in particular, editors, then what was the reasoning behind their exclusion? Penn could have arranged his collection of biographies so there were an even number of both men and women editors. He could have adjusted it to include more women, potentially, and drawn attention to the scores of women working within and for the Black press. Penn's apology seems to hint at a recognition that his editorial choice—who was included and excluded and how he organized the text—would earn some response from the very Black men and women he excluded. Penn's lack of a fuller explanation behind his choices reveals the normalcy assumed by many in the Black press. Many Black male editors had, for long, controlled the narratives of Black women, spoke for them, or excluded them entirely.

That is not to say Penn and his text represent the entirety of Black male editors or their texts. Texts contemporaneous to Penn's take great effort to detail the lives and work of Black women, including Black women editors. Monroe Majors's *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (1893) and L. A. Scruggs's *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character* (1893) are two such examples. Both Majors and Scruggs exclusively record the lives of Black women with the intent to inspire younger generations and to record the impressive work of Black women despite the limitations that have been placed on them within white and male America.[52] Their works are part corrective to the propagated dismissal and denigration of Black women by white Americans and men and hopeful inspiration for those yet to come. Amongst those are Black women editors Penn covers, such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Ida B. Wells, as well as those Penn does not record, such as Mattie Allison

Henderson and Julia Ringwood Coston.[53] Black women editors are central to racial progress for Majors and Scruggs. Majors writes that, "[i]t is no wonder that a race progresses in spite of its obstacles when it is remembered that such women bedeck the bright escutcheon of our editorial brow."[54] Majors's and Scruggs's text characterized a complicated era. Some wished to record the work of Black women editors while others continued to marginalize their contribution to the Black press. When we consider Penn's text against other works like Majors's and Scruggs's, we are left with the reality of how Penn's formal choices, what he kept and what he excluded, crafts a distinct narrative about Black women editors. Their work, Penn's formal segregation argues, are extricable from the work of Black men editors. Penn's text exemplifies a particular strain of patriarchal thought that anaesthetized the work of Black women editors from the larger work of racial uplift. Black women's work may benefit Black women—benefit motherhood and the home—but their work was not necessary for the race writ large.

Black women became editors to enter these discourses from which they were excluded, to create space for themselves, and to document their experiences, perspectives, and voices. The discourses surrounding Black women were limiting intentionally. Misogynoir predetermined Black women's expression. The Black press limited Black women's writing by believing they could only write toward women and women's issues, an idea that presumed their writing was inconsequential to the work of Race Men and uplift. When they did not adhere to the predetermined limitations of their writing, then they were silenced. In other instances, Black men wrote about Black women's work and experiences entirely from a male perspective and with an eye toward using Black women's stories to further a particular agenda. Yet Black

women found ways of expressing themselves editorially, engaging in those same actions of selection, exclusion, and arrangement that created potential for them to critique, to be recognized, and to make communities and networks of Black women. What becomes apparent is how Black women's editing is mired in complex power systems of race and gender, and as such, their editing was unlike their male peers. Scholars such Jim Casey, Sara Salter, Marina Bilbija, and Lois Brown have shown Black male editors use editing to establish their presence as Race Men, to engage in criticism of racism, and to theorize Black futures. While Black women engage in these, they do so whilst navigating these structures and with an understanding of how editing allowed them to better their immediate communities and connect them to resources and to culture from which they otherwise had no access.

Black women editors were central to the growing Black women's movement of the era, and they sought to teach and guide Black women toward a better tomorrow through several approaches, whether that be literature, education, community work, or organizing. They connected Black girls and women to community resources and provided them art and education they otherwise could not access, and in other instances, they hoped their works inspired and paved the way for future generations. Black women editors recognized the power of the periodical as a medium for criticism and naming power, and by printing their words in a circulating medium, they brought Black women's voices to the fore and interconnected each other; they recognized who their Black women readers were and forced recognition upon other readers. Their work was Black womanist work, envisioning and addressing the needs of Black women readers, though this work was complex. Black women editors do not approach this work to the same ends, yet they believed periodicals to be a medium through

which they could push Black women and their needs to the fore, engender change, and create networks and communities of Black women.

This chapter argues that Black women editors selected and arranged materials to address dominant narratives that dictated their expressions within the Black press. It does so by looking at the editorial expressions of four Black women editors—Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, Pauline E. Hopkins, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, and Ida B. Wells. These four women edited some of the most successful columns, like Mossell's "Our Women's Department," and newspapers, like Ruffin's *The Woman's Era*. I look at their distinct approaches to arrangement and the expressive possibilities they hold. I show how they use these methods to critique the Black press, key Black figures, and the white southern press and to make coherent narratives for their readers, bringing together Black women and guiding them toward a new definition of Black womanhood. Demonstrating how Black women editors arrange materials within their papers provides insight into how they use medium of periodical as one arm of a long project to redress the continual proscription of Black women's expression and their silencing.

Black women edited with the intent to address power as well as create and empower their own communities of Black women. They criticize oppressive institutions through their selection and arrangement of materials within their periodicals in the hopes of deconstructing or changing these institutions for the betterment of Black life. They also commit their paper to the labor of collecting, documenting, storing, and sharing an archive of information on Black organizations, Black women's clubs, and Black women. To do so they reprint and recirculate social information, club information, and club rosters. Any Black woman seeking a

community of like-minded Black women needed only turn to the pages of these periodicals, and they would find a veritable who's-who of Black women organizing and activism. Black girls and women then could join any of these clubs or create their own, and these resulting communities became networks—networks that disseminated what they learned from these periodicals throughout these informational networks and their physical communities. Black women editors express themselves critically and connectively, speaking to power and bringing together other Black women to bring about liberation. And their work, though often unseen, disrupted the Black press's narratives on Black women's expressive possibilities and documented their experiences. They offer us insight into how Black women utilized the Black press as a form of resistance and connection during an era of increased white supremacist anti-Black violence and as a hope for what the new century may bring.

Editing, Editors, and the Black Press Briefly

Nineteenth and early twentieth century periodical editing is an involved, physical practice, though its labor and effect are often invisible. Much of this invisibility arises from the complex nature of their work—they both permeate and disappear into their periodical's pages. Jonathan Senchyne calls this work transparent. Those who produce texts by mediating the boundary between the virtual and the physical, the idea and the text, become unseen, hidden labor.[55] There are exceptions to this rule: William Lloyd Garrison, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Frederick Douglass, or Zitkala-Ša, for example, are remembered for their editorial work.[56] However, what it means to edit and how they utilize editorship, particularly by marginalized persons, is a now an expanding topic of scholarship. What makes this labor complicated is that

some of it we can recreate through an understanding of periodical production, but in other ways, it is theoretical and ideological. Further, depending on the size of a press, what an editor did changes: they could be a managing editor with department editors and several staff members working alongside them, or they could control every aspect of production. At its most general, their physical labor entailed writing pieces for columns or responses to letters; soliciting contributions from well-known literary persons, friends, hired correspondents, or readers; contracting advertisements with companies; arranging these materials; getting these materials to the printer, whether in-house or a job printer; and mailing their newspapers out to subscribers and agents.

Aspects of this labor, admittedly, are intrinsically tied to the more ideological aspects of editorship. Arranging the materials within a periodical best demonstrates the intertwined complexities of form and function; arrangement is not only choosing what order to place materials in but also what materials would and would not be included in the periodical. It is both arrangement and selection, and it is in that choice—what to print and where—editors enter an intentional act to shape, and in some instances re-shape, discourses. They made choices that recontextualized and provided space for new discussions, for documentation, and for guidance. Editorial choices and their interventions have become a site for investigation. Jim Casey and Sarah Salter's reading of the editorial expressions by Frederick Douglass in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* and expressly the *L'Union* best exemplify the intervention and discourse those editorial decisions shape. Their close reading of editing in the *L'Union*, a Black newspaper in New Orleans, Louisiana, printed in French, provides the best example. *L'Union* translated and paraphrased remarks from Abraham Lincoln,

and their choices in doing so made an explicit statement on Lincoln, the Union, and slavery. The quote originally read,

> My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving the others alone, I would also do that.[57]

L'Union reprinted this as: "L'Union…l'Union avec des esclaves, l'Union sans esclaves—l'Union quand même!...ABE LINCOLN" ("The Union!...the Union with the enslaved, the Union without the enslaved—the Union even still/all the same!").[58] Translating Lincoln's words in such a way underscored the expendability of Black freedom and lives in Lincoln's opinion and criticized the president, the Union, and those who believed the president to be invested in Black liberation. The newspaper would later make the translation its motto and doing so in the avowedly anti-slavery and pro-Black publication carried the critique across each weekly issue; the motto underscored the difference from the American government, the "Union," and the Black community.

Acts of editorial expression, what Casey and Salter term actions like *L'Union*'s translation and choice to make the translation their motto, exemplify how editorial choices are distinct interventions in prevailing discourses as well as means of critique or commentary.[59] Editing is a discourse of its own. Though some moments may be as explicit as in *L'Union*, others are more subversive—they are divergences from editorial conventions evident across several issues or across numerous periodicals of the time. The location of a specific column and moments when that column's location

changes may be one such example. Others have shown that editors intentionally arrange their periodicals to impart a specific interpretation to readers. Charlotte Perkins Gilman included specific materials in *The Forerunner*, her magazine, to help readers understand a character's actions within that issue's chapter from a serial story.[60] These examples outline the ideological portion of editorial labor, and they provide us both a framework and a language for looking at the editorial labor many engaged in through periodicals of the time. Who they chose to include and where were more than simply choosing a location. They were actions laden with the editor's intention. They provided a heuristic for readers, and they could critique powerful people and institutions in subtle yet powerful ways.

The white press understood and utilized this from their earliest inceptions. In his study of the early American Republic's magazine culture, Jared Gardner investigates the different magazine editors and their approaches to editing. Some viewed their work as collecting the nation's genius in one repository.[61] Others saw their work as defining the nation's literature, narrative, and history.[62] Their goals were idealistic: early American print did not emerge as a unified process and so could not realize a nation.[63] The impossibility of their goals does not lessen their import as a guiding force behind why these white men took on editorial work and how they did that work. Print was a potent force for historical, cultural, and political use, and early American magazine editors recognized what part they could, and arguably did, play in creating a nation. Their power carried throughout the century. White editors, their press, and print culture, produced numerous periodicals and texts in the service of white supremacy and anti-Blackness. The United Daughters of the Confederacy, for example, emerged after the Civil War, and they intentionally created an entire pro-

South, revisionist print culture, which I will talk about more fully in chapter two.[64] More directly, white periodicals published racist articles and caricatures, and in other instances, they directly threatened Black editors, as happened to Ida B. Wells when she condemned the lynching of William Stewart, Calvin McDowell, and Thomas Moss. White print understood early on they could craft an American nation, and they also understood they could craft a white American nation. Their position and the possibility it held for shaping its readers, communities, and nation gave them their political and cultural power, and it is against this white press and its power that the Black press emerges.

Editors within the Black press, then, held important roles. The Black press itself was an integral project for Black liberation and elevation. Frances Smith Foster describes it as a way of creating "a positive and purposeful African America".[65] It also facilitated "any defensive gestures responding to racist attacks and libel."[66] At the 1847 National Convention of Colored People, the Committee on a National Press and Printing Establishment for the People of Color, referred to the project of a national Black press as "the most powerful means for our elevation"; that its establishment "is the most immediately necessary" action they should take.[67] Though they draw on the promise of a national Black press, the Committee's comments highlight what many thought periodicals could do for the Black community.[68] Black periodicals could educate and help shape the Black public, and they would do so with the goal being to elevate Black Americans and realize both a post-slavery and more inclusive future. For some, that project required obtaining and realizing citizenship.[69] For others, that was through gaining employment, autonomy, and economic purchase in America. Many took to periodicals to voice their opinions and, hopefully, guide others.

Regardless of their stance, the press facilitated discourses on any number of Black issues and provided spaces for imagining what their pathways could—and ideally would—provide Black Americans. It reflected the dynamic nature of the Black community and different approaches thought best to gain freedom, rights, and equity. It was also a liberal project that sincerely housed many of the Black community's hopes for its ability to turn speculation—those dreams and futures they wrote for—into reality. The belief in the Black press to be integral to any imagined future was unwavering.

This deep hope for and belief in the potential of the Black press by some within the Black community means there was a similar pressure on its editors, who were charged with realizing these goals. It also meant there were "correct" ways to approach this work and right people to be editors. Just as their work was political and ideological, editing itself was affected by cultural norms surrounding gender and class.[70] Much of the press had, until the nineteenth century, been edited and produced by white, upper-class men, though they used enslaved labor to print, set type, and make engravings.[71] Black presences had been in American print before the emergence of the nineteenth-century Black press and proliferation of a Black print culture. This project, however, did not mean the Black press was egalitarian.[72] Black women were not often nor wholly supported as periodical editors. This was despite their presence within Black print culture and activist circuits. Eric Gardner notes how employees for the *Christian Recorder* lived in the shop where the paper was printed, and Black women supported the Colored Conventions Movement in boarding houses and through food despite the convention obscuring their presences in its own proceedings.[73] Mary Ann Shadd Cary, the first Black woman editor and publisher of a

newspaper in North America, faced backlash for her work as the proprietor and editor of her newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman* (1853-57). She stepped back from the newspaper in June 1855, stating that her absence may help the paper.[74] In her farewell, she imparts a serious charge: "To colored women, we have a word—we have 'broken the Editorial ice,'…for your class in America; so go to Editing, as many of you are willing."[75]

Cary's work as editor was a watershed moment for Black women editors, yet it was not such that Black women flooded the press but rather trickled in slowly for the rest of the century. Many did take her charge seriously: Ione E. Wood, Kathleen Tankersley Young, Amelia E. Johnson, Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Pauline E. Hopkins, and Ida B. Wells all took up editorial positions in the wake of Cary's work and call.[76] And though they entered the press, they continued to battle with their male counterparts. In her essay on the Black press, editors, and Black women in the Black press, Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell observes that women are active in the press, but few of them are independently working; few are following in the footsteps of Cary, creating an independent Black women's press.[77] "[R]evolving around the sun of masculine journalism," she states, "[t]hey remain willing captives, chained to the chariot wheels of the sterner element, and deem it well, if 'united they stand.'"[78] Mossell's terminology is remarkable. In her words, Black women editors are not the center of an orbit, they circulate *around* the men of the Black press. Further, these women are "chained to the chariot wheels" and content to be so under the guise of unity.[79] Much like *L'Union*, Mossell's words point out the distance between progress and "unity" within the Black press. Terms like "captives" and chains imply Black women editors who do not forge a path for themselves are replacing one

servitude with another. Cary calls for Black women to take up editing; Mossell answers that call and issues her own. Black women needed to edit radically and create their own expressive space, unchained from the chariot wheels of the Black press's men.

Mossell herself navigated the difficult relationship between Black women editors and their male contemporaries. Born in 1855, Mossell came from a prominent African American family.[80] She taught at schools in Philadelphia and New Jersey, and she wrote for several newspapers, including the *A.M.E. Church Review*, the *Philadelphia Times*, the *Independent*, the *Woman's Era*, and the *Colored American Magazine*. She held two editing positions: one as the editor of the woman's department of the *New York Age* and as editor of the *Indianapolis World*. Her column with the *New York Freeman* (renamed the *New York Age* in 1888), "Our Woman's Department," started in 1884 after T. Thomas Fortune bought the newspaper when the other stakeholders allowed it to default. Mossell stayed at the *Freeman* through its transition to the *New York Age*, leaving in 1889.[81] "Our Women's Department" was "devoted to the interest of women" and promoted "true womanhood, especially that of the African race."[82] It celebrated the successes of Black women and shared their needs, and it invited contributions from other Black women. Writing for the *Freeman* put Mossell in contact with Fortune, who would be remembered as one of the most important and influential men of the Black press, and the *Freeman* would be remembered as "the 'distinguished black newspaper of opinion.'"[83] Yet it is after her experience with Fortune that Mossell pens her words about Black women editors being chained to their male counterparts; she penned her opinions for Irvine Garland Penn's *The Afro-American Press, and It's Editors* that was published in 1891—three

years after she left Fortune's *Freeman*. As I will examine later, Fortune's formal arrangement of the *Freeman* is indicative of how Black women editors and their work were viewed: they had a function but were not foundational to their periodicals.

Other women navigated the complexity of editing their own columns while men were their managers, like Pauline E. Hopkins. Hopkins held three editorial positions at the *Colored American Freeman* during her tenure. She began as the women's department editor in June 1900 and became the literary editor in 1903.[84] She became editor-in-chief in March 1904, though she would be forced to leave the magazine in November 1904.[85] Founded in May 1900, the *Colored American Magazine* was published by the Colored Co-Operative Publishing Company and printed histories, essays, information, and literature. Hopkins was a prolific contributor to the magazine while also working as one of their editors: the Colored Co-Operative Publishing Company published her first novel, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900), and the *Colored American Magazine* published her short stories, three of her serial novels, and several pieces under the pseudonyms Sarah A. Allen and, potentially, S. E. F. C. C. Hamedoe.[86] Hopkins was embedded in the *Colored American*, as a writer and editor. Her work and her uncompromising politics, particularly against Booker T. Washington and his accommodationist policy, made her and the magazine a target. [87] Hopkins's editorial labor was radical—she pushed against generic distinctions to best reflect, document, and preserve Black experience and history within the *Colored American*. However, that work occurred under scrutiny, racism, and misogyny from editors at the press, particularly the pro-Washington patron John Christian Freund. Freund's presence was part of an intentional project to undermine the *Colored*

American's purpose, Hopkins's work, and to oust her by Booker T. Washington.[88] Despite the aggression her work faced by Washington and his supporters, Hopkins's editorial labor made the *Colored American* magazine a repository for Black women's organizing and history and pushed for recognition of Black women's issues as part-and-parcel of larger race issues discussed within the publication.

Other Black women chose to create and edit their own periodicals, directly addressing the gaps and silences they noted within the Black press, as Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin did with the *Woman's Era*. Ruffin was a reader, writer, suffragist, activist, and editor—to name only a few of the many hats she wore during her life. She was active in organizations and clubs, and she founded several organizations during her lifetime: she founded Black organizations, like the Woman's Era Club, and interracial organizations for any gender, like the Boston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).[89] In 1894 she established the *Woman's Era*, a publication for her eponymous club. However, its scope was not so narrow—it outlines itself as "devoted to the interests of the women's Clubs, Leagues and Societies throughout the country."[90] Ruffin managed and edited the newspaper alongside other club members and friends: Florida R. Ridley, Medora W. Gould, Leslie Wilmot, M. Elizabeth Johnson, Marion Ridley, Irene De Mortie, Hannah Smith, Butler R. Wilson, Esq., and George Ruffin.[91] Butler Wilson and George Ruffin are the only men listed in the newspaper. Wilson helped found the Boston branch of the NAACP, so he was likely a friend of Ruffin's and invited to aid with the paper. Ruffin, her husband, has a more natural explanation for why he joined the paper. Though there are men involved in the paper, they are not the marked majority of the paper's staff, as was the case for Mossell and Hopkins. The periodical

published literature and reported on contemporary race issues, such as education, colonization, or unemployment as well as interviews with and biographies on important Black women. It served as the first and key paper by and for Black women, stating that it would take women from the repressive and controlled environment of the home and intellectually engage with them in the form of a paper.[92] The *Woman's Era* ceased publication in 1897, and Ruffin's work on the newspaper provides us insight into how she approached supporting Black women and elevation with a community of Black women—an experience many of her contemporaries did not have.

Ida B. Wells's impactful and powerful work as a crusader against lynching and her work editing the *Free Speech and Headlight* is another example of what Black women editors could and wanted to do with their newspapers. Wells was born into slavery and later emancipated alongside her family. She completed high school and attended college courses at Fisk University and Lemoyne-Owen College. She was a writer, journalist, teacher, and editor. Wells was first an editor for the *Evening Star* before she joined the *Free Speech*, for whom she had been a contributor. She was asked to join their staff, but she only agreed to do so if she could be equal to the paper's two owners, Rev. F. Nightingale and J.L. Fleming.[93] Wells joined on and immediately utilized her editorial work as a means of criticism. She writes that her first piece, which protested the conditions of Black schools materially and morally, was not signed off on by Nightingale; she chose to run it unsigned.[94] When Nightingale left the *Free Speech*, Wells co-edited the paper with Fleming, which they would do until the paper ended. Most famously, the *Free Speech* was ended at the hands of white supremacist mob that descended on the paper, destroying their offices

and claiming any production materials. Wells's critique of the flimsy case that white Memphis residents proposed to justify the lynching of William Stewart, Calvin McDowell, and Thomas Moss on March 9, 1892, led to retaliation from whites—both in the press and in the physical mob that destroyed the paper. No issues of the *Free Speech* persist, making one of the key moments in the history of the Black press also one of its largest specters. Any study of Wells's editorship must not only contend with the gravity of her topics and the space from which she wrote and edited her newspaper—the post-Reconstruction South—but also the reality of its invisibility. It will require a coalescence of fact and imagination, one that "encourages speculation and resists closure." [95] Exploring Wells's editorial work usually focuses on her engagement with white supremacy and lynching, and while that remains important to her work, this chapter explores her focus on how to make her journalism and paper accessible to illiterate and less-educated Black Americans. Her editing mixes together her journalism, her editing, and her teaching to educate and mobilize Black Americans. Pust simply, Wells's editorial praxis shows how she believed teaching about lynching and working to dismantle the white supremacist system that upheld it required *all* Black Americans, even those who could not read her newspaper.

Mossell's call for Black women to unchain themselves and make their own way is what the Black women of this chapter attempt to do with their editorship. Noting the practical and ideological work of editorship gives us a methodological framework for understanding how they edited and to what end they are editing critically. The brief history of the Black press and the importance placed on its editors provides the historical and cultural context into which Black women editors entered. And a frank understanding of the patriarchal norms surrounding editorship—how

often men held these positions—provides the final piece that rounds out the power structure into which Black women and their editing enters. Lastly, we recounted the brief history of the newspapers and how these Black women editors took on their positions with brief notes of important relationships and events in which their work was mired. Each of these women approach the act of editing for different reasons and evoke it to different ends. None of the approaches are best or better; many of them emerge from the historical, cultural, and social contexts this section outlines. To an extent, Wells's editing is always in service of her goals—for a Black community to no longer be threatened and exterminated by white supremacist domestic terrorism—as much as it is her awareness of the response her work would engender within her community and amongst Southern whites. That is true of any of these women. Hopkins, as much as Wells, navigates the complex commixture of her own ambitions and the reality of Washington's intervention into the *Colored American*. These women sought out editing to carve spaces in the Black press that were not available to them or their ideas otherwise, and they did so in a complex, interlocking system of pressures. Their work was necessary and urgent in the moment, as racial tensions grew and Black women were organizing. How did these Black women editors carve out space within these publications or within the larger Black print culture of the time? To what ends did they utilize that space? When Black women had been presumed by many to be without a voice, what did they to say in this moment?

Form, Re-Form, and Reform

Answering questions of how Black women edited and why they did so requires reading Mossell's, Hopkins's, Ruffin's, and Wells's editing. To do so, I lean on Casey

and Salter's conversation on editorial expressions, such as within *L'Union*, as explored in the previous section. This allows me to focus on reading the editorial expressions, or editorial approaches, of these Black women periodical editors. I look for the ways their works critique the narratives surrounding them—narratives on the page and, by extension, those circulating within the Black community and nation. These Black women were aware of how their narratives had been silenced, and they took to their periodicals as a means of making their experiences legible. They moved from the interstice—the space between the discursive and the iconographic—into the language and, ideally, consciousness of the nation.[96] These women edited alongside Black women or with an intent to bring Black women's issues, presences, and experiences to the page and, therefore, to the mind of their readers. Each took on a distinct approach in their newspapers or magazine. They worked within the social and physical limitations of the form and their world: they could not invent more literal space than they had materially, and their work responds to and is mediated by the response of editors around them. Yet each found a way of being present, of bearing witness, and of being heard. They worked through the boxes the form and society put them in and found ways of expression outside those limitations.

I start, then, with Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, as she most represents the way Black women were boxed in, both in terms of expression and within the medium. Mossell was a teacher and actively engaged in the Black press. She contributed to numerous newspapers, including the *Christian Recorder*, the *A.M.E. Review*, and *The Woman's Era.* She was the woman's department editor for the *New York Freeman* (later the *New York Age*) under its chief editor, T. Thomas Fortune. For this work, she wrote, solicited contributions, read other columns, chose materials for reprinting, and

arranged her weekly column, "Our Woman's Department," before sending it to Fortune for final approval and placement within the newspaper. The column was "devoted to the interest of women and" would "aim to promote true womanhood, especially that of the African race."[97] It also documented the "success," "progress," and "needs" of Black women, and she encouraged community involvement in the column: "Suggestions as to how this department may be improved and its usefulness increased will be gladly received."[98] The column was successful. Mossell became the "highest-paid black newspaperwoman at the time" while working at the *Freeman*, earning $500 a year.[99] To earn so much means Fortune recognized the value, socially and financially, for Mossell's work, and it reflects an investment on his part.

Yet reading the engagement between the messages of Fortune in the *Freeman*'s pages and Mossell's within her column reveals an ideological tension on how to approach addressing Black women's needs. The needs of Black mothers, and Black children by extension, serve as one such example. Certainly, Fortune invested in Mossell, but there is a gap between what the *Freeman* advertises as its "special attention to such matters as will interest the Family Circle," and what Mossell believes necessary for the Family Circle, especially as Black women were the heart of the family.[100] She takes seriously the concerns and needs of Black women regarding what Black families need. In the *Freeman*'s January 16, 1886, issue, for example, Fortune includes articles on the success of Martha L. Baldwin, a Black woman teacher, at a white school, the push for continued support for a multiracial night school, and the opening of the Pratt Free Library, a library accessible to the rich and the poor and to Black and white Americans.[101] Education and support are a front-page topic for this issue, and Mossell takes it up in her column, though she shifts the perspective.

Mossell's focus is on the kindergartens, nurseries, and charity organizations opening by and for Black women and Black families. [102] She notes the opening of a new "Day Nurseries and Kindergartens" to help Black mothers; an upcoming clothing sale by the Woman's Christian Association, who also feed and house those in need; the opening of an old folks' home for the poor elderly in the community; and an organization to offer Christmas dinners to the poor in Philadelphia.[103] Mossell's column makes good on its promise: it celebrates the ways Black women were helping their community and being helped by those in their community as well.

Whereas Fortune's focus is on how education and the openings of libraries provide opportunities for the Black community, Mossell brings into focus the smaller organizations uncelebrated by the *Freeman*'s other columns—charity organizations for the poor, an old folks' home, and daycares and kindergartens that have an immediate effect on Black women, Black children, and the community. The *Freeman*'s focus on the exemplary and singular, like Baldwin and the Pratt library, takes the day-to-day needs of the Black community, and Black women in particular, out of focus. I point to Mossell's column on January 16, 1886, as emblematic of the way she uses her column—what materials she chooses to include and exclude each week—as a means of critique, turning readers' attention back to the changes possible in their local community. Smaller, local change is as necessary, if not more, to the sustained movement of Black civil rights at the end of the nineteenth century. As an editor, Mossell pushes outside the bounds of her column and draws our focus into the community—to the Black women who were caring for and teaching children, who were feeding and housing those in need, and for all the Black women and community members who needed those resources. Mossell's column shows that it is not a box. It

is the most direct window into the organizing and support the Black community was doing at local levels. She draws our focus from the exceptional to the mundane, from the unique to the beautifully everyday ways that Black women were present for and necessary to improving Black life. She documents how change was happening already, by educating children for a better tomorrow and by supporting those who needed it, so they lived to see that change. Fortune turns his readers toward the horizon, but Mossell turns hers to the here and now of Black women's work and needs.

Mossell's column uses its box to provide insight into the community beyond the page, critiquing the ideological distance between herself and her managing editor, yet other editors, like Pauline E. Hopkins, intentionally segment their works as a commentary on the interference of others. In her journey from women's department editor to literary editor and, eventually, chief editor of the *Colored American Magazine*, Hopkins employs several editorial expressions: she devotes the women's department section to Black women's organizing and clubs; she reorganizes the literature section, pulling at the limitations of genre distinction in documenting Black life and history; and when she oversees the entire publication, she creates new spaces for herself.[104] In her first issue as main editor of the magazine, she changes a section of the newspaper. Previous issues had a section titled, "Editorial and Publishers Announcements." Hopkins breaks this into two sections, "In the Editor's Sanctum" and "Publisher's Announcements." It does not deviate heavily from the content of the previous "Editorial and Publishers Announcements": articles extol the possibilities of Black Americans, critique white supremacist articles and their claims, and document ongoing work for Black equity in America and for the end of segregation throughout the nation.[105] As an editor, Hopkins arranged sections of the magazine to collect and

share Black excellence, as community members, organizers, and writers. She also used her position to be critical of those heading movements when she did not agree with them. She shows how, to her, editorial work is the labor of celebration and documentation as much as it is engaging with ideologies seen as harmful for the community.

Hopkins's choice to criticize Booker T. Washington, the Wizard of Tuskegee, likely led to or inspired her creation of "In the Editor's Sanctum." Booker T. Washington is best known for the creation of Tuskegee University and his strong endorsement of the trade industry as the best the path toward Black elevation; trade vocations provided Black Americans the opportunity to take on jobs, to become autonomous, and to gain economic power. As Hannah Wallinger shows, Washington intentionally sent persons who worked with him or made connections with *Colored American* staff to force out Hopkins because she did not endorse him in her "Famous Men of the Negro Race" series.[106] John C. Freund, a white music critic, contributed articles on Jamaica and later became a patron of the magazine prior to 1904. Freund asked for a letter of introduction to Booker T. Washington from Hopkins, and it would cement one of the many connections Washington had and would develop within the *Colored American*. Washington and his supporters intended to remove Hopkins, move the paper to New York City where he had more supporters, and re-shape the magazine into a pro-Washington one, bringing it into the fold of periodicals syndicated by Washington. In a letter to William Depree, one of the original owners of the magazine, Freund wrote: "Either Miss Hopkins will follow our suggestion…and put live matter into the magazine, eliminating anything, which may create offense, stop talking about wrongs and a proscribed race, or you must count me out absolutely from this day

forth."[107] He ended this demand with a clear statement: "IT IS MR. BOOKER WASHINGTON'S IDEA."[108] This was only one of a litany of attempts Freund would make on lessening the political content of and the critique of white supremacy within the *Colored American*. He suggested that if Hopkins wanted to cover lynching, then she would need to be supported solely by Black Americans because covering lynching would alienate and push away white readers.[109] Freund, at Washington's behest, monetarily controlled the *Colored American* and used every inch to threaten the paper into lessening its race pride and criticism of white America as well as forcing out Hopkins.

Hopkins's choice to create an editor's sanctum—a "sacred place" where "one is free from intrusion"—is a formal response to the increasing pressure and threats she faced from Freund and Washington.[110] Freund's racism and misogyny also made their way into the workplace. In a note to Stephen Fiske, a correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, Freund leans into racial discourse surrounding Black women to demonstrate the success and accomplishment of the *Colored American*'s staff. Lois Brown notes that Freund's description of Pauline Hopkins nears racial caricature.[111] Not using her name, he celebrates that the magazine's "editress is colored woman," asking "What do you think of a colored editress, whose salary is eight dollars a week when she gets it…?"[112] Freund refuses to name Pauline Hopkins, only gesturing at her, and he celebrates the miracle of a Black woman editress. His patronizing tone approaches objectification, putting her identities on display almost like a sideshow to Fiske, as though it is remarkable a Black woman could be an editress. I note this not to draw on the violence of Freund's words and their harm on Hopkins but to note the interconnectedness of Freund's actions and his attempts at intervening in Hopkins's

editorial labor. Creating a sanctum, then, is not a retreat from Freund or from Washington's machinations; she could not escape their influence on the paper entirely. Rather, it takes what Freund plays as miraculous—a Black woman editress—and makes it sacred or sanctimonious. Making editorial work sacral requires acknowledging the sanctity of Hopkins and her work. She asserts her right to critique and to celebrate as inherent, self-actual, and untouchable, and she formally crafts a space wherein she could do so without intervention.

Hopkins almost immediately brings to bear her tensions with Washington's and Freund's ideologies through the materials she includes in her editor's sanctum. Washington's notoriety came from his advocacy for industrial, or trade, education for Black Americans, a move that went against numerous influential African Americans, who believed that "voting rights, higher education, and equal opportunities were essential to the progress of the race."[113] Hopkins and the *Colored American* had endured Freund and his increasing criticism for months with awareness that Freund was working for Washington. When Hopkins becomes chief editor and creates "In the Editor's Sanctum," she publishes several articles expounding the benefits of education for the advancement of Black Americans, whether that education be the more traditional model or a hybrid version of industrial and higher education. In March of 1904, she includes the article "The Educated Negro and the South" that condemns those who feign "ignorance of the upward march of the educated" Black Americans and cites data of the number of educated Black Americans holding positions as bankers, nurses, or educators.[114] This continues in the next issue, wherein she writes of the Montgomery Industrial School and its help to Black girls, providing a mixture of "book and practical knowledge."[115] Her article on Berea College in Kentucky

condemns segregated schooling while arguing for the necessity of Black education, and her coverage of the Training School for Colored Teachers in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, praises the school for leaning on charity and learning in a hybrid model of industrial and academic education. These articles' celebration of Black education or the middle-ground of a hybrid academic and trade education push against Washington and his Tuskegee Machine.

This is further underscored by Hopkins's inclusion of a pro-industrial article by Freund, in which he proclaims that they need more industrial schools than they do libraries, for how will they get jobs otherwise?[116] Hopkins places Freund's article immediately following her celebration of the Montgomery Industrial School and before her reporting on Berea College. Doing so undermines Freund's argument. His, and Washington's by extension, claims are undercut by the proximity to an evidentiary wealth of the opposite. His bold statements that no college-educated Black man had made an impact or that there are "somethings that are needed by the people more than all that this so-called education…can supply" rang hollow in the face of Hopkins's documentary evidence to the contrary.[117] Her arrangement, then, makes Freund's article seem laughable in the face of her continued coverage of both Black higher education as well as a hybrid form that brought together academic and industrial training. Her editing allowed her, and potentially others, to engage with and criticize Booker T. Washington, his ideas, and his circle. Hopkins may have been unable to prevent fully Freund and Washington from influencing the publication or its contents, but she utilized her ability to make editorial choices to express her discontent with the machine that attempted to silence her. When given the option, Hopkins turns to editing as a sacred duty for herself and other Black women: they were historians, critics, and

dreamers continually silenced for not fitting the narrative. And as she saw Washington and Freund attempting to silence her in the very same way at the *Colored American*, she reaffirms the importance and right she has to take up space for herself, for her ideas, and for those whose stories she shares.

Much like Hopkins shows the radical possibilities of Black women's editing to create space for herself and others, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and *The Woman's Era* exemplify the possibilities of Black women's communal editing. This group of women came together to create a paper that was not only an archive for the Woman's Era Club, the first Black woman's club in Boston, but is also emblematic of the networks of support Black women needed and created amongst their community. The newspaper is an index of information for Black women and girls: information interviews; organizational histories; housekeeping tips; advice for young girls; serial literature; social news; and coverage of important issues, like colonization and unemployment. It's a collage of information that harkens to the information structures many Black women created at the turn of the century to document and preserve history in perpetuity. Ruffin and her team of editors from the organization took seriously the liberatory possibilities of their work: they sought to remove Black women from "the limitation of her surroundings and the circumscribed sphere in which she must move."[118] Ruffin's editorial aspirations connect Black women to the textual circulation of information. She laments that housekeeping "shuts [Black women] out of physical touch with the great world of art, science and letters which is open to all other ambitious women."[119] The great stumbling block of any educated Black woman was "the narrowness of her environment."[120] Ruffin envisions her

newspaper as a means of connecting and shaping Black women into a new school of womanhood.

Ruffin interlocks content and form within her publications to shape her readers' interpretation of what purpose her new school of Black women have within the community. In her literature column, Medora W. Gould writes that the "women of the new school" hold different views on life than the previous generations.[121] They believe "it the duty of the wife and mother to keep in touch with the world about her, and to represent the highest culture attainable."[122] They strove to be good mothers and wives, to value their health, and to know only a little of business and only pursue it only if absolutely necessary.[123] Gould's definition of the "women of the new school," as she defines them aligns with the content of the June 1, 1894, issue in which her comments appear. Ruffin's editorial choices bring together articles on culture, health, and business. Sections on music, drama, social news, and literature, which includes information on upcoming publication as well as literary criticism, combine with the newspaper's serial literature to bring culture to readers; an article on health and beauty from exercise advocates for readers to do full-body workout routines for their health; and business appears within discussion on how Black women's charity organizations are funded and operated.[124] I take the latter to tie "knowing business," as Gould mentions it, to understanding how to operate a charity organization—very much in-line with contemporary expectations for middle- and high-class Black women.

Ruffin's own editorial proclaims the newspaper to be a means of bringing culture to Black women, who otherwise could not access it, and her advertisements for the newspaper claim its readers are "women of the refined and educated classes."[125] Gould's statements on new women, then, were almost blatant, considering the

newspaper's contents. Gould made explicit the guiding ideology Ruffin carried in her newspaper: she was not only giving Black women access to culture; current news, trends, and gossip; and information on Black women's clubs, leagues, and societies nationwide, she was also guiding them toward a version of womanhood she saw as necessary to the advancement of Black women. Ruffin's editorial expression was in the cohesive vision she made for her readers through the materials she selected. Her materials do not come together on a topical theme, like how the *Freeman* covers education and Mossell uses that as a means of critiquing the use of Black women within the newspaper, but rather it unites under a common vision. If one were to give it a theme, then it would be what Ruffin believed Black women needed to learn: culture, health, childcare, social trends, and business. Selection and arrangement in *The Woman's Era* demonstrate the possibility of editing a newspaper toward a cohesive vision rather than simply a theme. The newspaper reads as a coherent message: every inch is culture and Black womanhood, even the journalism, which takes a Black woman's stance on issue of lynching in this June 1984 issue. Ruffin makes *The Woman's Era* into a cohesive, organic narrative by and for Black women.

The cohesion of Ruffin's editorial work underscores the Black women community behind *The Woman's Era*. Ruffin's editorial team, including Ridley and her department editors, were members of the Woman's Era Club; they stepped into these roles when the newspaper was launched as the organization's official publication. *The Woman's Era* was the only periodical for Black women's clubs and organizations. It was uniquely a newspaper started by Black women, edited and staffed primarily by Black women, and covered the organizational work and history of Black women. Ruffin also viewed it as an arbitrator of culture to Black women

excluded from cultural institutions. Yet this was not a collective editorial endeavor in the terms that Ruffin and her other editors were involved equally. Ruffin titled herself "Editor," and though she had an assistant editor in Florida R. Ridley, Ruffin retained the main position as the singular titular "Editor." However, it is worth acknowledging the difference in this team. While there were probably differences and disagreements, this publication is a Black women's community project. As a result, Ruffin's work in *The Woman's Era* reinforces Black women's voices in print, and in other ways, she is training and teaching those who work with her and read her paper on what it means to create, edit, and run a Black woman-led periodical.[126] Ruffin's editorial approach then produces a cohesive narrative, bringing Black women culture as well as shaping them into the new womanhood Ruffin believed integral to new ideas of Black elevation at the end of the nineteenth century.

Ruffin's editorial praxis can best be defined by its passion to better Black women's lives by providing them access to culture and educating them—the belief that education and the arts as essential to racial uplift for Black Americans in which Ruffin and many contemporaries believed. Education, or rather educating, was not distinct to Ruffin and her newspaper. Perhaps understudied is the educational praxis of one of the most famous Black women of the era, Ida B. Wells. Her tireless work reporting, printing, and lecturing on lynching in the South is what many know of Wells. Scholars have read and examined how Wells's anti-lynching writings are forms of early data visualization that utilize narratives to resist how dehumanizing data can be for Black Americans; how her works articulate plans for reparations and prefigure Black feminist theorizations on how Black women are also affected by systems that justify lynching; and how her pamphlets and presence made apparent the relationship

between whiteness and America as well as how those two identities are predicated on violence against the Black body, both male and female.[127] This reading of Wells's editorial expression examines how she focused on her work as a means of access and education for her readers. While her work did intend to circulate nationwide and provide information to Black organizations throughout America, who would be inspired by her work to advocate for an end to lynching, Wells understood her work had to pass through and engage with a wide range of readers and non-readers with little education, and as such, she intentionally crafts her works to impart her message in a way all could read and understand.

Wells's focus on education is unsurprising, as her first career was as an educator. She taught in California, Missouri, and Tennessee during her career, and she began her work as an editor while she was as a teacher. Her first job was as the editor of the *Evening Star* after its editor left. Wells became familiar with the paper after joining a lyceum of local Memphis teachers. Weekly meetings ended with readings from the "spicy journal" made of "news items, literary notes, criticisms of previous offerings on the program, a 'They Say' column of pleasant personality—and always some choice of poetry." When its editor left the newspaper, Wells was elected by members of the lyceum to become the paper's editor. Like her predecessor, she made and read the newspaper to the group. She wrote for other newspapers, such as the *Living Way*, and would ultimately leave the *Evening Star*, joining the *Free Speech and Headlight*. However, Wells found that her editing and her teaching were not warmly received. She penned a criticism about the schools for Black children in Memphis. Wells's writing is early insight into the familiar segregation educational policy where schools for Black children had poor supplies, poor teachers, and corrupt school

boards.[128] Though it was unsigned, the local town knew who worked for the small, three-person staff of the newspaper, and only one of them was a teacher, who would have such knowledge. Wells found later that year that the school board did not reappoint her. The only reason given for her firing was "a copy of the *Free Speech* on file in the office showing the criticism of them. They didn't care to employ a teacher who had done this, and for that reason [she] had been left out."[129]

Teaching, however, never left Wells's editorial work. It was, in a way, inextricable. Very early in her editorial career, she connected what she observed as a teacher in her community to what her editorial work could do. While editing the *Evening Star* and writing for the *Living Way*, she noted that her work had to be for a wider range of audience, an audience that was less literate than most newspapers wrote for. "I had an instinctive feeling that the people who had little or no school training should have something coming into their homes weekly which dealt with their problems in a simple, helpful way," she writes.[130] Wells made an intentional choice to write "in a plain, common-sense way on the things which concerned our people."[131] As a writer and an editor, she made sure to never use words that were too big when a smaller, more readily understandable word sufficed.[132] Wells carried this praxis forward to her work on the *Free Speech*. She made an intentional choice to have the newspaper printed on pink paper, so that it was "distinctive to a great many people who could not read."[133] Illiterate Black readers could go where papers were sold and request the one pink newspaper, and as had long been the practice with nineteenth-century American newspapers, they could be read aloud to them and other community members by those who could read.[134]

Reading the works of Wells from this time demonstrates that she retained her "plain, common-sense way" of writing throughout her editorial and journalistic career. In her article, "'Iola' on Discrimination," reprinted in the *New York Freeman*, Wells's writing is clear, concise, and accessible. One can imagine that it is easy to understand if not easy to explain to any listener. She uses no complex words. The largest are words like "accommodation," "discrimination," and "self-aggrandizement."[135] She clearly felt there was no shorter, more effective word she could have used for her readers. This is true of another piece Wells wrote, "Our Women." She argues the morality and virtues of Black women with direct and uncomplicated language. Readers and listeners parsed only a few complex words—"contemptuous," "defamation," "immorality," "susceptibility," for example.[136] The newspaper was the perfect medium for this type of writing. The rise of the Black press showed the possibility of circulating her message far and wide, and the short columns of newspapers asked writers to often be quick and effective in their writing; not many could afford, both in terms of space and money, to use their pages for long-winded eloquence. Yet Wells retained this practice in her pamphlets as well. In her arguably most famous work, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892), her writing remains accessible and easy. This pamphlet most exemplifies the editorial practice Wells developed—that when she wrote of issues of the Black community the entirety of the Black community had to be able to understand her work, or they could not learn what was happening, what they could do to protect themselves, and how they could end the racial terror of lynching. As such, *Southern Horrors* does not use complex language that is difficult to read aloud, difficult to understand, or difficult to explain. Potentially the most quoted line of *Southern Horrors* demonstrates the effectiveness

and clarity of her writing: “The lesson this teaches and which every Afro American should ponder well, is that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give.”[137] It is hard to imagine that Wells’s words to be hard for readers or listeners. There is little room for misinterpretation or difficulty. Her words and their intention are immediately legible.

What is apparent is that Wells’s editorial expression centers on her language and her texts being legible and accessible to every possible reader or listener. She intentionally constructs her texts and sentences to include Black Americans who were illiterate and those constitutive of a broad range of literacy in conversations about Black issues and about potential ways forward. It would be impossible to assert that Black Americans who were illiterate or less literate were entirely ostracized from the discourse of racial uplift and activism that proliferated throughout the Black press of this era. It was, however, the possibility that bothered Wells. To her, it seemed this part of her community was unaddressed and unconsidered in the Black press. Her work speaks to the complexities of class in the Black press; the potential exclusion of those who were not or less educated from the conversation and from the work of bettering the Black community. Wells’s intentionally accessible language and texts for readers embodies the principle of education in “enabling African Americans in shaping the civil society” and the potential for them to participate in “democratic political activity.”[138] Her editorial expression then is the intentional construction of her works and the action of educating her readers. It is an admixture of theory and practice; the work to craft language intentionally, so she could teach her readers on

Black women's issues, such as charges of their immorality or lack of virtue, and on lynching, an issue affecting the entire Black community.

Further, Wells's editing provides a language of and hermeneutics on oppression to readers without or with little education. Regardless of their education levels or literacy, every member of the Black community experienced and recognized oppression. What I suggest is that Wells provides them with the language to name their experience and any interconnected systems of oppression they knew through lived experience. It also provided knowledge of where oppression was emerging, what could be done, and by teaching them these interconnected systems, gave them the groundwork to foresee what may happen in the future. *Southern Horrors*, as one such example, makes apparent how white supremacy creates and circulates myths about Black Americans to justify their murder and that whiteness predicates itself on the establishment and maintenance of its racial identity through violence against Blackness. She traces this through white press and local government and ends with suggestions for Black Americans to protect themselves, to protest, and to educate each other on lynching. Wells met her audience of illiterate and less educated readers on their level and brought the issues to them in a way they could digest and utilize this information. Newspaper editing, for Wells, created a classroom that was accessible to anyone who could get and read or be read to. Supporting the Black press supports "the only [press] which will print the truth," and these newspapers were necessary; they would put "the facts" of lynch law "before the public."[139] There was no better educator than the press, in Wells's opinion.[140] She persisted outside formal institutions of education, ones she had seen underserve if not fail the Black community during her tenure as a teacher. By centering accessible language for her readers, Wells brought

the classroom into the home of her subscribers and any listeners, giving them knowledge they could not get otherwise.

Wells's need to make sure her work was understandable to under- or uneducated readers also may explain why Wells's statistics of lynching may be underrepresented. She writes on the data she obtains about 504 lynchings from 1887-1892. The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) looks at lynchings in the South from 1877-1950 and finds there were 4084 lynchings.[141] Though the range of years they examine is larger, it is hard to attribute the approximate 3500 lynchings that make the difference between Wells's data and the EJI's to solely the years spanning 1893-1950. Rather, it may be that she underreported the number of lynchings that happened in her five-year survey, whether that was because it was difficult to locate data on certain lynchings or because records were inaccessible. One could also argue that Wells underreported because at a certain point a number too big becomes incomprehensible and ineffective. Readers may have struggled to imagine the vastness of loss that anywhere from 600-1000 lives had even if they felt it. Like her language, Wells may have believed that her data needed to be legible—comprehensible, in fact—to be effective. Her editorial expression attests to an intentional practice to educate to her readers on how lynching and other forms of racial oppression emerged from white supremacy and were embedded in the legal system, legislation, and cultural systems throughout the South. She provided them with the knowledge and language to name oppression if they did not have it and the knowledge to understand where it came from and, ideally, how to uproot it.

Each of these Black women—Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells—took to editing for different reasons, and they used it to different means. Many were as

oppositional forces: Mossell, Hopkins, and Wells are speaking to direct opposing forces that exert pressure on their voices, their editorial work, and, at times, their publications. Others, like Ruffin, create empowering spaces for Black women that are entirely their own. It is not that Ruffin's *The Woman's Era* does not address any oppositional force; her newspaper speaks to a gap or silence. Black women and their clubs were not represented in the larger Black press or American press. Her oppositional force, then, was more abstract; it was not immediately present in the form of a managing editor or political coup within her offices. I note their differences to push against a generalization that Black women's editing is an essential thing. Black women's editing is as distinct as the women and the ideologies they held. Yet there are interesting trends in their approaches to and uses of editing within their respective periodicals, and noting their existence provides us insight into how Black women's periodical editing is a space of imagination and actualization.

The Function of Black Women's Editing: Criticism, Recognition, and Community

What trend is apparent is that editing offers a space for Black women to enter the discourse of the Black press physically and ideologically, and in doing so, they criticize oppression along lines of race and gender; demand they be recognized as writers and theorists; and connect and support Black women in their community. Their work is an early Black womanist thought—centered on how to address the problems and provide for the needs of Black women in the years following slavery and the beginnings of Jim Crow. One can hear the echoes of this early Black womanist thought in Combahee River Collective's manifesto: "[T]he only people who care

enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us."[142] And much like Combahee, these Black women's work emerges "from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work."[143] While many attribute the start of Black feminism to Anna Julia Cooper, other women were thinking also of how Black women were at the intersection of their interlocking identities, who felt the coalescence of racial, sexual, class, and heterosexual oppression.[144] Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, Wells, and many others recognized the power of the periodical as a medium for criticism and naming power, and by printing their words in a medium that circulated, they brought Black women's voices to the fore; they forced recognition on readers. And their mediums crafted networks and communities of Black women, imagined and physical, who were encouraged to create their own communities in turn. That is not to say they approached this work to the same ends, yet they all believed periodicals to be a medium from which they could push Black women and their needs to the fore, engender change, and create networks and communities of Black women.

The most apparent trend amongst the editorial expressions of Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells is the possibility of Black women's editorship as a position that allows for their critique of racial and social oppressions, formally and vocally, when they were otherwise not encouraged to do so. Mossell's focus on the needs and work of everyday Black women contradicts T. Thomas Fortune's, and other Black male editors', use of the exceptional Black woman as an example for larger purposes, such as supporting the possibilities of integrated education. Hopkins continues endorsing Black classical education or hybrid forms of education that bring together industrial and humanities education as a means of critiquing John C. Freund

and Booker T. Washington, both in their ideology and intent to control the narrative of her magazine. Ruffin defines the *Era* as a magazine that brings culture to Black women, who are inside the home and isolated from society largely by their labor and domestic work. Wells's work is both a clear criticism of the southern white press as a racial machine supporting the machine of Black genocide lynch law made possible and an accessible means of educating all Black Americans about this machine. It is apparent what their critiques serve to do: they name systems of racial, gender, and class oppression within America and the white and Black presses, and they do so with the faith change would come through doing so.

The Black press is a liminal space of numerous possibilities through which Black women editors enter larger discourses as both empowered and obscured bodies. Carla L. Peterson writes of the unique position of Black women social activists in navigating the hyperpresence and vanishing of their bodies—drawing attention to it, "subvert[ing] the dominant culture's construction of it," and "decorporaliz[ing] the body from the outset and present[ing] the self as a disembodied voice."[145] She argues they remove their bodies from the discussion by focusing on literary representation as "a reaction to, and intentions with, their exclusion from black national institutions."[146] "Striving to achieve an empowering narrative authority," she writes, "they hoped that their writing would both challenge the power of those institutions to which they had been barred access *and* compel these institutions to legitimate their social activism in the public sphere."[147] Peterson articulates the tensions between Black women's bodies and institutions that draws necessary parallels with the experiences of Mossell, Hopkins, Russel, and Wells—all Black women editors entering into a Black press that had conceptualizations of what Black women's writing could be, and if it did not

follow those conceptualizations, then it was not the "right" Black women's writings. We see this in the number of women's departments, the segregation of Black women to a specific, restrictive, formal space, and what Bay notes in Wells's writing: the Black press expected Black women to write on domestic issues, on "subjects of special interest to women."[148] Neither Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, nor Wells adhere to the singularly feminine and domestic that begs for articles on fashion and housekeeping. Though Ruffin and Mossell do tap into those conversations at moments, their publications foray into more than the home. Like Hopkins and Wells, these Black women editors engage with political movements, leaders of the Black community, pen histories, and directly confront the systems of oppression that sustain the murder of Black Americans.

By challenging these institutions, Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells pull at the gendered ideologies of womanhood at work in the Black print. Much like Mossell's publication points at the distance between the Black women Fortune showcases and the everyday Black woman of "Our Woman's Department," by penning criticisms or arranging their publications to critique people and structures of oppression, Black women editors reveal the distance between the Black press's portrayal and containment of Black women and their reality. Though it seems mundane, their appearance in print as editors, journalists, and social activists asserted in print that Black women are knowledgeable and writing on racial, social, and political issues. In a world knowledgeable on or aware of Phillis Wheatley, Zelphia Elaw, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Sojourner Truth, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and growing scores of Black women writers, activists, organizers, and speakers, Black women as dynamic, engaged intellectuals critical of systemic oppression and

advocates for national change for the betterment of Black life is not revolutionary. It was not sudden.

Yet years of print made it seem as though Black women were never there, and their entrances were always remarkable. It was an intentional act of amnesia on the part of some that substantiated, and perhaps overstated at times, the importance of abolitionists and Black men to the movement of Black elevation throughout the nineteenth century. And as I will turn to later, this also worked across class strata, as some only support middle- and upper-class Black women's editorial and literary agitation. Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells participate in this history and draw its presence to the fore by nature of entering editorship, and their editorial criticism of oppression calls on a history of Black women's criticism and writing that demanded representation and attention. Their presence and editorial actions in periodicals draw our attention to a history of dissention that, as bell hooks notes, is often stifled by Black men.[149]

Critique brings to the fore Black women's bodies textually and physically. Peterson's quote explores how Black women obfuscate their bodies and bring it into vision as necessary. Yet I suggest that Black women editors at the turn of the twentieth century intentionally bring their bodies into print to obtain a visibility otherwise unobtainable. Zora Neale Hurston would write, "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background," decades after Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Well's work as Black women editors.[150] Hurston's comments make apparent how the normalized whiteness of the world eases its ability to index her as Black, and though it has an isolating effect, it also increases her visibility.[151] In a moment in which erasure and censure were the dominant approaches by the white and Black press toward Black

women's expressions, visibility necessitated recognition by editors and by readers. It was a performance that asks for audience recognition, whether their managing editors, external forces, or readers, even if they ultimately reject it. By breaking into those moments and performing by their own rules, by making themselves visible and legible against the sharp white background of the page, Black women periodical editors made their presence known.

What I suggest is that Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells necessarily increased their visibility in print. Mossell's designation as "Our Woman's Department" with her name listed on the column and as the primary contact should anyone wish to write in for further suggestions interrupts Fortune's connection to readers of the column. While it serves a practical purpose, as Mossell may have written her column at home rather than within the *New York Freeman*'s offices, it also primes her to be the direct contact for Black woman readers. She is substantiated as an authority and contact. Hopkins's presence is undeniable throughout her paper. An advertisement within the publication notes the *Colored American* is edited by Pauline Hopkins in large letters.[152] Her editor's sanctum, as said prior, elevates her presence to sacred, to legible. Ruffin's publication is entirely hers. The singular editor listed within the publication and the leader of the Woman's Era Club, Ruffin was the voice of her paper—every inch of it is her control and voice as editor, from its name to its purpose to its contents. Much like the others, Wells's presence with the paper was known and unquestionable. When she condemned Moss, McDowell, and Stewart's murder and encouraged Black persons in Memphis to move, Wells was the person recognized as stirring the trouble.[153] It was her life threatened by the white mob that descended on the offices.[154] These women were editors. Their presence was

inseparable from their papers, though they were not always acknowledged by others—as was true of editorial work. Yet the presence of Black women editors within print is a means of visibility and affirmation amongst other Black women.

However, despite these similarities, I do not wish to suggest a uniform and lateral understanding of Black womanhood throughout Mossell's, Hopkins's, Ruffin's, and Wells's editorial expression. Class belies the differentiations and nuances surrounding who these editors conceptualized as their audiences. Ruffin, for example, focuses on a middle-class Black woman reader with *The Woman's Era*. Defined as "women of the refined and educated classes," these were not working-class, laboring women to which Ruffin spoke. Words like "refined" and "educated" draw on class, respectability politics, and educational access—all intertwine and informed by each other. Rather, she imagined her readers in the growing class of Black women who attended public schools and increasingly colleges and universities. Ruffin's class of women are often the ones establishing and participating in Black organizations throughout this time, and her ideas of a new womanhood are enmeshed in this same classist interest in middle-class Black women. To focus on one's culture, health, childcare, social trends, and business requires one to have extra time in their day with which to read, exercise, and engage in society; not to mention to ability to afford childcare and to only dabble in business as necessary.[155] Hopkins to some extent mirrors this, though her work does admittedly attempt to bridge the gap between middle- and upper-class Black women and the lower-class, and sometimes militant, Black women working, all of whom are working to better Black life. Organizations and social circles provided access for Hopkins to the "political, intellectual, and social elite" of Black Boston, and they carried the air of "middle- and upper-class gentility"

that comes through in the work of Ruffin. And as Hanna Wallinger notes, Hopkins had her own conceptualizations on Black man- and womanhood, a deep belief that "the identity and power of the race depended on its manly men and worthy women."[156] The worthy women Hopkins often includes in the *Colored American* are women in organizations and clubs—the documentation of their works and membership was the original purpose for her "Woman's Department" in the magazine.[157] But her series *Famous Women of the Negro Race*, documents everyone from Black women vocalists to Harriet Tubman, to writers and educators.[158] Celebrating women from club movements and the higher arts alongside Harriet Tubman, a prominent figure for militant Black women, moves Hopkins's envisioned women audience from solely the middle- and upper-class gentile club women to the necessarily hostile Black women, who defended their lives and the lives of others—markers of Black women living the often dangerous lives of lower, working-class Black women.

Others use their space not to bridge gaps but to consider the intersectional realties of how race, gender, and class play part in Black oppression and criticize those interlocking structures and actions. Take Mossell's and Wells's works discussed here as an example. Mossell's columns focus on social organizing within her community—the places to collect clothes, to get a Christmas dinner, to get childcare. The posting about Christmas shows how needed these programs were for Black families. Offering free, hot meals to anyone in need in January indicates there was a sustained need to help feed Black community members. Regardless of whether Christmas had an extended celebration time into the new year, Black families were in need of food, and these drives—no matter what they called it—met that need. Mossell's directory of community opportunities to get food, clothes, and support during winter criticizes a

capitalist system that disenfranchised Black women in the late nineteenth century. Often relegated to domestic jobs and paid the least possible, Black women and their families struggled to get by, and these women often struggled under not only with employment and finances but in caring for their homes and families. Mossell, by connecting those readers to resources, creates a space for Black women, and their families by extension, to thrive outside the capitalism through community organizing and resources. Wells focuses on her ability to connect her readers to resources—data, facts, and actions to take—in her newspaper. Her intentional choice to focus on making her newspaper pink makes it recognizable to illiterate readers. She makes it an accessible resource, leaning on the realities of newspapers that would be read to family and community members. Wells changes her language to be legible to those with little education, so that her reporting on Black life and lynching is accessible. Her focus on making sure illiterate or less-literate Black readers reminds us that her resources were not solely for the educated Black Americans or the clubs and organizations she shared her work with. It was a commitment to helping share knowledge and mobilize *all* Black Americans, recognizing that education was often inaccessible and underfunded.[159] White supremacy intended to benefit on keeping Black Americans less educated and incapable of resistance. Wells's focus on access for all to her work recognizes the interconnectedness of class, education, and both racial and gendered oppression in America. Centering those communities in her work and in intentional editorial choices works against the barriers to education so many Black Americans faced, particularly in the South, and centers a class often unfigured in print culture.

Discussing class in the editorial choices of Ruffin, Hopkins, Mossell, and Wells underscores the distinctiveness and complexity of their work. That is not to say that they or their works conflict. Rather, it reflects their beliefs in how their work would contribute to addressing misogynoir and racial inequality as well as how their work best did so. As Eurie Dahn discusses with Jim Crow periodical networks, many magazines and newspaper networks were tied to political networks.[160] While this draws out how periodicals participate and potentially reinforce hierarchies surrounding class and race, it is also a reminder that audiences were intentional considerations. For example, when Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin chooses to speak to middle-class, educated Black women, she focuses on Black women who had a particular knowledge set and community. They may be involved in their church and other Black women's organizing groups to which they could share Ruffin's work or encourage subscriptions. They could also start clubs as well as organizations and had the time and capital to support their communities in ways not feasible for lower-class Black women. Yet, to return to Dahn's observations, periodical networks in Jim Crow America also called into question hierarchies; they "offer the possibility of countering hierarchies."[161] Much of the work done by Hopkins, Mossell, and Wells does what Dahn observes. They question and counter hierarchies—whether their editing showcases Black women of every class (Hopkins), connects lower-class and working Black women to community resources that allow them to survive outside capitalism (Mossell), or centers illiterate and less-educated readers as integral to the work of their periodical (Wells). Yet at its core, even when work like Ruffin draws into focus how class can be the focus of and potentially enforced by a periodical, these Black women's editorial work circulated together along these Jim Crown networks. Their

intermixture and circulation point to a Black women's periodical print culture that addressed a vast array of Black women and met them where they were at, financially, educationally, and culturally.

Much like their works, Ruffin, Hopkins, Mossell, and Wells all traveled in similar circles or were members of the same clubs and organizations. Their connections are not abstract or tied solely to their periodicals navigating those networks. Periodicals as a form inherently speak and attempt to manifest community through its seriality, which the Black press recognized and to which Black women would turn during this moment of Black women's organizing and increased activism. Black periodicals understood the potential between a connected physical community and the imagined community one enters when reading a newspaper or magazine.[162] This formed community could "imagine and enact a chosen nation that existed in relation to, but ultimately transcended, the United States," and in others it was a speculative space where Black Americans could theorize citizenship beyond the limited and racist determinations of the U.S. federal system.[163] Many communities arose around Black periodicals throughout the nineteenth century, and during the years following Reconstruction's failure, the importance of these publications in creating communities took on an additional dimension. Many of these newspapers and magazines are spaces where writers and readers began the work of sociopolitical and legislative change.[164] Black periodicals began with an impetus to connect Black readers and communities across the nation and guide them toward Black advancement. By the end of the century, they were no longer solely making communities for Black advancement; they were also creating communities that could lobby for and lead to the dissolution of oppressive systems and the creation of new, liberated futures.

I connect periodicals, their interconnected circulation, and Black women's organizing to acknowledge that Black women editors' different thoughts on or engagements with class, race, and gender does not imply these Black women were not in community while doing their work. As editors and writers, Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells all crossed paths and worked together. Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell's first "Our Women's Department" column appears next to a column from Ida B. Wells (under the pseudonym Iola), both arguing for the recognition of Black women's importance.[165] Hopkins and Ruffin participated in the same Black organizations and Black women's clubs, like the Colored National League, of which Ida B. Wells was also a member.[166] And Mossell would contribute to *The Woman's Era*. Though the movement for Black liberation was large, Black women, particularly those who were editors, writers, and activists, move through the same circles. As Brittany Cooper writes: "Black female leaders theorized the public platform as a site for community transformation via the dispensation of useful knowledge that they themselves helped to produce."[167] The work of calling out and ending misogynoir as well as making life better for both Black women and Black Americans writ large was more than any ideological divide their opinions on class may suggest. Differences were simply differences. Everyone had a part to play in the movement, and even if they focused on a particular group of Black women or on everyone, they were all contributing to the work. Indeed, the work was always the focus and the point of these publications. Black women editors worked with and connected other Black women to groups and resources, to collect and disseminate necessary information to their readers.

Just as they themselves were interconnected, the communities that Black women editors created were not isolated communities, but networks that connected information to maximize the sharing of information and to mobilize Black women as a force of sociopolitical and legal change. While periodicals brought together real and imagined communities, they often served as a locus of information for their readers. As noted in Ruffin's *The Woman's Era*, there are social columns and news columns that tell their reader who is who, who is where, who is doing what, and what the latest trends are amongst the middle- and upper-class Black Americans. If you wanted to know who to know and what places to know, then the *Era* would teach you. For Black women, this is an indispensable networking resource. The assiduous documentation of Black women's clubs and organizations is one further resource. *The Woman's Era*'s announcements note the establishment of Black women's organizations, and Pauline E. Hopkins's "Woman's Department" and "Here and There" are detailed indices of Black organizations and their members.[168] Though Mossell does not list members, she does tell which Black women opens what organization or leads it, if available.[169] This meticulous collection of Black women and Black organization serves as an informational network and guide, leading Black women readers toward persons and communities to which they could connect. For Black women's organizing to lead to change, it would require Black women to be a coordinated or, at least, connected group, both textually and personally. One need only to return to the work of Mossell, collecting information from other Black women and passing it on to readers weekly. Her column asks for information from the community. Aggregated into one column, it circulates to her community information about those services—kindergartens, food, clothing, opportunities. Each week could provide a new resource, a new connection

for a Black woman in need. One brought to Mossell by other Black women and community organizations. Mossell's "Our Women's Department" then reflects how Black women editors envision their periodicals as not only creating a strong base for resistance and protest but also a vast, interconnected network through which they could disseminate and utilize their knowledge.

Black women editors were foundational in the work of Black women's organizing at the dawn of the twentieth century. They shape their publications through their selection, exclusion, and arrangement of materials. Mossell crafts a column that undercuts the narrative on Black women T. Thomas Fortune prints in the *New York Freeman*. Hopkins uses her editorial arrangement to criticize Booker T. Washington's industrial school policy and to fight against the censure by Washington through his subordinate, John C. Freund. Ruffin crafts a newspaper entirely devoted to Black women's clubs and organizations, and she creates a cohesive narrative meant to guide her readers on the path to "new womanhood"—a womanhood focused on culture and minimal business labor. And Ida B. Wells crafts legible materials to disseminate information about lynching in a legible, accessible manner for readers in her area and across the United States. While copies of the *Free Speech* do not persist, we can assume it was likely she did the same within her publication more broadly. Black women's editing brought together ideological and textual labor and gave power to Black women. The practices they evoke here—interrupting, selecting, excluding, and (re)arranging—form a key practice for how many would continue making space for Black women and documenting their experiences in print. White and male print culture—American print culture—attempted to control Black women's depiction and

participation in print. Their choice to engage with and cut, copy, paste, and remix these narratives to their own ends were editorial acts with intentionality.

This chapter shows how editing was a periodical practice that invited rhetorical and ideological interventions for Black women in American print culture. Each chapter will push on the ideological aspect of this intervention—those interjections into dominant cultural narratives from which Black women were excluded or talked for by white Americans and by men. It traces editorial expressions as interruption and engagement across other mediums. Indeed, much of this manifests in the growing interest in collecting Black history and biographies, as Black women attempt to rectify their erasure from and counter white supremacist endeavor to destroy Black and American history. Yet we also must acknowledge that many Black women editors continued the work by Mossell, Hopkins, Ruffin, and Wells I read in this chapter. One cannot talk about Black women's editing without acknowledging the continued work of Black women editors to speak against misogynoir, to speak to their Black communities, to connect their communities, and to theorize on issues of gender, race, and, for many, sexuality. Black women editors like Jessie Redmon Fauset, whose editorial work at *The Crisis* is integral to the Harlem Renaissance and New Negro literature. Hazel B. Garland, the first Black woman editor-in-chief for a national newspaper chain (*New Pittsburgh Courier*), and Charlotta Spears Bass, who was editor of *The California Eagle* and first Black woman to run for vice-president in 1952, offer to examples of mid-twentieth century Black women that use their editing to fight against discrimination and offer space for Black women's voices. One cannot forget the work of Toni Morrison as an acquiring editor for Penguin during and following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Her editorial labor forever altered

Black and American publishing and literary history. Contemporary editors, such as Lottie Joiner, who was the editor of *The Crisis* until 2021, participate in this long history of Black women editors, whose work provides space for Black women's writing, theorization, and organizing. Many Black women continue to answer Mary Ann Shadd Cary's call for Black women to go to editing almost two hundred years after she made it.

[49] *The Afro-American Press*, [vii].

[50] *The Afro-American Press*, [vii].

[51] *The Afro-American Press*, [vii].

[52] *Noted Negro Women*, xii; *Women of Distinction*, iii–iv.

[53] Mattie Allison Henderson was editor of the Memphis *Avalanche* and later of the Kansas City *Future* State Julia Ringwood Coston was the editor of *Ringwood's Journal*

[54] *Noted Negro Women*, 199.

[55] "Under Pressure," 112–13. It is worth briefly noting that Jonathan Senchyne's analysis of unseen labor in textual production is a reminder of the presence of Black Americans in early American printing. Many mark the presence of Black stories and presences in American press within specific forms, like the slave narrative, poetry, or Black press, and their emergence. Senchyne reminds us that enslaved Black persons were forced to work in printing houses and are often both difficult to find and forgotten.

[56] William Lloyd Garrison edited *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper; Mary Ann Shadd Cary *The Provincial Freeman*; Frederick Douglass *The North Star*, *Frederick Doulgass' Paper*, and *The New National Era*; and Zitkala-Ša edited the *American Indian Magazine*.

[57] Quoted in Casey and Salter, "With, Without, Even Still," 254.

[58] "With, Without, Even Still," 254.

[59] "With, Without, Even Still," 246.

[60] Patterson, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Living in Periodicals," 142.

[61] *Rise and Fall*, 5–6.

[62] *Rise and Fall*, 24.

[63] Loughran, *The Republic in Print*, 24–25. Though serial print may create imagined communities over great distance, early America was geographically and infrastructurally diverse, meaning print emerged in dislocated instances during the eighteenth century. Whether American print was ever "even" across the nation is debatable.

[64] Gardner, *Blood & Irony*, 8–9.

[65] "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture," 718.

[66] "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture," 718.

[67] *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People*, 18.

[68] Scholars have looked at the different uses of the Black press. Some believed it had an evangelical purpose, one that realized what Ben Fagan refers to as a "chosen nation that existed in relation to, but ultimately transcended, the United States" (8). See Benjamin Fagan, *The Black Newspaper and the Chosen Nation*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016; and Eric Gardner, *Black Print Unbound: The Christian Recorder, African American Literature, and Periodical Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

[69] Derrick Spires writes extensively on the relationship between Black print and citizenship. Black Americans theorize through and outside the racially restrictive and mercurial definition of citizenship during the nineteenth century. See *The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.

[70] This is not to say that only gender and class norms affect editing. The practice is laden with ideas of race, gender expression, and sexuality as well. These all are at play at any moment. However, in the context of the women whose editing I examine in this chapter, I note the existence of class and, primarily, gender norms.

[71] Senchyne, "Under Pressure," 109.

[72] This is, of course, not specific to the Black press—it was a fact of print culture broadly, and it was not specific to this time. Others have studied editing and editorial expression by women, generally, and other marginalized communities. See Patricia Okker's *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century*

American Women Editors. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995; *Blue Pencils and Hidden Hands: Women Editing Periodicals, 1830-1910*. Edited by Sharon M. Harris and Ellen Gruber Garvey. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004; and the Locating the Practices of Editors in Multiethnic Periodicals special issue of *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism* (30, 2 [2020]) edited by Jim Casey and Sarah H. Salter, featuring the work of Kelley Kreitz, Jewon Woo, Jacqueline Emery, Ayendy Bonifacio, and Todd Thompson.

[73] *Black Print Unbound*, 64–65; Lacy, "What Did They Eat?"

[74] Cary, "Adieu," 2.

[75] Cary, "Adieu," 2.

[76] Ione E. Wood was the temperance department editor for *Our Women and Children*, a Black, Baptist newspaper in Louisville, KY; Kathleen Tankersley Young edited *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* and created the Modern Editions Press journal; Amelia E. Johnson edited and printed *Joy*; Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell was the Women's Department Editor for the *New York Age* and edited the *Philadelphia Echo* as well as the *Indianapolis World*; Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin established and edited *The Women's Era*; Pauline E. Hopkins was the women's department editor and literary editor for the *Colored American Magazine* before becoming the chief editor; and Ida B. Wells was the co-editor for *The Free Speech and Headlight*.

[77] "Opinion of Mrs. N.F. Mossell," 490.

[78] "Opinion of Mrs. N.F. Mossell," 490.

[79] "Opinion of Mrs. N.F. Mossell," 490.

[80] For more on Mossell's life and her family, see Nazera Sadiq Wright's "'Teach Your Daughters': Black Girlhood and Mrs. N.F. Mossell's Advice Column in the *New York Freeman*. In *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*, 93-117. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

[81] The *New York Freeman* started as *The Rumor* shortly before 1880. It was published by George Parker, and Fortune became *The Rumor's* editor, or an editor at the *Rumor*, shortly before the newspaper became the *New York Globe*. Fortune became a partner for the *Globe*. Fortune's other partners sold their interest to William B. Derrick, who let the paper default. It was then (1884) that Fortune bought the newspaper entirely and began production *New York Freeman*.

[82] Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, "Our Woman's Department," February 13, 1886, 2.

[83] *The New York Times*, "New York Age, a Black Weekly, Publishing Again."

[84] "Index."

[85] "Index."

[86] Gilmore et al., "The Hopkins-Hamedoe Identity," 63–65. Hopkins published her short story, "Talma Gordon," (1900) within the magazine, and they published the three serial novels: *Hagar's Daughter: A Story of Southern Caste Prejudice* (1901-02), *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* (1902-03), and *Of One Blood; Or, The Hidden Self* (1903). Hopkins also used the pseudonym J. Shirley Shadrach, according to The Digital Colored American Magazine. See, "September 1902 (Vol. 5, No. 5)." *The Digital Colored American Magazine*. https://coloredamerican.org/?page_id=770.

[87] *Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 408.

[88] McHenry, *To Make Negro Literature*, 9. Washington would take over the *Colored American Magazine*, and Freund's position was a first attempt at controlling the paper. When Fred R. Moore, who worked for the Washington-supported National Negro Business League, purchased the paper in 1904 and took over as manager and editor, the paper was truly under Washington's control. The *Colored American Magazine* dwindled under Moore's watch and closed in 1909. For more on Washington's takeover of the *Colored American Magazine*, see Hannah Wallinger, "Pauline E. Hopkins as Editor and Journalist: An African American Story of Success and Failure." In *Blue Pencils & Hidden Hands: Women, Editing Periodicals, 1830-1910*, edited by Sharon M. Harris and Ellen Gruber Garvey, 146-69. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004; and Lois Brown *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

[89] Holden, "Earnest Women Can Do Anything," 23–24.

[90] *The Woman's Era*, "Publisher's Announcement," 8. The *Woman's Era* may not be the first venture Ruffin made into periodical editing. According to L.A. Scruggs, Ruffin was the editor of the *Boston Courant*, but she resigned before the publication of his book in 1893. The only digitized copy of that newspaper is a January 6, 1900, issue, ostensibly after Ruffin left. See, L.A. Scruggs, "Mrs. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin." In *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character*, 147. Raleigh: L.A. Scruggs, 1893.

[91] Florida R. Ridley is listed in the newspaper as Ruffin's assistant editor while the remaining members are referred to as department editors.

[92] *The Woman's Era*, "Greeting," 8.

[93] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 32.

[94] *Crusade for Justice*, 32–33.

[95] Peterson, "Subject to Speculation," 116. Others have written of the speculative nature of studying Black presences in archives and institutions. This was most famously done by Saidiya Hartman, who suggested we push "against the limits of the archive to write a cultural history of the captive, and, at the same time, enacting the impossibility of representing the lives of the captives precisely through the process of narration." Hartman defined this practice as "critical fabulation." Other scholars and activists, such as Kim F. Hall, have continued to critically fabulate the full lives of Black persons in the archives, despite and in demonstration of those limitations. See, Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts." *Small* Axe 12, no. 2 (June 2008), 11; and Kim F. Hall, "I Can't Love This the Way You Want Me To: Archival Blackness." *Postmedieval* 11, nos. 2-3 (2020): 171-79.

[96] Spillers, "Interstices," 156.

[97] Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, "Our Woman's Department," December 26, 1885, 2.

[98] Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, "Our Woman's Department," December 26, 1885, 2.

[99] Wright, *Black Girlhood*, 98.

[100] *The New York Freeman*, "The Freeman!," 3.

[101] *The New York Freeman*, "Boston's Colored Teachers," 1; *The New York Freeman*, "Opposing Night Schools," 1; *The New York Freeman*, "The Pratt Library," 1.

[102] Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, "Our Woman's Department," January 16, 1886, 4.

[103] "Our Woman's Department," January 16, 1886, 4.

[104] Hopkins pens an editor's note for the "Women's Department" that reads: "We would be glad to correspond with all women's clubs in relation to club matters, to insert club notices, etc. Send in the name of your club and its officers for enrollment in

the Record." Hopkins was not only interested in Black women's clubs, but she saw one of the purposes of the women's department to be a record of club members and club proceedings. See, "Women's Department." *Colored American Magazine*. Boston: The Colored Co-Operative Publishing Company, June 1900, 118.

[105] Hopkins, "The Educated Negro and the South," 219–21; Hopkins, "The Case...," 221; Hopkins, "Portsmouth, Va., Jan. 18...," 222.

[106] "Pauline Hopkins as Editor and Journalist," 153, 159–60.

[107] Pauline E. Hopkins to William Monroe Trotter, April 16, 1905, 5, quoted in Hanna Wallinger, "Pauline Hopkins as Editor," "Pauline Hopkins as Editor and Journalist," 160.

[108] Pauline E. Hopkins to William Monroe Trotter, April 16, 1905, 5, quoted in Hanna Wallinger, "Pauline Hopkins as Editor," "Pauline Hopkins as Editor and Journalist," 160.

[109] Brown, *Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 427.

[110] *Merriam-Webster.Com Diction, s.v.*, "sanctum."

[111] *Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 421.

[112] *Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 421.

[113] Wallinger, "Pauline Hopkins as Editor and Journalist," 150.

[114] *The Colored American Magazine*, "The Educated Negro and the South," 220–21.

[115] Hopkins, "Montgomery, Ala., Feb. 25...," 300.

[116] *The Colored American Magazine*, "Apropos of Intellectual vs. Industrial Training...," 301.

[117] *The Colored American Magazine*, "Apropos of Intellectual vs. Industrial Training...," 301.

[118] *The Woman's Era*, "Greeting," 8.

[119] *The Woman's Era*, "Greeting," 8.

[120] *The Woman's Era*, "Greeting," 8.

[121] Gould, "Literature," 11.

[122] "Literature," 11.

[123] "Literature," 11.

[124] *The Woman's Era*, "Music and Drama," 13; Motie and Ridley, "Social News," 12–13; Gould, "Literature," 11; Lewis, "Part III. A Domestic Scene," 6–7; Evans, "Health and Beauty from Exercise," 7–8; Early, "Through the Large-Hearted Courtesy...," 13.

[125] "Greeting," 8; "Advertise In The Woman's Era," 9.

[126] Woo, "The Colored Citizen," 110.

[127] Murphy, "'Multiplied without Number,'" 199; Balfour, "Ida B. Wells and 'Color Line Justice,'" 681–82; Johnson-Roullier, "The City Shining on a Hill, or by a Lake," 50, 60.

[128] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 32.

[129] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 33.

[130] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 22.

[131] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 22.

[132] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 22.

[133] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 38.

[134] Okker, *Social Stories*, 15–16.

[135] Wells-Barnett, *The Light of Truth*, 22–23.

[136] Wells-Barnett, *The Light of Truth*, 20–21.

[137] Wells-Barnett, *The Light of Truth*, 80.

[138] Williams, "We Must Get Education," 69.

[139] "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," 80.

[140] "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," 80.

[141] *Lynching in America*, 4.

[142] *How We Get Free*, 16.

[143] *How We Get Free*, 16.

[144] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140; Combahee River Collective, *How We Get Free*, 14. For foundational texts on Black feminism and intersectionality, see Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983; bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. New York: South End, 1989; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 1991; and Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016.

[145] *Doers of the Word*, 22.

[146] *Doers of the Word*, 22.

[147] *Doers of the Word*, 22.

[148] "Introduction," xxii.

[149] "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," 144,139.

[150]"How It Feels to Be Colored Me," *World Tomorrow* 11 (May 1928): 215-16, quoted in Brigitte Fielder and Jonathan Senchyne, "Introduction: Infrastructures of African American Print," in *Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African American Print*, 5. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2019.

[151] Fielder and Senchyne, "Introduction: Infrastructures of African American Print," 6.

[152] Hopkins, "The Colored American Magazine Advertisement," 147.

[153] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 53.

[154] Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice*, 54.

[155] Gould, "Literature," 11.

[156] "Pauline Hopkins as Editor and Journalist," 153.

[157] Hopkins, "Editor's Note," 118.

[158] See "Famous Women of the Negro Race. I. Phenomenal Vocalists," *Colored American Magazine* 4, no. 1 (November 1901): 45-53; "Famous Women of the Negro Race. III. Harriet Tubman ('Moses')," *Colored American Magazine* 4, no. 3 (January-February 1902): 210-23; "Famous Women of the Negro Race. IV. Some Literary Workers," *Colored American Magazine* 4, no. 4 (March 1902): 276-80; and "Famous Women of the Negro Race. VII. Educators (Continued)," *Colored American Magazine* 5, no. 2 (June 1902): 125-30.

[159] For more on the Black education in the American South, see Heather Andrea Williams's *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

[160] *Jim Crow Networks*, 8.

[161] *Jim Crow Networks*, 9.

[162] Gardner, *Black Print Unbound*, 77; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

[163] Fagan, *Chosen Nation*, 8; Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*, 10.

[164] Dahn, *Jim Crow Networks*, 3.

[165] "Our Woman's Department," February 13, 1886, 2; "Woman's Mission," 2.

[166] Brown, *Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 168, 170–71. Ruffin was, in fact, Hopkins's local club leader for the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).

[167] *Respectability*, 15.

[168] *The Woman's Era*, "Providence, R.I.," 5; *The Woman's Era*, "Boston," 5–6; "Here and There," 214–25.

[169] "Our Woman's Department," January 9, 1886, 4.

Chapter 3

TRUTH STRONGER THAN FICTION: BLACK WOMEN'S NONFICTION AND DOMINANT NARRATIVES

Black women have been speaking, writing, and recording Black nonfiction for centuries. From the anonymous and community-crafted spirituals that W. E. B. Du Bois describes as "the siftings of centuries" that are "full of the voices of the past," to the poetry of Phillis Wheatley in 1773 and beyond to the numerous lecturers, poets, essayists, novelists, educators, historians, performers, journalists, editors, playwrights, and more that, throughout the years since, have recorded and shared Black history.[1] Black women's nonfiction records a reality they saw unrecorded or re-shaped by white supremacists and misogynists that erased their lived experiences and justified their continued oppression. It was also a genre in which Black women not only recorded Black history and their part in it but also the vast score of other Black women—some named, some unnamed—that worked to better Black life whether they be the first to do something or a leader in creating an organization, establishing a club, or running a business. Black women's nonfiction is a complex corpus that at once is a historical counternarrative to white supremacist and misogynist historical revisionism as well as a record and celebration of the immensity of Black women's work during this period. It echoes the past, lives in the moment, and calls for a response from future generations. In this chapter, I argue Black women used nonfiction to refute dominant historical narratives that controlled their historical representation, attempting to foreclose their present and future. I return to the principal of my first chapter and look

at the editorial expression of three Black women nonfiction writers—Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, Anna Julia Cooper, and Lucy Wilmot Smith. To show this, I look at a text from each author as representative of what I believe are three key types of nonfiction texts: a history, an essay collection, and a collective bibliography respectively. Histories, essays, and collective biographies, at this moment, both refute and grapple with the narrative of Black history while also preserving it and educating their readers. They reflect the constant negotiation of what narratives they would include, be shaped by, and form anew for themselves. Put simply, histories, essays, and collective bibliography exemplify how Black women were both defining what Black history was, what their narratives would be within that history, and what remained undefined for future Black women.

The educational portion of Black women's historiography during the post-bellum, pre-Harlem era is one of the reasons why I turn to nonfiction. There was a drive to write Black nonfiction because they could be sent to Black schools as textbooks. I explore this further in this chapter's first section, but freedpeople's schools, especially in the South, were in dire need of textbooks. Funding came from abolitionist organizations or from what could be collected and donated to these schools, so they were reliant on donations. Concurrently, post-Civil War, many white supremacist groups and abolitionists all printed, circulated, and donated histories that revised slavery, the Confederacy, and proscribed what free Black Americans could and should do next. These texts made their way into Black schools, and there was an intentional effort to counter this white supremacist print culture in Black schools. However, to suggest that was the only purpose of Black women's nonfiction would undermine the focus many Black women had on Black education. Many Black women

activists wore many hats. They were never just writers or editors; they were historians, journalists, and, often, teachers and therefore aware of the needs of Black students and classrooms. Mossell taught in Philadelphia and in New Jersey, Anna Julia Cooper taught throughout her life, and Lucy Wilmot Smith taught at State University (now Simmons Bible College, a private historically Black college and university. Black women's historiography is then as much about Black education—the preserving, sharing, and remembering of Black history and, particularly, Black women's history—as it is about the work of countering dominant narratives present in white supremacist and misogynist nonfiction.

White supremacy and misogyny propagated misogynoir narratives in American nonfiction and culture to erase Black women from American history with the intent to limit Black women's possibilities. By erasing Black women's presence and achievements, white supremacy disappears Black women into a non-space. They cease to exist, though we know they paradoxically are always present. Their erasure means that Black women stop being signified when someone says "Black" or "woman." No legal framework protects them. They are non-entities, non-citizens, and unprotected, yet they were ever present, writing and working. Black women's nonfiction, then, allowed Black women to control the narrative of their histories and, by extension, their present and future. It takes the agency that white supremacy and misogyny presumed to have over nonfiction as well as the presence and remembrance of Black women's work back into their hands. Black women's history—their achievements and literary works—was in danger of being lost and forgotten, hindering contemporary Black women's imaginations of liberation and racial uplift. Further, dominant narratives threatened to foreclose how Black women could understand

themselves. As a result, Black women edited these dominant cultural narratives through the production of their own nonfiction texts. They engaged in choices of selection and arrangement that allowed them to express themselves and to counter these dominant narratives. They documented the lives, achievements, and intellectual traditions of Black women, a counter-narrative to those that erased their past, dictated their expression, and foreclosed their futures.

This chapter is a study of how the genre of histories, essay collections, and collective biographies—nonfiction, broadly—refute cultural historical narratives about Black women and their representation while simultaneously wrestling with what narratives they would retain or form for themselves through these works. This coalescence of the need to educate, to preserve, and to circulate Black nonfiction speaks to the urgency of this project. Black women's nonfiction and its editing could shape the inertia of an entire generation and, in its loftiest goals, dictate the next steps for the Black community. You chart paths forward by knowing what has been done before and, with that, imagining where you can go. I return to the principal of my first chapter and look at the editorial expression of Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, Anna Julia Cooper, and Lucy Wilmot Smith, and examine a history, an essay collection, and a collective biography respectively. I look at how they selected and arranged their texts and what narratives result from those choices. With those, I turn to how those choices are engaging with narratives about Black women as historical agents and theorists. What emerges is a story of Black women's representation and the complex as well as iterative work of defining what it would mean to represent Black women after years of misrepresentation. At times, these representations offer new ways of remembering and of uplift. In other moments, they wrestle with how normalized

cultural narratives are; their texts attest to the constant work of deconstructing those internalized narratives and how defining Black women's representation remains a project in progress.

Editing and the Work of Black Women's Nonfiction

Black women's editing did not happen only in periodicals. They engaged in editing through several texts they generated in the vast Black print culture of those transitionary years between the end of Reconstruction and the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance. Much of the focus on periodicals is because of the ease in which editorial expression can be read within the form. Convention and meanings are established within newspapers and magazines through their habitual formation and use.[2] Seriality defines those conventions: through repeated engagement with a magazine, for example, readers come to expect a particular column to appear on a certain page. Casey and Salter argue that when editors diverge from established convention, we become aware of an editorial intervention—the moment when an editor interjects a particular message.[3] Chapter one focused on how Black women periodical editors deviated from convention to critique narratives surrounding Black women that limited their expression or silenced them entirely. Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell confronted T. Thomas Fortune's use of exceptional Black women for his political purpose; Pauline E. Hopkins rejected Booker T. Washington's totalizing industrial education and forced takeover of her newspaper and editorial voice; Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin created a paper by and for Black women to guide them toward new womanhood; and Ida B. Wells used her paper to address illiterate or less educated Black Americans about

the white supremacist southern press's anti-Black fictions that justified and perpetuated lynching. These women edited—they selected and arranged materials—engaging, interrupting, and refuting narratives. In doing so, they created space for their own work, experiences, and expressions. Black women generated anthologies, poetry, lists, fiction, histories, essay collections, collective biographies, and more that attest to and celebrate the vibrant lives of Black women during a time of increased anti-Black violence and white supremacy.

Black women's histories, essay collections, and collective biographies of the post-bellum, pre-Harlem provide a strong foundation for expanding our conceptualization of editing beyond periodicals. Black women's nonfiction underscores how white supremacy and patriarchy edited Black women into specific narratives or edited them out entirely. As Daina Ramey Berry and Kali N. Gross note, "[t]hat Black women in America had a history at all was itself contested."[4] The history, experience, and lives of Black women were written out entirely if they did not fit racial and gendered narratives, and often they did not. Histories of Black women journalists, who use the press to critique white supremacy and push for racial and gender uplift; the experience of living as a Black woman in post-Reconstruction America; and collections of biographies of Black women using literature to better Black life throughout the nineteenth century did not neatly come together to portray them as domestic, submissive, exotic, or threatening. Black women's nonfiction attests to a diverse history of Black women's work toward racial uplift and gender equity that threatened white revisionist history; a historical record that downplays whiteness, power, and violence in the historical record for the sake of not distressing white Americans and maintaining a white supremacist status quote. Much of the work

recovering Black women's writing and reparatively correcting the archival and collections records show the centuries-long and systemic effort of white supremacy to control Black history, particularly Black women's history. The work of Black women's histories, essay collections, and collective biographies in the transitional years before and at the start of the twentieth century then was to document across the disruptions and fragments of Black history and its nearly nonexistent archive.[5]

Documenting across those fragments and disruptions demonstrates the complex task of selection and arrangement necessary when crafting a history, essay collection, or collective biography. At stake was the documented record of Black women's lives and labors throughout the nineteenth century. Collecting, selecting, condensing, and arranging these lives and stories in turn shaped, ideally, what Black women's and Black history was and would forever be. Returning to Jim Casey and Sarah Salter's study of editorial expressions within *L'Union*, the transliteration and placement of a quote from Abraham Lincoln as a critique of the Union's inherent disregard for Black life and emancipation, shows us how acts of selection and arrangement, of editorship, are "aimed at any number of goals"—cultural, political, or otherwise.[6] Others, like Nele Sawallisch and Johanna Seibert, identify the cultural and political goals of editing as the ability "to re-'appropriate languages of power' to counter and 'deconstruct' white supremacy."[7] And in much similar ways crafting histories, essays collections, and biographies engage in those same practical and ideological interventions when choosing whose stories were included, how they were framed, and how they were arranged. Elizabeth Alexander notes how anthologizing—choosing and compiling—engages in those same principles Casey, Salter, Sawallisch, and Seibert note as the cultural and political power of editorship: "The act of

consolidating and then distilling invites aesthetic and political choices at every turn."[8] By compiling histories, essays, and biographies, Black women were engaging in the cultural and political project of creating a historical record of their lives, a power many white Americans and men sought to deny Black women. Their work as anthologizers and creators are acts of editing, much like their periodical counterparts. In creating nonfiction texts, Black women were defining what and who were a part of Black history as well as what Black history's narrative would be, and though those definitions are not universal nor general, they did so to wrest that control away from the hands of others—others who tempered Black women's lived experiences and their written expressions in service of larger narratives.

The cultural and political power of Black women's nonfiction makes it a compelling textual form to look at for editorial expressions. Histories, for example, are a complex form through which Black historiography, white revisionism, and dominant narratives emerge. Historical narratives operated as a form of record and memory; they dictated the understanding and characterization of entire people. When Black Americans were not excluded from the white historical narrative, they were characterized by their exceptionalism—how persons like Frederick Douglass or Phyllis Wheatley were not indicative of the possibilities of Black Americans but singular and surprising anomalies.[9] In others, white historians intentionally crafted anti-Black narratives and stoked anti-Black hate and violence. The contested history of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 may be the most infamous example of white historians shaping a narrative that negatively portrayed Black Americans—one that received a rebuttal from prominent Black Americans, as seen in Mathew Carey's *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever* (1793) and Richard Allen and Absalom Jones's

A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the Late Awful Calamity Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: and a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown upon Them in Some Late Publications (1794). Carey alleges the Black community were vandals and thieves during the epidemic, praying on the suffering white Philadelphians. In a specific instance, he claims the Black church and its delegation extorted money for their services as caretakers and undertakers.[10] Richard Allen and Absalom Jones—prominent Black abolitionists, clergymen, and writers—penned a pamphlet addressing all of Carey's charges, including the churches extortion. *A Narrative* shows that they were paid for their work and paid well because no one else would take on this labor, caring for and burying the sick, and though some Black persons stole during the epidemic, Carey noticeably leaves out the numbers of white persons who pilfered the dying and dead during the yellow fever outbreak.[11] Allen and Jones's *Narrative* engages in a citational practice of refutation, listing page numbers and directly quoting Carey, which they then follow with documentary and testimonial counterpoints. Yet to say Allen and Jones are only correcting a record diminishes the complexity of their text, one that engages in context and in citizenship. As John Ernest notes, Allen and Jones are engaged in acts of recontextualization. They "enter into the theater of history, a theater in which they had already been assigned a marginal role," and as a result, they "shift or disrupt" who tells history, when history is recorded, and how history is told.[12] As Ernest writes: "They needed a history that defined not just the message or the terms of historical interpretation but also the teller."[13] Similarly, Derrick Spires articulates how Allen and Jones are not only refuting Carey's account, one that would slip into historical consciousness of how Black Philadelphians responded to the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793; their pamphlet "represents an

attempt to reshape the discourse of citizenship."[14] Thinking through Ernest and Spires, I read Allen and Jones as editing Carey's emerging historical record to recollect the Black experience and voice during this pivotal moment of civic failure.

The exchange between Carey and Allen and Jones are examples of how white histories attempted to and often did shape perceptions of Black America, and it documents the intentional effort of Black Americans to intervene and correct that narrative. It recognizes what both Arthur A. Schomburg and Clarence Walker recognize as the need for Black history to correct the white record.[15] That is not to say Black historiography is purely reactionary. It is also a necessary practice of recording Black history, sharing Black history with the community, and educating readers.[16] The power of Black historiography was in its power to do all these things simultaneously, and for Black women, it offered a powerful and persuasive venue for working against emerging cultural narratives about them. As John Ernest notes, Black historiography is "a reading and unreading, a juxtapositioning of documents, ideology, and individual lives," for "[w]riting history is an act of moral imagination, and what can be apprehended as historical truth is revealed in the ways in which the narrative *doesn't* add up." [17] Black historians and the histories they penned revealed the immense gaps between white histories and the historical archive of Black life; it is always interacting with history in ways this project describes editing—engaging and refuting narratives in ways that provide space for Black stories in their words. For Black women, this was compounded by race and gender. Peter Gaglo Dagbovie documents how Black women were denied education and training to become professional historians.[18] Instead, Black women historians created "'parallel institutions'" for themselves, untethered from educational training or other intellectual institutions that defined who could be a

historian and what histories could be recorded.[19] Further, Black women themselves were not, and in some instances are still not, considered worth historicizing.[20] As such, Black women took to a number of forms to document Black women's and Black American history: periodicals, appeals, legal and convention proceedings, anthologies, poetry, fiction—from Mary Ann Shadd Cary's *The Provincial Freeman* to women's club proceedings or Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell's *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* Black women intervened in the record to document and disseminate Black history. Black women's historiography, then, intervenes on two fronts: it asserts Black history and Black women's history as worth documenting, and it demonstrates how the narratives about Black Americans and Black women do not line up with the documented record in any form. Black women historians' work draws us toward the realities of their lives and the unreal nature of white supremacist revisionist history, and it actualized the authority they had as witnesses, testifiers, archivists, and historians, collecting stories from others or heard throughout their families.

Much like histories, the work of crafting, selecting, and arranging personal essays creates a textual archive of Black women's experiences and of their intellectual theorizing in the late nineteenth-century. The essay form has a long and international history, starting in east Asian countries and later in Europe. In Europe the essay form's emergence and popularity is attributed to Michel de Montaigne, the French philosopher, and his essay collection, *Essais* (1580). The essay explores a central question or argument at-length on a range of topics, from the personal to the abstract, and it persisted from Montaigne through the Enlightenment to the modern day. Essays appear as notes, essays, and opinion editorials in periodicals—all exploring contemporary political, religious, and cultural questions surrounding, for example,

race and gender: essays like Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), Maria Stewart's *Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build* (1831), or Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892) are only a few examples of the essays produced throughout the nineteenth-century, all engaged with issues of race, religion, abolition, liberation, and gender in America. Yet essays were a historied and distinct form for Black Americans, as Jarvis Aaron Young argues. He marks the start of the Black essay tradition with Quobna Ottobah Cugoano's 1787 *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery*, which Young claims to be not just a slave narrative but a polemical essay—one that engages with the conventions of white, European anti-Black anti-intellectualism and the essay as a form. Cugoano's essay demonstrates the capacity of African thought and challenges readers "to view the Black polemical essay as an offshoot of African thought and expression rather than European."[21] However, the form remained mired in issues of gender, as essays became the preferred form of publication for Black men, much like it had been for white men as well. Black women's essay traditions that emerged during the nineteenth century, as Young notes, work to reappropriate and transform "dominant cultural forms in order to create their own literary representations" but also to demonstrate the capaciousness of Black women's viewpoints on issues of race and gender.[22] Black women's essays "harbor language and concerns that Black men" and white America "were unwilling to see and unable to articulate."[23] Essays were a perfect form then for Black women to work through the inarticulable nature of their lives.

Black women essayists use the form as a means theorizing on their experiences, white supremacy, patriarchy, and the pathways toward uplift that, like

histories, underscore the gaps between what was believed possible and impossible. In fact, the comparison between John Ernest's comments on the fragmented nature of Black history and of Black historiography mirrors Badley's comments on the essay form: "The task of early historians was to write not a continuous narrative but rather a story of disruptions, of fragmentation, so as to identify the contours of a story beyond the reach of representation."[24] Badley, similarly, writes of how essays refuse conformity entirely, as "they emphasize the partial rather than the whole."[25] "[E]ssayists deliberately celebrate the fragmentary and random," and "make the transitory eternal."[26] Black theorists, like their historian counterparts, were aware of the incomplete record from which their work and ideas drew, but the essay form offers a means of accepting and exploring those fragments as necessary; disjunction and disruption is, as Badley notes, structurally integral to the essay. Black essays then model a space where Black women could theorize and work through their ideas and experiences, reacting to the now and possible future. In compiling essays into a collection, they refined that narrative and made integral decisions on what thoughts, ideas, and actions their works would document and distribute. To return to Elizabeth Alexander, these choices of selection and arrangement are political and aesthetic, but they are also arresting control of the context from others. Black women essayists and the collections they created participated "in the making of the context in which [their] own work would be read and placed."[27] Black women's essays provided a means of taking control—of the narrative and the context—and of theorizing Black womanhood and futurity.

Collective biographies provide the final textual form through which Black women engaged in editing dominant narratives. It also coalesces the theoretical

underpinnings of Black women's histories and essays described here: they allowed Black women to document histories and demonstrate how the narrative did not align with their lived experiences as well as theorize on Black womanhood. The argument for how collective biographies engage in editing is simple. Collective biographies include numerous biographies and are organized under a unifying theme, usually a shared identity like race, gender, or profession, and in doing so, they suggest a model or ideology for their readers. By selecting who would be included in the collective biographies, editors select what persons from the Black community would be remembered, and by arranging those materials intentionally, they created a narrative for their readers. Texts such as Irvine Garland Penn's *The Afro American Press, and Its Editors* narrated the importance of the Black press through its many examples of key figures who worked for the press across the nation; whereas, Lucy Wilmot Smith's "Women as Journalists: Portraits and Sketches of a Few of the Women Journalists of the Race" (1889) makes a case for the importance of Black women journalists in fighting for racial uplift and as theorists and writers. Marking out who makes it into the pages of Black history and who is a role model for younger generations makes clear statements about Blackness; it defines the parameters of who is "correctly" working for the Black community and what are acceptable approaches to dismantling white supremacy and achieving racial equity in the United States. Collective biographies were complex texts, merging the work of historiography and theory while dictating a particular interpretation of Blackness or Black womanhood to readers.

This complexity is also why collective biographies are, to me, potent spaces for looking at editing, as they do complex work of historiography and theorizing on

Black womanhood while simultaneously confronting dominant narratives about Black women. By doing this work in one text, collective biographies assert Black women as subjects—historical, political, and cultural—that defy narratives. Carla L. Peterson writes of how Black women's subjectivity was a fraught topic. Dominant culture perpetuated narratives of Black women's bodies as "a form of social disorder that confirmed notions of the black female body as unruly, grotesque, carnivalesque."[28] These narratives made "the black female subject into an 'abject creature'," "internalizing the images of herself as dirty, disorderly and grotesque."[29] Collective biographies allowed Black women to "construct themselves in relationship to the world" through their engagement with the biographies; they also allowed them to see themselves as historied and complex subjects navigating the power structures of the world. To return to Smith's "Women as Journalists," Black women and girls could engage with her text and read about Victoria Earle Mathews, Lillial Akbeeta Kewus, and Amelia F. Johnson—women whose lives and work reject the dominant narratives of them as lesser or incapable and attest to the numerous possibilities Black women could forge for themselves. Black women who read collective biographies were given access to a vibrant coterie of persons who held any number of professions, ran organizations, and pushed for change in the world. They were not "abject creatures" nor were they dirty, disorderly, or grotesque. Black women were creating, fighting, living, and hoping in ways that were beautiful and complex. Collective biographies bring together the work of histories and essays—documenting and theorizing—and through selection and arrangement, convey ideologies and contest dominant narratives surrounding Black women.

Yet to only acknowledge how Black women's nonfiction edits cultural narratives is to overlook the necessity of these texts as educational materials. Part of the larger work of cultural narratives was the intentional white supremacist and misogynist projects that erased Black women from American history and intellectual culture. Take, for example, the work of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (DAC), who in the 1890s created an entire print culture surrounding what they claimed to be the "truth" of the Civil War. These white, middle-class Southern women defined their goals as vindicating southern men; proving Confederates to be patriots and martyrs for their Constitutional rights; fulfilling their duty to the memory of their "Brave Defenders"; and engendering in future generations a need to define clearly the federal government for the "destiny of mankind."[30] In doing so, the DAC wrote histories with a mix of sentimentalism and fiction that re-historicized the South and Confederacy as a peaceful place, concerned with their governmental rights more than slavery, though they would paint slavery itself as a benign institution enjoyed by all. To reach as many as possible with their revisionist histories, the DAC published textbooks and reading lists for readers on the history of the South and the Confederacy. They were not alone in their work. Textbooks and histories about the good of slavery, the inferiority of Black Americans, and what white abolitionists believed to be the necessary work of Black Americans as free people circulated throughout schools, including freedpeople's schools.[31]

One way white supremacy fought against Black education in the South was through a lack of fiscal and material support. While freedpeople's schools may have wanted to buy textbooks for their students, teachers often struggled to find the resources they needed for the classroom. They had no money, and books were

expensive. Teachers used what books they could find or what were donated. A teacher in Georgia during this era wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau, stating they were using "*Webster's Spelling Book, Davies' and Ray's Arithmetic,* and a 'mixture of other books."[32] However, they were inadequate. They required "150 copies of these books" from the Freedmen's Bureau to address their students' needs adequately.[33] The vast difference between the three texts the Georgia teacher had and the 150 needed are why schools were reliant upon what texts they could find cheaply or could be donated by organizations or individuals. It is little surprise then how white supremacist histories made their way into freedpeople's schools, or they were left with no textbooks at all. Many Black women writers and organizers were teachers and so were aware of these realities. They recognized the vast white supremacist print culture project that the DAC and many other white Southerners and organizations employed to shape American history in a way that dismissed Black voices and experiences; a project that would, threateningly, re-shape American consciousness and, at worse, outlive Black experiences with slavery if they did not print and circulate their histories and theorizations. Black women's nonfiction is a counterproduction to white supremacist revisionist historicism during the post-bellum, pre-Harlem. Their texts could be printed and sent to Black schools, providing textbooks for and educating Black Americans while also confronting contemporary cultural narratives about Black women.

Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, for example, attempted to rectify the narratives against Black women in her work as editor of the *New York Freeman*'s "Our Women's Department," and she turned to historiography for the same work. I return to Mossell's work, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, not only because it is a

powerful history of Black women but also because she is a strong connective tissue between my previous chapter and this. She offers ideological continuity between periodical editing and nonfiction as acts of editing. As I discussed her biography in the previous chapter, I will not recount it here. Rather, it is necessary to acknowledge that Mossell's *Work of the Afro-American Woman* is a history, as readers may not agree with labeling the text as such. Mossell's text brings together several genres—essays, lists, and poetry—to recount the labor and achievements of Black women within literature and popular culture. In her introduction to the work, Mossell refers to it as a historical work: "The value of any published work, especially if historical in character, must be largely inspiration…"[34] The historical character Mossell remarks upon here is closer to John Ernest's reading of Black historical theory as "a function of historical method": "the process of gathering the fragments of history so as to construct a fragmented historical text, one in which the several parts become significant in their relation to one another" and through their distinct articulations of their engagement with white supremacist oppression.[35] Mossell selected and arranged materials in *Work of the Afro-American Woman* bring together a fragments of genres, crafting a history of Black women's participation in American literature and culture. Each essay, list, and poem come together, generating a history across these fragments. In short, Mossell's *Work of the Afro-American Woman* is literal: it is a history of Black women and the work they had been doing against white supremacy and to make life better for Black women and the Black community. Mossell collects this fragmented history as a counter to narratives that erased and minimized Black women's part in America's history and literary history, and it documents that history for current and future

generations, arguing for the importance of Black women's education and their work as writers and activists to racial uplift.

Others utilize different forms of nonfiction, such as essays, to articulate Black women's capabilities as critics and theorists on issues of race and gender, such as Anna Julia Cooper in her work *A Voice from the South*. Throughout her life, Cooper confronted narratives about herself and her intellectual capabilities. She was born enslaved in 1858 in Raleigh, North Carolina, to her mother Hannah Stanley Haywood. Both were later emancipated. At an early age, Cooper began her education at Saint Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh—a school for those who were formerly enslaved. Cooper was given a scholarship to attend and spent her years at St. Augustine's defining herself as an ambitious and brilliant student. Despite the administration's discouragement, Cooper took higher-level courses typically reserved for only male students after proving herself capable. After completing her degree, she became an instructor for St. Augustine's and continued her education at Oberlin College, where she would receiver her master's in mathematics in 1888—one of the first two Black women to do so. She would teach and hold administrative positions at schools in Washington, D.C. She continued her education in 1914, when she pursued a doctoral degree at Columbia University on Old French literature. Her thesis was "a painstaking edition of the twelfth-century French romance *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*." When she had to leave Columbia and transferred to the University of Paris-Sorbonne, her new institution refused her work on *Le Pèlerinage*. She attempted to publish the work with Oberlin, but they refused. Hermann H. Thornton, one of the three white male medievalists who read and rejected the work, recognized this to be because of T. Atkinson Jenkins's, another member, racism, though Thornton

remained silent about it.[36] Despite their rejection, the three white medievalists used Cooper's edition of *Le Pèlerinage* throughout their careers—in classes and in their research.[37] Cooper had moved on, writing and defending her dissertation on the Haitian revolution. She received her doctorate in 1925—the fourth Black American woman to do so. It is unsurprising considering the narratives perpetuated throughout her life—that women could not take advanced classes and that her work on *Le Pèlerinage* was not good because of her race—that *A Voice from the South* articulates one of the earliest conceptualizations of intersectionality, and that it takes a particular interest in Black women as key theorists on gender and racial uplift. Cooper passed in 1964 at the age of 105, a celebrated writer, teacher, orator, activist, and scholar. Her work had proven Black women to be incredible thinkers and integral voices in addressing systems of power and oppression.

While Mossell and Cooper turned to histories and essays, Lucy Wilmot Smith showed the possibilities of collective biographies for articulating both Black women's place in history and their power as intellectuals. Smith was an editor and frequent contributor to various Black press newspapers, and she carried numerous positions as a teacher, suffragist, and historian. She was born in 1861 in Lexington, Kentucky, to Margaret Smith, who was likely enslaved.[38] Lucy Wilmot Smith attended school and graduated from the Kentucky Normal and Theological Institute in Louisville at the age of sixteen. She taught at the school and was the secretary for the university's President before becoming the lead organizer of the Baptist Women's Educational Convention of Kentucky in 1883. She also held positions as chair or president of several Baptist or Christian women's organizations. In 1887 she was hired as "a professor at State University and served as historian at the American National Baptist Convention

(ANBC)."[39] She wrote one speech during her lifetime, "The Future Colored Girl," which she delivered at the 1886 ANBC. During her prolific life, Smith also found time to be the editor of the Women and Women's Department in *Our Women and Children*. She also wrote pieces for newspapers like the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the *New York Journalist*, and the *Boston Advocate* and was a staff member for *The Baptist Journal*.[40] Her collective biography, "Women as Journalists," was published in the *Freeman*'s February 23, 1889, issue, and it collected the lives and accomplishment of several prominent and up-and-coming Black women journalists. Throughout her career, Smith advocated for Black women to have more career options than domestic labor and for women's equity. Unfortunately, Smith's advocacy was cut short, as she passed away in either 1889 or 1890 in her late twenties.

Black women's nonfiction edits critical narratives that erased or diminished the historical, literary, and intellectual work of Black women, pushing against attempts to silence them or delimit how and where they could express themselves. They bring together the practical acts of selection and arrangement and the ideological choice of selection and arrangement. Who they included shaped who would be remembered, and when arranged, these texts convey a narrative and ideology about Black women, their part in American history, and their works. This provided the foundation for detaching editing from a singularly periodical-based context. It allows us to look at other instances in which Black women are using selection and arrangement to create texts that, ultimately, engage with dominant narratives about Black women's expression. This allows us to explore how histories, essay collections, and collective biographies are engaged in editing dominant narratives that remove or erase Black women's history and portray Black women as intellectual inferior and uncreative. Black women

created history to document the stories of their ancestors and themselves, and they portrayed their history as valuable and integral to American history. Essay collections demonstrated Black women were theorists capable of naming, analyzing, and criticizing the systems of oppression that affected both race and gender. Collective biographies bring together both ideas: they archive the lives of contemporary Black women, their successes and accomplishments in the face of adversity, and make a claim about the importance of Black women to racial uplift. That is not to say each of these Black women use editing in their respective forms to the same end. Mossell's work remains dedicated to a particular class of Black women as much as Smith's hope to inspire Black women and girls to the press speaks to a level of education and support that is not accessible to everyone. Editing with these texts, however, provided space for these Black women, the stories of their community, and their expressions that was unavailable or under threat by dominant white supremacist ideology. Their work recorded a history erased or disappearing, sought new ways of documenting and remembering, and they pushed for recognition of the long tradition of Black women's thought and theory.

Creating a Documentary Record

To understand how and why Black women committed their history and theoretical work to a documentary record, I look at how Mossell, Cooper, and Smith edited dominant narratives about Black women with their nonfiction works. This chapter continues building on the claims on editing made in the first chapter—that editorial expression can be read by examining the decisions of selection and arrangement. However, we are decontextualizing that work from periodicals and exploring how Black women are selecting and arranging other texts; here I look at

nonfiction works and the choices of who or what to include, who narrated or wrote these texts, and in what order to place them. I claim that these choices are to both indicate the importance and power of Black women's history and intellectual labors as well as refute dominant narratives that assert Black women to not be historical agents in American and to be intellectually lesser or incapable. Further, when Black women edit these narratives through their nonfiction, they are teaching new ways of remembering and knowing deeply situated in and out of print and in experience. Though Mossell, Cooper, and Smith take their own approaches to and with their own motivations toward this work, the importance of creating a record and editing cultural narratives surrounding Black women's expression remains clear. This was vital work in the Women's Era and at the turn of the century, a time of both home and intense anti-Black violence and legislation. The historical and intellectual record of nineteenth-century Black women was not solely to record their lives and achievements; it also hoped to inspire Black girls and women as well as prevent history from being repeated.

Like chapter 1, I start with Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell's *Work of the Afro-American Woman*, as her work directly responds to a specific discourse to gesture at larger narratives. Mossell's *Work of the Afro-American Women* is at once both an editorial corrective white historiography and an articulation of the tenants of Black women's historiography work. I see these two tenants as a community-centered tracing of Black women's history, one that decenters narratives of exceptionalism, and as a theorization on the part criticism plays in historiography work. As I mentioned earlier, Mossell's text uses several genres within it, such as lists or essays. This approach decenters any narrative of exceptionalism. More often, readers are left with

an extensive knowledge of Black women who are educated, who are doctors, who are writers, who are journalists, who are morticians, who are singers, and who are artists. Mossell historiography is akin to what Mary Church Terrell articulates four years later in *The Progress of Colored Women* (1898). Church Terrell, like Mossell, does not craft a narrative of progress hinged on a few exceptional Black women. She is always general. It is "the women" and the work they are doing to gain education, to educate, to fight the convict lease system, to boycott the end of domestic training, to run businesses, and more. She decenters, or perhaps de-exceptionalizes, Phillis Wheatley in a similar way, saying that since Wheatley's poetry was published "colored women have given abundant evidence of literary ability."[41] Church Terrell articulates how Black women have been doing work, all of them, to change America for the better, for Black Americans and for Black women. Like Church Terrell, Mossell's work is doing the same. It is an articulation that Black women's historiography is not a story of the few but of the many. Black women were innumerable and unnamable, as every single one took on some aspect of the work in their community that was part of the larger effort to lift and climb in Jim Crow era America. We see throughout Mossell's text how she turns to the list of names and lists of texts as a means of articulating that vastness. She names where she can, but the capaciousness of her lists gesture to a broader collective that cannot be named or recorded. Mossell's work underscores how Black historiography moves named and unnamed Black women from the margins, from the paradox of unbeing, to the recorded and remembered. Though she may be unable to name each Black woman who has played a part in resisting white supremacy and misogyny as well as uplifting their community and race, Mossell's text, like Church Terrell's, records their existence through their generalities and brings them

into the larger narrative. It is a historiography that always speaks to how Black women were always doing the work, even if it went unacknowledged.

See, for example, the power of Mossell's text to document and celebrate the literary history of Black persons comes in her chapter, "A Sketch of Afro-American Literature." Mossell builds on the conventions of the literary history essay and deviates into a different form of intellectual infrastructure—the bibliography. Mossell begins her section with a statement on the importance of Black literature and the crux of her project: "The intellectual history of a people or nation constitutes to a great degree the very heart of its life. To find its history, we search the fountain-head of its language, its customs, its religion, and its politics, expressed by tongue or pen, its folklore and its songs."[42] She continues that Black Americans have been emancipated but not recognized as citizens. Collecting Black literary history collects the tradition of Black citizenship occurring within literature.[43] It also attests to the capabilities of Black Americans and their potential: "Again, the intellectual history of a race is always of value in determining the past and future of it."[44] Black history, like Mossell documents, attests to existence outside legal definitions of citizenship and ways of knowing not entirely reliant upon education or print. The importance of collecting this history was two-fold: it created an archive and dictated the potentialities. Black Americans were progressing, but progress could not happen without a coherent understanding of the past, of working with and building upon the work of your predecessors and contemporaries. She documents writers and historians, covering from Frederick Douglass to Jabez Pitt Campbell to Phyllis Wheatley, Gustavus Vassa, Anna Julia Cooper, Victoria Earle Matthews and more. She brings together all genres she can: histories, narratives, fictions, biographies, poetry, and scientific works all

receive acknowledgement by Mossell as integral works of Black literature. Much of this chapter attests to the power of Mossell's ability to "do for the women of [her] race, in a few words."[45] Her seventeen pages of Black literary history are not meagre. They feel packed, as though she uses every inch of her paragraphs to extol the beauty and necessity of each author and text she includes.

Admittedly, written between the lines of Mossell's historiography of numerous Black women and the work they have always undertaken is a grapple with the silence or gaps in her own historical narrative. While I acknowledge that there are unspoken for and unnamed Black women in the gaps of Mossell's lists, there is also an engagement with the limitations of Black literary history. Her recounting of Black writing starts with the recognition of African traditions and what she refers to as the "lost memory…of their native tongue."[46] Mossell traces from this the growth of an African American spiritual, oral tradition, and its use of the Bible, an anonymous and community-authored literary tradition. She connects this tradition to the lecture work of nineteenth century Black abolitionists and activists—Frederick Douglass, Samuel Ruggels Ward, Jabez Pitt Campbell, and Joseph C. Price. It is only then that she turns to Phillis Wheatley at her poems. Like Church Terrell, Mossell marks the beginning of a documented Black women's literary history at Phillis Wheatley's poetry, yet doing so requires she chart a history of male historical figures before turning to women. Mossell's move—from anonymous tradition to a history of male speakers and then to women—mark a gap in the records of Black women's literary history. While I find that her lists gesture to a broader work of unnamed Black women, Mossell's literary history narrative wrestles with her own gaps, or narratives, in Black women's literary history. It lays bare the fragmented nature of Black history and the resulting losses.

The genderless, anonymous tradition of slave songs offer space for the presence of Black women's literary history, but she must turn to the overwhelmingly known and documented history of Black men speakers like Douglass and Ward before she can adequately start and contextualize Black women's literary history. As much as her work is a corrective to these gaps it is interpolated by the histories that have been lost, unknown, or intentionally set aside to create a cohesive narrative of history.

What attests most to the importance of and breadth of Black literary history is the bibliography Mossell includes at the end. Simply titled, "List of Afro-American Publications," the list is as generically broad as the preceding essay. Bibliographies are an integral part of Black literary history, Black print culture, and Black thought. Enumerative lists, like the one Mossell creates, are simply that— "the listing of books according to a system."[47] But bibliographies move beyond lists and systems. As Laura Helton notes, they operate as a knowledge infrastructure—they indicated who to read and, in some lists, where these books could be read.[48] As such, they engaged in defining Black literature and Blackness itself by delimiting who would and would not be included.[49] Most importantly, they assert Black literature as a field of inquiry.[50] Mossell's bibliography then does not only add volume to her collection of Black literary history. It asserts that Black history is a category of study—a corpus Black Americans and those interested in Black life and literature could study. When others wrote about women in the nineteenth century, they wrote of white women; "white" was not stated, but implied and/or assumed. Black women became non-beings: they were women and not women at the same time. Brigitte Fielder wrote of how there is a "long history of white women's participation in mainstream feminist struggles for their own interests, while both relying on nonwhite women's labor in those struggles

but also ignoring those women's own most pressing interests."[51] Black women were a labor force for feminist movements, but they were abandoned immediately once white women achieved more power or abandoned the movement entirely. The same is true of their history, American culture, and feminist organizing. Black women were women when it benefited white feminism, but they were not "women" in that white supremacy would not give them the power white feminism chases. Her work both exposes and struggles through these historical fragments, making them apparent as much as it lets these gaps breathe. Readers are left to recognize these inconsistencies and question from where they came and how they can be rectified.

I would mark this undertone in Mossell's work as a second trait of Black women's historiography: that history is not just a documentary record but an active criticism of white supremacist and misogynist oppression. This is apparent in how Mossell states her work derives from and is in response to another— Early in her text, Mossell states her work derives from another—Annie Nathan Meyer's *Woman's Work in America* (1891). [52] Meyer was a Jewish American author and anti-suffragist. She favored women receiving a higher education rather than the vote, and as such, she helped found Barnard College to provide such educational opportunities.[53] Mossell states that Meyer "garners up the grain from the harvest field of labor of our Anglo-American sisters." Mossell sees herself as a corrective to Meyer's text: "I would do for the women of my race, in a few words, this work that has been so ably done for our more favored sisters by another and abler pen."[54] To record Black history was to engage, openly and critical, with the structures and acts by which Black history was erased or assumed to be nonexistent. Derrick Spires writes that white citizenship's "'intolerable reality' included histoires, citizens (black men and women, enslaved and

free, white women, American Indians, and others), and ways of doing citizenship that would not go away."[55] Critical citizenship is a response by those persons and citizenship practices that embody those "intolerable realities"—what Spires defines as a disruption or reopening of citizenship's boundaries and structure "through critical practices that cultivated a 'taste' for participatory plurality and intrusive politics."[56] This critical engagement, the interruption and rupture of a process is key to Mossell's historiographical work. Intermixing essays with her histories connects the work of remembrance for those histories white and male America found intolerable but also in disrupting the boundaries of historiography itself. Recording history and the reciprocal act of acknowledging the structures that erased those histories or oppressed Black Americans disrupts misogynoir historical narratives and the myth of historiography as a neutral, apolitical and unracialized, genre. Essays like "A Lofty Study," for example, detail the possibilities of writing anywhere where one can find the space to write, whether that be an attic or any spare space within a home, engages in class criticism. In one way it reminds readers that the work of writing requires no education or specialized tools. It may require an expensive commodity like time and space, but it is not locked to a particular set of educational standards or training. Black Americans needed simply to sit and write.

Mossell's essay on Black education is the best example of her critical Black historiographical practice. By juxtaposing their work, we can see how Mossell's organization points how the historical record does not align when you compare a Black women's history project to that of a white woman—Meyers.[57] When one looks at Meyers's approach to record white women's history against Mossell's work, we see the difference in white women's historiography and Black women's historiography.

For example, Meyers records the history of white women's education across three sections, "The Education of Woman in the Eastern States," western states, and southern states. Meyers's contributors, Mary F. Eastman, May Wright Sewall, and Christine Ladd Franklin, laud the achievements of white women to gain access to and succeed within public schools, colleges, and universities. Mossell's exploration in education is not only tracing the history of Black women who have received higher education degrees and are teachers, but the realities of how Black colleges and universities are finding new ways of avoiding hiring Black men and women as professors. Mossell must explore how Black colleges and universities are finding new ways to avoid hiring Black men and women as professors. Educated Black men and women were not accepted for work as faculty at southern Black colleges and universities—work for which they were qualified.[58] Their faculty remained largely white.[59] The justifications from white faculty and administrations were that Black faculty would discourage white patronage; what patrons did donate would control their money more tightly if there were Black faculty; that these institutions were not ready for Black faculty; that Black Americans did not contribute enough money to expect representation or have a say in university decisions; and that Black students were not confident in their abilities or their peers to teach college courses.[60] White faculty in the south sought to retain control over Black education, and as part of the racist barrage they submit as rationale, they discredit Black college and university graduates' capabilities; having Black faculty is "premature."[61] One must wonder *when* white faculty at these southern Black higher education institutions believed it would be the "right" time to hire Black faculty. It also belies the logic that even with a college degree, Black Americans were seen as not as intelligent by their white peers; even

with their degree, white professors believed Black Americans to not be ready to teach their own community at a higher-education level. Considering gender worsens the problem. If Black men struggled to become professors, Black women found it nearly impossible. Thus, the narrative did not add up. Mary F. Eastman's "Educating the Woman" essay is hollow. The accomplishments are only noteworthy in the history of white women's equity and advancement. She boasts of how Bernard College's board of trustees is made up of women and of how Vassar College has several women professors. [62] It is a celebration of educating the white woman not women. Mossell's choice to take the topic of education from Meyer's text and remix it into a new document that represented the gulf between the Black experience and the "favored sisters" experience refutes narratives of women's progress as *all* women's progress.

Mossell's *Work of the Afro-American Narrative* and its refusal of a narrative of exceptionalism and critical historiographical practice respond not to an argument but to the cultural assumption that there was no argument to make; that it was a cultural truth that Black women did not create literature. Her work engages with the realities that it was not a conscious forgetting of Black women but an omission of Black women's consciousness entirely. There is, at work, both strains of intentional erasure of Black women in white American histories as well as the underlying and unquestioned presumption by white America that there were no Black women to remember. Mossell's editing critically engages with those rhetorical, scholarly, and narrative conventions of historiography in which those very assumptions are embedded. By recording them, she challenges that essential white American and male assumption that there just is not any Black women's history. This is how dominant narratives struck along lines of race and gender to minimize Black women's creative

possibilities and the expressive means to which they took when they sought to share their stories. By including a bibliography with Black women's works on it, Mossell opposes this narrative and provides proof that an entire counter-literary history exists alongside the dominant narrative, undermining the narrative entirely. By creating a bibliography, Mossell also leans on the authority that form has in substantiating a list of texts as an infrastructure of knowledge, as indicative of Black literature as an important and valid field of study. When Mossell edits the dominant narrative that Black women did not create literature, she asserts her evidence in a way that catapulted it into the same knowledge infrastructures as colleges, universities, and libraries used to track white literary history. Though this does not mean that Black literary history or Black women's literary history was an immediate "field" within academic institutions nationwide, it does suggest the intent of Mossell's bibliography and her work as a whole in collecting this Black literary history: she took a field entirely erased, dismissed, and controlled, and she made it valid. And she did so with the earnest belief that collecting this literary history, and the larger history of *Work of the Afro-American Woman*, meant that there would be a better future for Black Americans.

Anna Julia Cooper, on the other hand, turned her focus to documenting Black women's intellectual work. Her essay collection, *A Voice from the South*, was published in 1892, and it "was reviewed widely and favorably and lauded for its contribution to both the 'race problem' and the 'woman questions.'"[63] The work established Cooper's prominence in discussing both issues, pushing her to the fore of growing debates on race and gender. In terms of selection and arrangement, Cooper's text is surprisingly straightforward: *Voice from the South* brings together eight essays

and divides them into two sections, “Soprano Obligato” and “Tutti ad Libitum.” The musical metaphor is central to the larger argument of the essay collection: as Karen Baker-Fletcher has shown, Cooper’s essays were collected with publication in mind and organized around the musical metaphor both in structure and framework.[64] “Soprano Obligato” is a portion of an arrangement played by a particular instrument and is indispensable.[65] “Tutti ad Libitum” is a where components coalesce and is marked by improvisation.[66] If we take this structure as central to the selection and arrangement by—the editorial expression of—Cooper, then it suggests the underlying logic of her argument: Black women are central voices in the ongoing debates on race and gender throughout America, particularly in understanding and imagining solutions to these problems.

“Soprano Obligato” makes arguments about the importance of Black women. “Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race,” the first essay in “Soprano Obligato,” makes the claim that listening to and supporting Black women is a Christian belief; it is central to Christian teachings throughout the Bible. Each subsequent essay advances a particular perspective on Black women’s issues: education, discrimination in feminist movements and organizations, and their involvement in political, social, and cultural theorizing and work. In “The Higher Education of Women,” for example, Cooper works through several arguments against educating women, including what she suggests is “the most serious argument ever used against the higher education” of women: “If it interferes with marriage, classical training has a grave objection to weigh and answer.” [67] She believes that if educating women has a negative effect on marriage, then she should explore it. However, she only finds that it “renders woman less dependent on the marriage relation for physical

support" and sex as the only feeling she can have; "Her horizon is extended."[68] Cooper continues, exploring how education moves us out of the stagnant past and elevates women's standards, and as to the narrative that educated women are unattractive, she can only answer that "judging from the number of female names I find in college catalogues among the alumnae with double patronymics, I surmise that quite a number of men are willing to put up with them."[69] I will explore it further later, but the arguments presented in each essay suggest a narrative about women or Black women particularly, which Cooper refutes in her following paragraphs. She concludes the argument of her essay in favor of educating Black women, for their influence the home, community, and church: "The earnest well trained Christian young woman, as a teacher, a home-maker, as wife, mother, or silent influence even, is as potent a missionary agency among our people as is the theologian." "The Higher Education of Women" argues that Black women's educational advancement does not detract from the Black community, but because they are central to the community, their uplift uplifts the entire community. For "Soprano Obligato," this structure follows the musical metaphor, arguing that Black women are indispensable, and in doing so, she deconstructs each of these narratives to show why and how Black women are invaluable voices.

"Tutti ad Libitum" builds on the foundation of "Soprano Obligato," exploring Black women's thought on issues of gender, race, culture, and politics. It emerges over the second section's essays, as Cooper writes her thoughts on the issues she poses. "One Phase of American Literature" articulates her thoughts on regionalism, religion, and race in her examination of Black literature's achievement and value to larger American culture, and "What Are We Worth?" argues that Black Americans' "worth"

is in both their religious faith and ability to contribute meaningfully to the world despite prejudice. "The Gain from a Belief" is a religious articulation of what is gained by having a strong belief in God and the truth of the world that God rewards those who are good and faithful. "Has America a Race Problem; If So, How Can It Best Be Solved?" best exemplifies why Cooper thinks Black women are integral to contemporary thought and its possibilities. This essay explores and refutes racial narratives before suggesting a resolution. It opens with potentially the strongest narrative surrounding race relations at the time: "There are two kinds of peace in this world. The one produced by suppression, which is the passivity of death; the other brought about by a proper adjustment of living, active forces."[70] Her discussion traces race and narratives as well as the barbarous history of the British that echoes many anti-Black narratives of the nineteenth century.[71] She turns to the ideas of François Guizot, a French historian and politician, to disprove the dichotomous claim her essay opens with and suggest that equilibrium, not assimilation or revolution, are solutions to race relations. Cooper builds upon this to claim that progress is inevitable—it is God's will and plan. Progress will occur no matter how racists attempt to stop it, and as such, she believes the "race problem" will be solved, ultimately, by God in the name of progress. This, I suggest is the importance of "Tutti ad Libitum" in *Voice from the South*. Her perspective is new and breaks out of the violent and totalizing binary of revolution or assimilation. She suggests equilibrium, couched in divine inevitability and promise, will bring racial uplift and advancement. Cooper's engagement with contemporary race issues, then, demonstrate how Black women's theorizing provide new perspectives and solutions that push beyond the binary choices

often offered Black Americans—choices that, as revolution and assimilation suggest ideologically, bring immense loss and consequence to the community.

This non-binary space is a productive one for Cooper. It allows her to inhabit numerous ideological and theoretical spaces. In her essay, "Has America a Race Problem; If So, How Can It Best Be Solved?" Cooper explores how conflict is central to America as a colonial, racial, and gendered project. She defines it as "foreordained to conflict" through how it was obtained and its exertion of oppressive strategies to conquer and assimilate wherever possible. (#) It is Cooper's offhanded comment here that draws the reader: "Conflict, conflict, conflict." (#; 185) I would suggest that Cooper has, throughout her essays, found a generative space for ideological conflict, a space in between acceptance and opposition. It suggests hostility and resistance to the erasure of Black women's thought and theory that operates as a methodology. We start with reading conflict as a natural state for America, yet we see Cooper probing what it means to be a Black woman in conflict with misogynoir, with America, and how that turns into a means of understanding Black women's expression. Conflict offers a different way through Black women's relationship to America, as a legal, ideological, and social structure. In a binary reading of Black women's relationship and action against white supremacy and misogyny, conflict would be unimaginable; it suggests power on a scale similar to entire nations. Misogynoir would find it inconceivable that Black women could be seen as "in conflict" with America as well as its systems and structures of oppression. Further conflict as a methodological practice suggests a way beyond. Her essays as an articulation of how Cooper conflicts with American intellectual history as well as its misogynoir suggests a new mode that breaks out of the foreordained structures of oppression and assimilation she explores in other essays.

Conflict moves outside of these binaries and suggests that one cannot be moved from opposition to assimilated but rather that one is always outside of and against a structure. This aligns with how she continually rejects foreclosure, gesturing to the something. Cooper, throughout *A Voice from the South*, presents and rejects narratives. She never presents one and enshrines it as an infallible truth. In doing so, I believe she takes the third path, conflicting with any neat, narrative closure or suggested action. Instead, Cooper's uses of these third places to enshrine the in-betweenness of being a Black woman and of being a Black woman in conflict with American intellectual culture. Cooper's methodological practice of being beyond the binary seem to gesture toward a "truth" that is beyond the truths offered or made popular by American culture. There is, in Cooper's methodology, a still-untold story or truth about Black women yet to be written but more dynamic than any popular narratives propose.

As noted in my readings, essays engage in refuting narratives structurally as well. Overall, the sections and musical metaphor work against narratives that pushed women out of America's intellectual discourses, and though it is blatant, it is yet another method in which Cooper edits narratives—by explicitly naming and refuting them. Both examples given in my readings of how "Soprano Obligato" and "Tutti ad Libitum" are editing narratives about Black women and centering them as well as their intellectual work in race and gender issues demonstrate this. In the "The Higher Education of Woman" I noted how Cooper, in one moment, names the narrative that educating women threatens marriage. She refutes this claim, including citing the number of married women with higher education degrees she knows. Similarly, "Has America a Race Problem" opens with a claim that the only solution to race issues is either assimilation or revolution. Cooper suggests instead an equilibrium that comes

with accepting that the solving race issues is the work of God; God moves humanity along, on the path of progress, despite racist and misogynist attempts to halt progress or regress. This format is a common structure throughout Cooper's essays: she names a narrative and then counters that narrative through a series of counterarguments and theories. Cooper's actions are rhetorically complex. She refutes narratives that tell Black women, such as herself, they were not integral to the Black community, America, or any discourse on race or gender. Her structure calls attention to the statement itself and highlights their racist and misogynistic underpinnings of these narratives. By refuting them, Cooper shows those narratives to be up for debate—not to be taken as truth or as a standard. As Charles Mills writes, whiteness is a project of intentional misinterpretation, "an epistemology of ignorance," where white persons forget they codified the world according to race and established a hierarchy that benefits them.[72] Naming misogynistic and racial narratives like Cooper does refuses to let those narratives continue the "epistemology of ignorance." She rejects intentional misinterpretation of Black women's roles in America in favor of one that sustains white supremacy and patriarchy. When narratives or epistemologies are seen as debatable, they are more readily broken than when they are culturally and politically accepted. Cooper wrests the power of the written word from those who spoke against Black women and wrote as though they were authorities. She interrupted their narratives and made space for herself within the same statements that attempted to define how she could live and express herself.

Cooper's editorial expression is in talking back to white supremacy and to the patriarchy—to those invested in silencing Black women or limiting their expression. Selecting narratives and arranging her essays to state and refute those narratives

plainly talked back. Talking back is an empowering and dangerous action. bell hooks writes that talking back made "it possible for [her] to emerge as an independent thinker and writer": "In retrospect, 'talking back' became for me a rite of initiation, testing my courage, strengthening my commitment, preparing me for the days ahead."[73] Talking back also makes one a target for punishment—from one's family, community, and society. Cooper put herself out there as a target by talking back to these cultural narratives and the larger structures of power from which they emerge. But the promise of what talking back offered was too lucrative. Not only would Cooper "emerge as an independent thinker and writer," as Moody-Turner notes happened with *Voice from the South*, but she "move[ed] from silence into speech," a "gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible."[74] Talking back, as Cooper modeled for Black women, was "no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of [their] movement from object to subject—the liberated voice."[75] Her editorial expression played an integral part in facilitating Cooper's talking back. It allowed her to engage in discourse through her essays that many portrayed as not the purview of women—she moved herself from object to subject and participated in intellectual discourse on issues of race and gender. Cooper's arrangement of her essays, including her musical metaphor, work in tandem with the essay's structural arrangement itself, repeating cultural narratives before disproving them. This allows her to engage with narratives that erased Black women's intellectual work and delimited how Black women could engage with issues of race and gender politically and culturally. Her refutations assert Black women are central to the Black community and America, as there would be no advancement without Black women. In doing so, she determined when and where she entered so that others could follow.[76]

Inspiring Black women to continue expressing themselves and pushing for racial uplift was central to the work of Black women historians, like Mossell, and essayists, like Cooper. The same is true of Lucy Wilmot Smith as evidenced in her work "Women as Journalists." Her collective biography demonstrates how Black women engage in both collecting counter histories and engaging in critical debate on issues of race and gender, as her editorial expression makes apparent. Its intervention into narratives that limit how Black women's history could be stated, if at all, can be read in how she arranges her biographies. Smith opens her collective biography with the statement, "The Negro woman's history is marvelously strange and pathetic. Unlike that of other races, her mental, moral, and physical status has not found a place in the archives of public libraries."[77] Ostensibly her work solves this, putting the history of Black women, specifically Black women journalists and editors, into the "archives of public libraries," or, at the very least, in public circulation through the newspaper in which it was printed. Her work brings together a small selection of women for her collective biography. It records the lives and achievements of ten women. In order, they are: Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, Lucretia Newman Coleman, Ida B. Wells, Victoria Earle Mathews, Mary V. Cook, Lillial Akbeeta Kewus, Amelia F. Johnson, Mary E. Britton, Jane E. Wood, and Kate D. Chapman. Though her number of biographies are small, Smith believes her work is still indicative of the success of Black women in the press: "This article includes only a few of our writers. When we remember the very difficult circumstances of the past, the trials and discomforts of the present, we are indeed cheered with the prospects."[78]

The impact of these few writers is in how Smith arranges their biographies to convey that Black women's work is a tradition that must be continued. She begins

with the Black woman journalist she describes as the best "author among our female writers" on "matters pertaining to women and the race," Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell.[79] Mossell's fame in the Black press for her work as a journalist and editor was well-known; she was prolific and celebrated. It is sensible for Smith to start with Mossell, as she is one of the most significant examples of a Black woman journalist. She follows Mossell with Lucretia Newman Coleman, who is equally significant. A poet, scientist, philosopher, writer, and journalist, Coleman is as impressive as Mossell in her work—as is true of who follows Coleman, Ida B. Wells. I note this progress because she brings in several important figures of the Black press until her last two entries: Jane E. Wood and Kate D. Chapman. Information on Jane E. Wood is difficult to find. Smith's text may be the most extensive record on her professional career available. She is a contributor to *The Ivy* and edits the Temperance Department of *Our Women and Children* while being a Greek tutor at Kentucky State University.[80] Kate D. Chapman was known for her contributions to a variety of newspapers, including *The Christian Recorder* and *Our Women and Children*, and she had an impressive writing career, penning historical plays, poems, novellas, short stories, and essays.[81] However, these works did not exist when Smith included Chapman in her collective biography. Chapman was still known primarily for her contributions and editing at the time (1889); her first work, a novella, would be published in 1893 and marked the beginning of a succession of published works. Although their careers are young, Smith is no less laudatory of Wood or Chapman, but she marks them as a turn in her presentation.

Smith includes Wood and Chapman at the end of collective biographies as markers of what future generation of Black women journalists can and will do. Other

biography entries extoll the intellectual brilliance of its contributors, which I will return to later, as well as their lengthy list of achievements. They end with a succinct statement about the person. Victoria Earle Mathews's biography ends with the statement, "She is a member of the Women's National Press Association and no writer of the race is kept better."[82] Lillial Akbeeta Kewus is "recognized in all circles for her ability, and works side by side with editors and reporters without an iota of distinction being made"; and Amelia F. Johnson's ends with: "Mrs. Johnson was educated in Canada—taking a thorough French course—and has taught both French and English branches in Baltimore, her present home."[83] These endings range in effect. They can be solely laudatory, as they are with Mathews and Kewus, or they can be both laudatory and practical, like Johnson's. However, Wood and Chapman are different. Their biographies end with future tense. Wood "will make a clever reporter," and Chapman "will devote her talent to juvenile literature."[84] The grammatical shift in discussing Wood and Chapman in the future tense aligns, I believe, with an intentional structural shift. The women covered in Smith's collective biography are alive at the time and are notable, but the act of delineating Wood and Chapman mark them as exemplars of the newest generation of Black women journalists. They are distinct and to be noted, included despite how early they are in their career. This open-endedness suggests the possibility of Black women's future. It was yet to be written and to be defined and suggests a form of historiography that is future oriented—in-progress. Black women's futures could not yet be written.

Further, by including Wood and Chapman at the end of her collective biography, Smith suggests a bridge between giants in the field, like Mossell or Wells,

and the Black girls and women reading her work—those she hopes to inspire. She writes,

> From the womb of the future must come that poet or author to glorify her womanhood by idealizing the various phases of her character, by digging from the past examples of faithfulness and sympathy, endurance and self-sacrifice and displaying the achievements which were brightened by friction.[85]

Smith believes that the future of Black women is tied to their understanding of the endurance, success, and faithfulness of their predecessors and ancestors. Wood and Chapman mark one further step in that long arc toward "the future" Black woman who will "glorify her womanhood" in her works. This also encourages her readers to participate in creating the future Smith outlines. Black girls, young women, and women reading "Women as Journalist" are getting exposure to stories of endurance and the achievements of Black women journalists, who are active in their church and organizations. In a way, readers are encouraged to imagine themselves as the next set of journalists to be covered in a collective biography like Smith's. Progressing from some of the most known and remarkable Black women journalists to the current future of the field articulates through its arrangement that any young journalist can make history. It takes work and determination in the face of immense discrimination, certainly, but by including younger Black women journalists, Smith articulates the possibility. Further, by marking everything as "the future"—the Black woman writer who would realize Smith's statement as well as the future tense of Wood's and Chapman's biographies—implies that the work of Black women is always in progress. It has not ended and is not anticipated to end soon. Rather, each generation contributes to and moves closer to realizing a better future for Black women. The brilliance of

these women was not tempered by their inability to realize the dream of racial uplift and gender equity; their work, as the arrangement of these biographies suggests, was part of a tradition of Black women moving the community one step further.

The brilliance of the Black women included in Smith's biography is an important aspect of "Women as Journalists," as it reveals how Smith's work is also creating a Black women's intellectual history, much like Mossell. She draws on Black women's "endurance and self-sacrifice," and their successes despite the "difficult circumstances of the past" and "the trials and discomforts of the present" to underscore the importance of Black women journalists' achievements.[86] It also gestures toward how Smith envisions her collective biography as more than a documentary record and inspiration to Black girls and women; "Women as Journalists" would be a record of Black women's intellectual traditions emerging and traversing despite systems of oppression. As such, Smith focuses on these Black women's education, achievements, and work in the Black press rather than information about where or when they were born. Biographies, such as Victoria Early Mathews's, diligently recount each award, each position held at a newspaper, and each newspaper to which they were contributors. They are packed with the literary work of these Black women journalists: "[Victoria Earle Mathews] has reported for the New York Times, Herald, Mail and Express, Sunday Mercury, The Earth, The Photographic World, and is now New York correspondent to the National Leader, D.C., The Detroit Plaindealer, and the Southern Christian Recorder."[87] Smith continues with the numerous papers Mathews wrote for, and the other materials—histories and stories—she produced. Each sentence fits as much impressive information on the work of these Black women journalists, and each biography is

committed to this level of detail. To draw on Cooper's comments on education and marriage, if there was a fear surrounding Black women's intellectuality, then Smith's biography demonstrates the vast and prolific tradition happening within and outside of academic institutions for years that was no less meaningful nor impactful. This dovetails with the historical drive of the collective biography, collecting these works as a historical record—one that would circulate, inspire, and persist.

What Smith is doing is not new. Like Mossell, she is crafting a literary history, and like Cooper, she is attesting to Black women's literary and intellectual achievements; she focuses her perspective on their work as journalists. It is not that Smith is innovative here, but rather that she aligns with the work of Mossel, Cooper, and others in documenting a rich tradition of Black women's thought and theory within her collective biography. Arguably, her work attests to a long-standing tradition of women thinkers. Smith is tapping into what Marnina Gonick and Susanne Gannon believes to be the purpose of collective biography as a feminist practice. "[I]n collective biography," they write, "we are interested in examining the ways in which individuals are made social, how we are discursively, affectively, materially constituted in particular moments that are inherently unstable."[88] And that, in those very moments, there are "slippages, gaps and opportunities for shifting those very discourses and desires that might otherwise appear to hold us captive."[89] Smith uses her collective biography as a moment to recognize how Black women enacted a subjectivity erased and denied by white supremacy and misogyny. She also recognizes how the collective biography constitutes a moment of subjectivity—she both observes that moment enacted by those Black and enacts that subjectivity through the collective biography. Her work documenting these Black women journalists' lives,

achievements, and intellectual traditions is not only to document it nor to inspire but also a moment in which she moves their stories through those slippages and gaps to shift the discourse itself. Smith's work asserts itself into the discourse surrounding Black women, their work, their intellectual history and traditions, and their lives and documented the complicated stories of Black women creating and persisting despite "the hindrance of slavery and the limitations of her sex."[90]

Mossell, Cooper, and Smith used their nonfiction for editing to address the erasure of Black women's presences as historical subjects and theorists on issues of race and gender. They document a long tradition of Black women's agency, thought, and theory. Mossell collects a historical record of Black women's literary work, Cooper argues for Black women's intellectual traditions to be recognized, and Smith documents Black women's journalistic tradition as well as the intellectual tradition they exemplify. Although their goals are similar, they differ in their ends, which I will examine later in this chapter. Cooper, for example, suggests that much of her plans for racial and gender equality that will elevate the Black woman still requires the patronage of Black men. Certainly, Mossel and Smith struggle with their own conceptualizations of what is Black woman's history and what its purpose is. It underscores the reality of this work, of the process of defining what would be the practice of representing Black women—that it was always a process. Editing these narratives was as much an act of correcting and defining Black women's representation as historical subjects and critics as it was learning what representing Black women would look like.

Nonfiction Editing: Documenting, Defining, and Refining Black Women's Representation

Using nonfiction to edit narratives about Black women allowed Black women to take control of their representation after years of intentional erasure and misrepresentation. I return to the quote by Charles Mills—that whiteness requires an "epistemology of ignorance."[91] Whiteness requires a complete amnesia of a real history of the world in favor of misunderstanding and misrepresentation.[92] When we talk of the work Mossell, Cooper, and Smith undertake in correcting cultural narratives that misrepresent Black women, we are talking of the systemic and nation-wide white project that makes an "epistemology of ignorance" possible. Narratives that erased and dictated what Black women had done and therefore could do were prolific, and they were not sudden. From texts like Thomas Jefferson's *Notes* mentioned in the introduction to the vast national movement and print culture by white America to forgive the South and reunify at the expense of Black America.[93] This coupled with the prolific work of the United Daughters of the Confederacy to revise the history of the Civil War in its wake, disseminating propaganda in schools depicts the intentional project of white misunderstanding and misrepresentation that had dictated American history and representations of Black women. These nonfiction works engage in a vital form of criticism that identified the epistemology of ignorance and intentionality behind misrepresenting Black women. As bell hooks reminds us, "We have to constantly critique imperialist white supremacist patriarchal culture because it is so normalized by mass media and rendered unproblematic."[94] Black women's nonfiction as a form of editing engages in that critique; it problematizes and de-normalizes the white supremacist and patriarchal project of misrepresentation and misremembrance.

To control one's representation is also to reclaim power from ideological, political, and cultural systems. "African American Women in Defense of Ourselves" outlines how the representation of Black women creates a legal loophole through which Black women face sexual assault and violence without being believed and without justice.[95] This same moment of silencing and dehumanization echoes through Hortense Spiller's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," where the identity of enslaved Africans disappeared on the ledgers of kidnappers, rendering numerous African women "nothing"— a population open to violation without repercussion for their white male captors.[96] Both "African American Women in Defense of Ourselves" and Spillers get at the reality of these narratives. It was not solely that Black women gained control of their narratives. Cultural narratives about Black women, and Black America as well, had legal, political, social, and material consequences. Any narrative about Black women unfolds into numerous ways how systems of oppression find new avenues to continue oppression. If Black women were incapable of producing literature, then there was no need to support Black women's education. If Black women were not women, citizen, or human, then they were not protected under American laws. It is not just that Black women were in the interstice of language; they were in the interstice of any number of languages, including political. The stakes of reclaiming power over their representation meant Black women opened avenues to issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality with which they continue to engage.

In some ways, the difficulty of Black women's nonfiction editing is the paradox of its topic. It is at once exceedingly simple in its claim: Black women are integral in society and to its progress. And yet that premise has been rendered absurd. It is why Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell includes an epigraph for *Work of the Afro-*

American Woman: "The chief significance of this work is that it preserves for all time a chapter of humanity."[97] That is not to say that Mossell's work is insignificant. For all the histories of Black women she documents in *Work of the Afro-American Woman* the assertion that the importance of this work was the preservation of that history for eternity underscores the absurdity Black women faced. Anna Julia Cooper reiterates this point in her work as well: "I confess one of the difficulties for me in the subject assigned lay in its obviousness."[98] "'Women's influence on social progress,'" she continues, "—who in Christendom doubts or questions it? One may as well be called on to prove that the sun is the source of light and heat and energy to this many-sided little world."[99] That Black women had been historical subjects, had a literary history and intellectual tradition, was a reality. That those stories and traditions required documentation to attest to their presence and argue for their recognition spoke to the absurdity of Black life—of the unreality of watching the history of yourself being pulled up behind you as you marched toward progress.

But as Cooper notes, the very normalization of these facts paradoxically rendered them moot. Mossell, Cooper, and Smith take seriously the charge that their texts, the work they are doing, will bring a better tomorrow for Black women. Smith writes that "when the edge of prejudice shall have become rusted and worn out, the Negro woman shall be heard most potently in the realm of thought, till then shall we strive."[100] That moment when "the edge of prejudice" would be "rusted and worn out," allowing Black women to write and be heard would be the culmination of this work. That is what using these nonfiction texts to engage with dominant cultural narratives would lead to. But as Cooper points to—the assumption that Black women were a cornerstone was easily accepted. They were not arguing about something

outlandish or unprovable. You would have a harder time arguing the sun did not exist than you would arguing that Black women were not central to the progress of the country. Yet narratives that Black women were not active agents of history or intellectuals circulated and re-circulated until they were normalized as an undergirding logic of American intellectual and aesthetic culture. From this, you arrive at Jefferson's comments about Phyllis Wheatley inability to be a poet: Black persons could parrot poetry, but they were not educated, rational, or moral and could not produce true poetry as a result.[101] The subject may be obvious, but it was undercut by the white project of misremembrance, which I would extend across gender lines as well. Those with power or with ambitions for power, whether through race or gender, had investments in the cultural misrepresentation of Black women, for through status quo they retained their power.

To challenge this power emerges as one of the first goals of Black women's nonfiction editing: compiling and documenting a historical record of Black women's history. Mossell, Cooper, and Smith take on this work with the hope that it has liberatory possibilities. Mossell's statement that the value of her work is in its documentation of a history *for all* emphasize the documentary drive occurring around the turn of the century.[102] Smith's opening calls to this when she refers to how Black women's history "has not found a place in the archives of public libraries."[103] Cooper leverages her text as "the other side" of the debate from the start: "It is because I believe the American people to be conscientiously committed to a fair trial and ungarbled evidence…—That this little Voice has been added to the already full chorus. The 'other side' has not been represented by one who 'lives there.'"[104] The first corrective to the elision of Black women from America's histories would be the

overwhelming collection of counterhistories they produced. The exhaustiveness of works like Mossell's *Work of the Afro-American Woman* and Smith's "Women as Journalists" offer a volume that underscores Black women as historical agents deeply involved in their communities as teachers and organizers as well as prolific writers participating in a literary tradition. These histories emerge on the cusp of the work of Black bibliographers and librarians, who work to index, enumerate, organize Black literature, and the archival impulse that will follow.[105] Yet the similarities are there: the possibilities of crafting bibliographies, of lists (which we will return to in the next chapter), as a documentary record of a vibrant and important Black literary tradition resembles the intentions of Black histories. Though at times they were literary histories, they provide biography after biography that, like bibliographies, use quantity to argue for their presence and importance. An exhaustive documentary record of Black women's lives and literature was the corrective to the white revisionist historical project.

That is not to suggest that Black women's nonfiction existed solely to oppose white nonfiction and cultural narratives. Part of their work was to refute those histories and narratives. As Laura Helton notes in her study of Black bibliographies at the dawn of the twentieth century, texts that wrote on the edge of the unwritten operate on deferment.[106] Black women's nonfiction had both immediate and deferred effects. Immediately, they created a documentary record that was erased and controlled by dominant narratives. In the long term, they provided both a future and a methodology for future generations of Black women. Smith explicitly acknowledges that to be the purpose of her text. She sees her work as part of the record that will work to make "the edge of prejudice…rusted and worn out," for then "the Negro woman shall be heard

most potently in the realm of thought, till then shall we strive."[107] Mossell identifies her work similarly in her first sentence, which I referenced earlier: "The value of any published work, especially if historical in character, must be largely inspirational."[108] The deferred promise of these work was in their belief that future generations would carry this work toward its fruition. Their labor to create a documentary record addressed immediate concerns, rectifying silences and misremembrances, but the fulfilment of their ambitions lay with scores of Black girls, young women, and women, who would continue this work. Those that would continue to work in the fragments of histories and culture, writing in conflict with misogynoir language and narratives, working from the interstices into which they fell, and creating narratives from white supremacist and misogynoir culture in which there were no narratives for Black women. These future generations would be the next editors, creating gaps and making collages of Black American history and thought for others. They would fulfill, share, and expand these stories, always leaving open their work for the innumerable possibilities future generations of Black women would deliver. Historical revisionism underscores how out of time history itself was: white supremacists and misogynists could, at any moment, rewrite the history to shape the future to their ends. It is reasonable then that inspiration and inheritance are part of this work, stretching Black women's nonfiction from the past to the present and future. Black women would build on this project across the upcoming years, carrying forward Mossell's promise to be inspirational and Smith's forward-looking hope that they strive toward a future without prejudice. Hope and inspiration in Black women's nonfiction underscores this work's inherent editorial nature: it is a process of constant revision and iteration to be realized one promised day.

The iterative nature of Black women's nonfiction pulls at another of the core themes of this approach to editing. It was eternally "in progress." Neither Mossell nor Cooper or Smith define their text as the culmination of a particular project or initiative. They are part of the moving flow of Black women's work at that moment. Mossell marks this by inspiration. Smith makes it clear in her use of future tense for new Black women journalists and through explicit statements. Cooper alludes to this when she famously writes, "[o]nly the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole *Negro race enters with me*."[109] *A Voice from the South* models this for her readers, but Cooper's quote is a deferral. She speaks of what is needed for the Black community to advance. The Black community should center the advancement of the community on the Black woman not "eminent men," for Black women's progress marked the true progress of the race.[110] However this was not to be immediate. It would require the reconfiguration of the Black community and movement for racial uplift. A Black woman can, or rather could, control the advancement of the community, but it would not be immediate. Cooper's words recognize that this effect requires an ideological shift amongst more than just Black women. The promise of Black women entering with her community behind her were to be delivered. Mossell, Cooper, and Smith certainly hoped these statements would become fact, but they recognized themselves to be a part of the journey toward that moment not the culmination of it. What representing Black women as historical subjects would result in was yet to be realized.

Seeing Black women's nonfiction as an editorial project always under revision gestures toward its complicated nature. Black women were still defining for

themselves what it meant to represent themselves without the cultural narratives that had for so long defined them. For Mossell and Cooper, this emerges as a revision of current heteronormative, domestic Black womanhood, and for Smith, it is the respectability of her subjects. As noted in the first chapter, Mossell continues to have a particular class of Black Americans for which she writes. Her chapter, "A Lofty Study," argues for the importance of creating a study for reading. She presumes readers have an additional, unused room—or two should your husband also need a study—for which they can add a sofa, decorate, and read the books they have.[111] Mossell's home is not the home of many Black families. She writes to those with homes, those with material and fiscal wealth; enough wealth they can afford unused space. Her essay, "The Opposite Point of View," advocates for teaching husbands how to treat their wives to save their marriage, subverting the typical advice of many columns and books on marriage.[112] Mossell's suggestion does go against the status quo. It argues that marital and domestical failures are not solely a wife's failures to make her husband happy. However, it still aligns itself with the promise of a strong, Christian marriage with dutiful spouses that create a foundation for a strong future. Cooper offers her version through her advocacy that Black women's advancement can only come when Black men act as "a father, a brother, a friend to every weak, struggling unshielded girl."[113] Cooper certainly centers Black women in her formulations, but their advancement is inextricable from the language of weak/feminine in need of protection and support from the strong/masculine. Smith defines her women by their "countenance," upholding of moral standards, their character, and "womanly qualities."[114] While their work is of utmost importance, she

also strives for you to know her Black women journalists exemplify morality and respectability.

Mossell, Cooper, and Smith's reliance on the domestic, the weak, and the respectability suggest how the "in progress" nature of Black women's nonfiction make representation difficult. If the project of Black women's nonfiction editing was to represent Black women on their terms, then the conflicting and complicated depictions of Black women by Mossell, Cooper, and Smith exemplify the struggle of that work. Black women were in the progress of defining what it meant to represent Black women—what those representations would look like. For Mossell, it is a middle- or upper-class Black woman who has a home and time for reading and writing. Cooper sees her representation as a Black woman making her way with the protection and support of Black men. Smith envisions hers as the triumph of respectable and moral Black women. The relationship between radicality, liberation, domesticity, and womanhood are a complicated one. Claudia Tate reminds us that domesticity is not a limitation of Black women's imaginations. To many the promise of the freedom to have "domestic ambitions—marriage, motherhood, and home—in which women have authority as well as men" was a dream.[115] What this reflects is the complexity with which Black women worked with and against established narratives. Often they worked with and against narratives by creating narrative, historical, and methodological foundations for a progressive narrative about Black women. Yet that does not mean they were wholly free from narratives. They continued to struggle to define their lives and experiences against narratives that defined nearly every aspect of their lives—from womanhood to motherhood to success. Black women constantly explored how they were defining and redefining themselves as they tried to move

away from those narratives: What did it mean to be a woman? To be a Black woman? To be successful? To be independent? To be married? To have children? To be a mother? To be a part of a community? To be a part of American society? To be radical? As they navigate finding new ways of defining these ideas for themselves, of working against pre-existing and creating new narratives for themselves, Black women reckoned with how many narratives white supremacy and misogyny entrapped them in. And in other moments, they explored what aspects of narratives did or did not apply to them, as they explored new methodologies and ideologies based on their experiences. For some, these definitions would find strength in Black womanhood, motherhood, and domestic life. Others would find it in radical new ways, untethered from heterosexuality or reproduction. As such, Black women wrestled with this narrative complexity and navigated what parts of narratives could and could not be separated from their understandings of themselves.

The difficulties of these representations of Black women, of their conservative sssfigurations, point to one of the largest stakes of this Black women's nonfiction and the editorial work it did: narratives of Black women threatened to limit how Black women could imagine themselves. Cooper, for example, is remembered for her work centering Black women and is often considered the progenitor of Black feminism. Vivian M. May writes of how Cooper "pivot[ed] away from dominant mindsets and offer[s] a different view of the possibilities before us."[116] Her appeal then to the protection and aide of Black men for the weak Black woman adds dimensionality to Cooper. I do not categorize this as a "failure" of Cooper nor a criticism of scholarship on Cooper, as though they avoid this aspect of her. Rather, I draw us to it as a moment wherein Cooper herself does not think beyond the narratives of weak/feminine and

strong/masculine that were typical of the era. Where she pushes beyond anti-Black narratives, this moment reminds us that gendered narratives are as much in play and have, by nature of their circulation and normalization, structured her understanding of herself and her Black feminism. Cooper, Mossell, and Smith are engaging in the work of deconstructing these narratives about Black women in front of our eyes, as they offer us different ideas of who their text represents. Each one is working through, unpacking those narratives, and though they may not read as radical and liberal, they are evidence of the complexity and iterative work of defining what it would mean to represent Black women finally. To not be controlled by misrepresentation but to be represented wholly.

Black women used nonfiction to edit narratives that controlled their representation as historical agents and intellectuals. It dictated whether women could contribute to history and for what they would be remembered. They saw the erasure of Black history and the emergence of these cultural narratives, for which they created a counterhistory, a documentary record of Black women's lives and literature that attested to a vibrant, historied tradition. Mossell creates a literary history of Black women's work, while Cooper documents and exemplifies Black women's intellectual traditions, arguing for their recognition as critics and theorists on power, race, and gender. Smith attempts to both document the literary and intellectual history of Black women in her collective biography, coalescing the ambitions of Mossell and Cooper. These women recognized that controlling their representation in nonfiction meant controlling how they would be remembered and how various political, legal, and cultural systems would treat them. Yet this work also brought the difficult work of what it would mean to represent Black women. They offered Black women writers,

organizers, and trailblazers for the record and as inspiration to other generations of Black girls and women, and they simultaneously suggested Black women to be defined by domesticity, marriage, weakness, and respectability.

Defining Black women's representation underscores how this work was one of revision—it was in process. Mossell, Cooper, and Smith bring their own attempts at representing Black women and offer it to readers. And these representations underscore the importance of this work: these Black women were working through deconstructing these narratives in understanding themselves. Black women's nonfiction as an editorial act meant that Black women could control their own representation as historical subjects, and that they could imagine themselves outside of dominant narratives. These works highlight not a simple narrative of progress, but one of continual work. Collecting Black women's histories remains an integral part of contemporary recovery work. Histories like Nikkole Hannah-Jones's historiographical project, *The 1619 Project*, took on the difficult task accurately telling the long history of slavery in the United States since 1619, when the first enslaved Africans arrived in a Virginia Colony. Hannah-Jones's work, even if contentious to some historians, signals the necessity of this historiographical work; Black women continue to push for a history that includes Black history and experiences and, in doing so, critiques the interconnectedness of historiography and white supremacy. Black women's essays remain an integral genre in nonfiction. Elizabeth Alexander, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Christina Sharpe, Claudia Rankine, and many more continue to explore the form and its possibilities. Each explores not only the history of Black women's and feminist thought but also its relation to how the world grows and changes as well as how white supremacy and misogyny reshape and adapt to said changes. Collective

biographies remain a necessary focus for Black women's nonfiction as well. Collections of important Black figures, for example, continue to struggle with including Black women. They are often missing or inadequately represented. One would think that Black history has immense gaps between Frederick Douglass to W. E. B. Du Bois, Louis Armstrong, Jesse Owens, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X., and Barack Obama. Sometimes, they will include Black women, like Fanny Lou Hamer or Maya Angelou. But many continue to work on addressing this. The African-American Collective Biography series by Enslow Publishing tries to include an equal amount of Black women in their texts, putting many on the cover as representative of "Celebrated African-American Novelists" or "Extraordinary African-American Poets." Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped Win the Space Race* (2016), adapted into a movie of the same name, traced the lives of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson—the mathematicians, or human computers, at NASA behind the 1960s space race—and the Christine Darden, the first Black woman promoted to Senior Executive Service for her research on supersonic flight and sonic booms. The lives and stories of these four Black women were already lesser known if not entirely forgotten in the short fifty-six years since the space race. Histories, essays, and collective biographies remain an important genre for Black women's writing and editing. They continue to navigate narratives, refining new ones or moving beyond them entirely. In light of continued pushes to excise Black history from school curriculums and to revise American history in light of an aggressive empowerment of white supremacy, the work of Black women to not only confront narratives, but to

preserve Black history and to educate others about Black history remains both urgent and important.

ENDNOTES

[1] *The Souls of Black Folk*, 188, 190.

[2] Casey and Salter, "With, Without, Even Still," 247.

[3] "With, Without, Even Still," 247.

[4] *A Black Women's History of the United States: Revisioning American History*, 11.

[5] Ernest, "Liberation Historiography," 416.

[6] "With, Without, Even Still," 26.

[7] "Introduction," 441.

[8] *The Black Interior*, 24.

[9] Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," 232.

[10] *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia: With a Statement of the Proceedings That Took Place on the Subject in Different Parts of the United States*, 76–77.

[11] *Proceedings*, 7–8.

[12] Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 53.

[13] *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 53.

[14] *Practice of Citizenship*, 36–37.

[15] "The Negro Digs Up His Past," 234; *Deromanticizing Black History*, 88.

[16] Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History*, 88.

[17] *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 8.

[18] "Black Women Historians from the Late 19th Century to the Dawning of the Civil Rights Movement," 241–42.

[19] "Black Women Historians from the Late 19th Century to the Dawning of the Civil Rights Movement," 242.

[20] Berry and Gross, *A Black Women's History of the United States: Revisioning American History*, 11.

[21] Young, "The Black Polemical Essay," 2.

[22] Young, "The Black Polemical Essay," 69.

[23] "The Black Polemical Essay," 69.

[24] "Liberation Historiography," 9.

[25] "Essays, Essayists, and Essayism," 809.

[26] "Essays, Essayists, and Essayism," 809.

[27] *The Black Interior*, 24.

[28] *Doers of the Word*, 21.

[29] *Doers of the Word*, 21.

[30] Gardner, *Blood & Irony*, 123.

[31] Williams, *Self-Taught*, 126.

[32] Williams, "We Are Striving," 127.

[33] Williams, *Self-Taught*, 127.

[34] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 9.

[35] *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 21.

[36] Wade, "The Overlooked Medievalist Career of Dr. Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964)."

[37] Wade, “The Overlooked Medievalist Career of Dr. Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964).”

[38] McDaniel, “Biographical Sketch of Lucy Wilmot Smith.”

[39] McDaniel, “Biographical Sketch of Lucy Wilmot Smith.”

[40] McDaniel, “Biographical Sketch of Lucy Wilmot Smith.”

[41] “‘The Progress of Colored Women’ (1898),” 440.

[42] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 48.

[43] Spires, *Practice of Citizenship*, 11.

[44] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 49.

[45] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 10.

[46] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 50.

[47] Belanger, “Descriptive Bibliography,” 99, quoted in Helton, “Making Lists, Keeping Time,” 86.

[48] “Making Lists, Keeping Time,” 84.

[49] “Making Lists, Keeping Time,” 87.

[50] “Making Lists, Keeping Time,” 85.

[51] Fielder, *Relative Races*, 242.

[52] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 10. Mossell misidentifies the author as Anna Nathan Myer.

[53] Annie Nathan Meyer and a group of women petitioned Columbia University for an all-women’s college, which resulted in Barnard. Notable graduates include Zora Neale Hurston (1928), Grace Lee Boggs (1935), and Ntozake Shange (1970) to name only a few.

[54] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 10.

[55] *Practice of Citizenship*, 174.

[56] *Practice of Citizenship*, 175.

[57] Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 8.

[58] Mossell, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 131.

[59] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 130.

[60] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 131–32.

[61] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 132.

[62] "The Education of Woman in the Eastern States," 45.

[63] Moody-Turner, "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2022), xxx.

[64] Qtd in Shirley Moody-Turner, "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2022), xxix.

[65] Moody-Turner, "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2022), xxix.

[66] "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2022), xxix–xxx.

[67] "Voice from the South," 38.

[68] "Voice from the South," 39.

[69] "Voice from the South," 40–41.

[70] "Voice from the South," 79.

[71] "Voice from the South," 84.

[72] *Racial Contract*, 18.

[73] *Talking Back*, 9.

[74] "Introduction," ed. Moody-Turner (2022), xxx; hooks, *Talking Back*, 9.

[75] *Talking Back*, 9.

[76] Cooper, "Voice from the South," 19.

[77] "Women as Journalists," 605.

[78] "Women as Journalists," 613.

[79] "Women as Journalists," 606.

[80] "Women as Journalists," 612.

[81] She also published the novella *Clancy Street* (1898-1899. Her historical plays were titled *Thirty Years of Freedom* (1902) and *Fifty Years of Freedom* (1910), and she published a book of poetry in 1902, *Recitations*.

[82] "Women as Journalists," 609.

[83] "Women as Journalists," 610–11.

[84] "Women as Journalists," 612.

[85] "Women as Journalists," 605–6.

[86] "Women as Journalists," 606, 613.

[87] "Women as Journalists," 609.

[88] "Collective Biography," 8.

[89] "Collective Biography," 8.

[90] "Women as Journalists," 606.

[91] *Racial Contract*, 18.

[92] *Racial Contract*, 19.

[93] Edward J. Blum explores how American Protestantism pushed for reforging the white nation post-Civil War to re-create the white supremacist nation as quickly as possible and work against movements for Black equality and elevation. See Edward J. Blum. *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2007.

[94] *Homegrown*, 61.

[95] 272.

[96] "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," 67, 70–71. Sterling Brown writes of how white writers can only conceive of Black Americans through the lens of seven stereotypes. These narratives become so normalized and pervasive that it risks determining how Black Americans understand themselves. See Sterling A Brown. "Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors (1933)." In *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to* 2000. Edited by Hazel Arnett Ervin, 55-81. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999.

[97] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 6.

[98] "Voice from the South," 15.

[99] "Voice from the South," 15.

[100] "Women as Journalists," 613.

[101] Gikandi, "Race and the Idea of the Aesthetic."

[102] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 6.

[103] "Women as Journalists," 605.

[104] "Voice from the South," 5.

[105] For more on Black bibliography and its work in defining, at the time, Negro literature and establishing it as a field of inquiry, see Laura E. Helton. "Making Lists, Keeping Time: Infrastructures of Black Inquiry, 1900-1950." In *Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African American Print*. Edited by Brigitte Fielder and Jonathan Senchyne, 82-108. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2019.

[106] "Making Lists, Keeping Time," 83.

[107] "Women as Journalists," 613.

[108] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 9.

[109] "Voice from the South," 19.

[110] "Voice from the South," 18–19.

[111] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 126–27.

[112] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 118–19.

[113] "Voice from the South," 20.

[114] "Women as Journalists," 610–11.

[115] *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 49.

[116] "Anna Julia Cooper, Archival Absences, and Black Women's 'Muffled' Knowledge," 242.

Chapter 4

LISTING AND EDITING: COLLECTING AND COLLATING BLACK LITERARY HISTORY

This is the question I would bring to your minds. Are we adding to the structure planned for us by our pioneers? Do we know our dwelling and those who under many hardships, at least, gathered the materials for its upbuilding? Knowing them do we honor—do we love them—what have they done that we should love?

Victoria Earle Matthews, *The Value of Race Literature* (1895)[1]

In the summer heat of Boston's Berkeley Hall, Black women from organizations throughout America met to discuss whether they would form a national conference for themselves.[2] Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, the Women's Era Club President, organized the convening and provided opening remarks—remarks that bely that not only was determining a national conference on the agenda but so too were key issues for Black women.[3] Ruffin recounts the reasons for their gathering: to enjoy each other's company and to discuss issues of education, morality, and domesticity.[4] But she leaves "the strongest reason for our conferring together until the last."[5] What Ruffin speaks of as the "strongest reason" for the gathering of Black women organizers and club members across the United States is the paradoxical struggle of young Black women. "All over America there is to be found a large and growing class of earnest, intelligent, progressive colored women, women who, if not leading full, useful lives, are only waiting for the opportunity to do so, many of them warped and cramped for lack of opportunity, not only to do more but to be more," she states.[6] What holds these women back, an oppressive force equal to legislation that prevented

equal access to education, financial security, childcare—in short, access to resources that would support Black women to pursue their intellectual interests—was the reality that their achievements would not be recognized unless they were exceptional. Ruffin laments that Black women are often responded to with narratives that preconceive them as unintelligent and incapable. And when they were exceptional, "exception" was leaned on heavily; they were not indicative of Black girls' or women's possibilities but a fluke, a one-off, strange occurrence. Ruffin characterizes this by the phrase, "'For the most part ignorant and immoral, some exceptions, of course, but these don't count."[7] What Ruffin outlines as the "strongest reason" for the meeting of numerous Black women in 1895 was the reality that narratives about Black women were shaping the possibilities of their future. Her push is for the Black women gathered to "disprove unjust charges," not through individual effort, but through "an army of organized women."[8]

That night Victoria Earle Matthews presented *The Value of Race Literature*, an attempt to answer Ruffin's charge for Black women to address those narratives that silenced Black women, and diminished their writing as "flukes," or demanded they share their stories in certain ways to be heard. Matthews's text is a treatise on how Black literature and Black literary history can help Black women work against narratives that portray them as incapable of writing. To refer to Mary Church Terrell's *The Progress of Colored Women*, Black women, known and unknown, were writing and creating literary history alongside and after Phillis Wheatley, any statement to the contrary was false.[9] Collecting a history of Black women's writing then would be "counter-irritants against all such writing that shall stand, having as an aim the supplying of influential and accurate information, on all subjects relating to the Negro

and his environments, to inform the American mind at least."[10] Yet she does not advocate for Black women to solely write. Black women would also seek out Black literary history, record it, share it, and document it in perpetuity for the future generations. "[U]nless earnest and systematic effort be made to procure and preserve for transmission to our successors," Matthews writes, "the records, books and various publications already produced by us, […] an irretrievable wrong will be inflicted upon the generations that shall come after us."[11]

This chapter focuses on an understudied genre of Black women's writing: the list. It is a mundane genre; everyone has written and used lists in their lives. From to-do lists, to "to be read" lists, and grocery lists, it's almost invisible as a genre. Yet this chapter explores how two Black women, Victora Earle Matthews and S. Elizabeth Frazier, use lists to recenter Black women's literature in ways that not only challenge narratives about Black literary history but recenter the world around them. To suggest that lists are this evocative or powerful may seem hyperbolic: they are made of things to be done within a time frame or materials to buy or read. Yet they gesture at innumerable stories that the list itself does not need to elaborate on. It's generically evocative in its ability to allude to a wealth of knowledge that teaches us through contextuality. A biography of a Black woman is the story of her life as a Black girl and a Black woman. It is also the story of how the world is racialized and gendered, especially in ways that may not have been recognized as such. Creating a list of Black women's biographies and then listing them provides not just a data set of how many Black women's biographies there are, but they gesture to the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of these experiences. A list of Black women asks us to consider their history and, in some instances, their corpus of work, and when we recontextualize

them by putting them in conversation with ten or fifteen other Black women in a list, we find ourselves re-viewing and recontextualizing the women, their work, the systems, the experiences, and the world in which they and their work navigate. Black women's lists completely reorient the axis of our understanding by showing their audience a vastness of Black literature and culture unrepresented elsewhere and by showing their audience a deep, comprehensive and connected series of Black experiences that lay bare experiences and understandings of race and gender otherwise unintelligible. Its complexity signals that a list is the closest genre and language through which the distinctiveness of Black women's lived experience can be articulated.

Lists also reject narratives, making them a provocative space for looking at editorial practices. In gesturing to numerous Black women's lives and works, a list cannot be reduced to a simple narrative. The distinctiveness of those experiences and of those women's perspectives may overlap and connect, but they may also reject and conflict with each other. Further, they hint at their own incompleteness. Lists are not exhaustive. Like historiography in chapter 2, they wrestle with the gaps and losses in the record as both a reality and feature of Black historiographical work. Instead, a list names many people and/or works but is always signaling the numerous others unnamed and, therefore, unlisted. A list leaves behind a record that recognizes and wrestles with its own gaps and limitations. Even as, for example, Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature* overwhelms any claims that there is no Black literary history through long lists, it cannot recollect every single Black woman author or work prior to 1895. It would be more accurate to suggest Matthews does not try to. She provides a lengthy list of authors and works, yes, but the enormity of her list speaks to the

larger specter of those lost and forgotten who are not included in her list. Others, like S. Elizabeth's Frazier's "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" (1892), focus on a select few Black women as remarkable examples, a more apparent signal of the difficulty of accounting for Black women and the numerous ones unaccounted for within Frazier's list. The absences inherent in lists and the refusal to reduce and reconcile Black women's histories to a clean narrative are key features of lists as a genre. They refuse narratives, pushing us to consider that dominant narratives about Black literary history are untrue, as white supremacy poses essential and tidy narratives about Black women, and that defining narratives is a work-in-progress. That is to say that while Black women used lists to edit narratives and to explore what narratives would apply to them, their lists also reject any definitive "truth" in those narratives. They never go so far as to pose their lists as a complete, finished work that provides an essential understanding of Black women and Black literary history. Rather, lists harken to some distant, unarticulated idea or narrative.

Yet I find lists—their fragmentary, irreconcilable, and unnarratable nature—to be at odds with their function as a tool of Black education. I do not wish to reconcile how lists navigate narratives and persist in a to-be-finished state with how they function as an early attempt to define Black literary history for a generation of free, and education-seeking Black Americans. Chapter 2 acknowledged the relationship between Black nonfiction and Black education in this period, an era in which there was a drive for Black education and a need for textbooks. There are certainly connections from the necessity of textbooks derived from histories, essays, and collective biographies to texts that contain lists. Texts like Matthews's and Frazier's would have been useful to students under those genres. However, the lists in these

texts have distinct functions. Lists of Black lecturers, authors, editors, poets, and journalists start to form Black literature as a subject—not as only a topic but a subject of study, historied with numerous works and people that younger generations should learn and remember. I understand Black women's listing practices as a predecessor to the work that Black bibliographers took on at the turn of the century when they aggregate and create extensive bibliographies on Black literature. Lists are an early attempt at collecting and enumerating Black literary history, showing its audience that Black literary history could be a subject of study. They have a purpose in the early work of Black education that is intertwined with the recovery and circulation of Black literary history. A list may function as a reading list for its audience, one that guided them toward Black authors and works previously unknown, or it may open a constellation of connections that set readers and listeners on paths towards new authors and texts. The function of Black women's listing practices as an educational resource remains important and, to me, does not conflict with their inability to be exhaustive. They mark the start of an educational journey that could be expanded whether by other lists or bibliographers or the work of readers themselves.

For this chapter, I examine the lists within Victoria Earle Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature* and S. Elizabeth Frazier's "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," exploring how they use their lists to edit narratives about Black women's writing. This also accounts for the editorial acts and expressions that occur when Matthews and Frazier create their lists; the acts of selection and arrangement that shape who is and is not included in their versions of Black literary history. In a way, this chapter is about knowing: knowing a literary and ideological history that feels precariously close to being lost; knowing truths about how narratives erased and

limited Black women's literature and their voices; knowing as in learning, remembering, and building from a vast literary history in order to chart the journey forward; knowing as in understanding the value and caring for a legacy with the belief that it would shape the future. Listing tells the story of accounting for the unaccounted, re-collecting what was near loss, and recollecting to correct a corrupted record. This, collection and recollection, is why I examine lists as an editorial expression used by Black women. I argue that Black women create lists to combat narratives that proclaimed they could not write or must write their stories in certain ways if they wished to be heard at all, collecting and enumerating a historied tradition of Black women's writing to the contrary. Lastly, these lists also created a documentary record that would teach future generations of those writers who had come before, and it would preserve Black literary history in perpetuity. By doing so, they created centers of cultural authority that previously did not exist; they created languages and discourses unspoken or unwritten by anyone else and spoke of realities no one else recognized.

Listing: Its History, Significance, and Editorial Practices

I would begin by defining a list as a series of topics or subjects that follow each other and have several entries grouped together by those topics or sub-topics (e.g. Black historians or Black journalists). Further, a list can include biographies or short information after each entry, but they are clearly grouped under subject. We can see lists as short strings of names or as a collective biography, for example. Also, a list is not exhaustive and does not wish it to be. It aggregates and collates data to show a vastness of information about its topic, but it can also be characterized by its gaps and

absences; the larger data that was forgotten or not included within the list. This definition emerges from tracing the history of listing and finding what a list is based upon what it is and is not. You would not find many texts, if any, focused purely on the practice of listing; you find the history of listing in other textual forms. For instance, I trace an early form of listing to early modern medieval texts and the index as a genre to the work of other scholars, such as Elizabeth Alexander, who wrote about lists in her work *the black interior*. I connect this to scholarship on Black bibliographers and librarians by scholars like Laura E. Helton. An index is a similarly important and invisible genre, and its history is long. It develops with the codex, and it has persisted through the 800-year history since. We can find our modern internet defined by the index: one of the first webpages, the WorldWideWeb project, was an index of internet websites and Google views its own search engine as an "index of the web."[12] This back-of-the book tool is best defined by its ability to catalogue data from a text for users. It is a reference tool best recognized by its function to make it easier to, as the word index alludes to, indicate where information can be found within a book. Found at the end of the book, an index is a list of key subjects, whether those are historical events, organizations, persons, or texts—all defined by the author or, often, someone who compiles the index, a compiler or an indexer. It provides page numbers where these topics are mentioned; sub-topics, if necessary (a subject on indices may mention "computing in indexing" as a sub-topic as one example); and connections to other entries (e.g. "see *computing*" if you were looking at an index entry on digital indices perhaps). Dennis Duncan, in his history of the index, refers to an index as "a story about time and knowledge and the relationship between the two." As technology, the index adapts to the reading habits of audiences and the changes in data that

emerge. Readers who use indices want information quickly. They rake the lists at the end of books for who or what they wish to know about, and the success of an index is its ability to readily and clearly convey that data.

However, I would differentiate lists from indices in one important way: indices are formally bound whereas a list is not. A list signifies outside itself. It is formally untethered. An index refers to the data within its pages. Its technological function is to make a book navigable to readers—to get them to the information they want or need on a particular subject. A reader comes to an index much like a physical card catalog. They seek something and need information on its location, and while some entries may be interconnected within an index, such as when a reader is referred to another entry, these referents do not take a reader outside of the book. An index views the book as an enclosed space. The text may refer outside of itself in references, but the index will not. In fact, an index cannot exist without its respective text. Without a book, an index has no meaning. Its data derives from and is referential to the text. Whereas a list can be built from a text, but it is not tethered to that text. One could take a list and circulate it as an independent document from whatever text it exists within, though many lists are created and live separately from texts. Familiarity with popular reading lists, or a New York Times Bestseller List, are lists not reliant upon texts. We understand them immediately when presented to us, and their data signals us to look elsewhere and perhaps beyond the context of the list at all, particularly if you dislike a book listed. Indices provide a good foundational start for understanding a list. We can see how an index is a list of subjects and sub-topics for readers, but the actual function of the technology and its usage separate indices and lists. Lists find their vibrancy not in being referential to a text but referential to an interconnected network of persons,

places, and things—whatever topic the list enumerates. Lists connect their users to an entire culture, as they list subject after subject. And in their vast listings, they suggest to us that there are even more things to be listed. Stopping a bestseller list at ten does not mean there were only ten books whose sales were recorded across the nation. No, we look at a list and recognize inherently they are incomplete, gesturing to more data that we, the user, must seek out if we wish to learn more.

While it is useful to see what a list is by its divergences from an index, it is also useful to see how an index and list overlap, particularly in their ideological function. One of the books you can turn to on indices, amongst the vast number available for those interested in library science and indexing, is Robert L. Collison's *Indexes and Indexing: Guide to the Indexing of Books and Collections of Books, Periodicals, Music, Recordings, Films and Other Material; With a Reference Section and Suggestions for Further Reading*. Collison's exploration of the index as a form asks us to reconsider what ideological function an index has. He refers to how someone may understand their kitchen by indexing it. What goes where and why? You also index your own clothes, in a way. What you put in your pocket, in the same place every day, for example. Collins is exploring the relationship between an inventory, an index, and, at this moment, our home or kitchen. But I find his idea provocative because, at its core, what he proposes is that "whenever we organize the world around us so that we know where to find things, we are in fact indexing."[13] Collins's observation is key to our understanding of indices, and the same is true of a list. Both ask that readers focus on data, on subjects and topics, rather than narrative or text. In the case of lists found within essays or books, they ask you to be actively engaged with both a narrative and an enumerative piece of data. Though we may argue to what

degree an essay with a list in it keeps a narrative. This re-arrangement of our understanding and engagement with a text or topic is innate to lists as a genre. A list alters the axis on which we understand and engage with the world around us. They ask us to center finding as a central concept to a text rather than solely a narrative. This oddity is also why lists struggle with narratives. A list can portray a narrative through its paratext—the narrative in which it emerges—or through how it selects and groups its subjects, yet this narrative is incomplete. It is impossible to cohesively craft a narrative out of a list, as it's always referring to our need to look for more, to seek more information. A narrative can exist, but it, like its data, always gestures toward its unfinished nature. Lists ask us to accept that any essential and complete understanding of its topic is impossible and, arguably, not a function of the list itself.

Lists, like indices, have existed orally, mentally, and textually for generations and have made their way into texts, particularly African American texts. A list is a mundane textual form, one we all use at some point in our lives, but they have had a central function in nineteenth-century Black historiography. In chapter 2 I explored through the work of John Ernest and Derrick Spires how Black historiography wrestles with narratives and the inherent incompleteness of Black history. Ernest writes the most directly on how Black histories are the story of "disruption, of fragmentation…a story beyond the reach of representation."[14] Early Black historiography work is the work navigating the gaps and fragmentation of Black history. It is not of filling those gaps, necessarily, but exploring them as a reality of Black history: persons, events, and places had been lost through intentional white supremacist erasure or unintentional amnesia from not perceiving Black history. Listing navigates the same fragments and gaps. In their own gaps they signify the vast

web of people and works unspoken. Yet in those gaps are the echoes of those things that are unremembered and forgotten. The same fragments of Black history ripple through lists. As well there is also the vastness of the print culture that also made it hard to know every piece of Black literary history.

It is unsurprising then that some nineteenth-century Black histories include lists. A list allowed a historian to aggregate and collate Black history in a thin narrative structure. James W. C. Pennington's *A Textbook of the Origin and History, &c. &c. of the Colored People* (1841) has several lists. He lists the sons of Ham and the sons of Cush as a tracing of Black lineage and history, and he lists the events that happened to each of Ham's grandsons in a recognizable form.

> First. Nimrod settled Babylon. …
> Second. Havilah settled south of Baylon. …
> Third. Sabtah joined Havilah on the south and lay on the Persian gulf….
> Fourth. Raamah's land lay south of Sabtah on the Persian gulf…[15]

In a later chapter, he lists the Black "men who have been distinguished themselves in the midst of slavery generally" organized by the year in which they printed their work or were recognized.[16] Robert Benjamin Lewis does the same in his text, *Light and Truth; Collected from the Bible and Ancient in Modern History, Containing the Universal History of the Colored and the Indian Race, from the Creation of the World to the Present Time* (1844). Like Pennington, he traces from the early eras of the Bible and Ham through Ethiopia and to contemporary Black persons in a truly transnational Black history. His section, "Modern Eminent Colored Men" is a list of important Black men to know with short biographies. You can learn of Price Watkis, Mr. Osborn, Richard Hill, A. De Castro, Mr. Athill, Gustavus Vasa, George Washington Jefferson, Edward Jordan, Prince Sanders, the "hundreds of the Roman Catholic

clergy [that] are Black and colored men," Capitein, Girard, Thomas Jenkins, Ignatius Sancho, Correa de Serra, and more.[17]We could also look at Martin Delany's *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United Staes. Politically Considered.* (1852) where he lists throughout. He tells of the "most intelligent and leading spirits among the colored men in the United States"—from James Forten to A. D. Shadd, John T. Hilton to Henry Sipkins, Thomas Hamilton to Samuel E. Cornish and "others of New York."[18] William C. Nell's *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, with Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons: To Which Is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans* (1855) is another, final example of how early Black histories often relied upon lists. The list is integral to Nell's text, as it aims to have a documentary record of the Black men who served during the Revolution and whose presence was eroded and lost in American histories. In his section on Bunker Hill, Nell lists several Black men soldiers who were there: Titus Coburn, Alexander Ames, Barzilai Lew, Cato Howe, Seymour Burr, and Jeremy Jonah.[19] These histories mark the start of a clearly identifiable Black listing tradition. They appear in histories almost organically, as both genres navigate, narrative, and accept their fragmentary nature. It seems only natural for histories to be the start of an identifiable Black listing practice.

Black women, however, formed a distinct listing practice from men, as their lists engage with dominant misogynoir narratives, grapple with what it meant to narrative, if one could, Black literary history. Often, the most apparent way in which they engaged in narratives was through the choices they made about selection and arrangement when compiling and writing a list. As stated before, lists were not exhaustive. They required their compilers to make choices about who or what they

would include and how they would arrange their list, whether that be how they are grouped or how they placed people or works within the list. Those choices could craft narratives or lay bare the impossibility of a narrative, and they could also recontextualize and reframe the narratives that circulated. The easiest way to understand how Black women's lists engage in editorial acts is in their basic function: the choices of selection and arrangement they engaged in to craft a list and, therefore, a narrative. In Jim Casey and Sara H. Salter's study of *L'Union*, for example, they focus on the significance of translation and placement (selection and arrangement) of Abraham Lincoln's "Letter to Horace Greeley." Greeley had appealed to the President for an emancipatory vision of the Union. Lincoln's response was a political response that made clear saving the Union was the purpose of the Civil War, not an emancipatory future for enslaved Black Americans:

> My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.[20]

The newspaper's editors translated this as "L'Union!...l'Union avec des eslaves, l'Union sans esclaves,---l'Union quand même… ABE LINCOLN" (The Union! …the Union with slaves, the Union without slaves—the Union even still/all the same!"…ABE LINCOLN).[21] Paraphrasing Lincoln's letter allows *L'Union*'s editors to remove Lincoln's authorial identity and control of his letter by centering their translation. It also allows them to emphasize the enslaved persons in Lincoln's letter, emphasizing how, in his letter, enslaved people ultimately "will remain 'quand même' ('all the same/even so')" no matter their status in the Union.[22] Moving this quote to

the masthead of the newspaper, appearing on page two, let the newspaper "subtly condemn Lincoln's equivocation without increasing the risk of racial violence."[23] Reframing allowed a Black, Creole publication from New Orleans to criticize the president and do so safely. Cynthia Lee Patterson examines the same work by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her magazine, *The Forerunner*. Gilman published her serial literature within the magazine and would include materials around the serial literature that guided readers toward a particular interpretation of the story. In Patterson's example, she cites how in in an issue from her serial story, *What Diantha Did*, a minister offers advice to Diantha on her duty as a daughter.[24] This was placed with an article that challenged that the duty of a daughter was to serve her family, be silent, and be respectable. Readers who read the story of Diantha and then the paratextual materials would struggle to take the minister and his advice seriously. Casey and Salter's as well as Patterson's readings on how editor's choices on what materials to include and where they placed them—choices of selection and arrangement—intentional frame our readings and reframe the materials they include within their publication. Black women's lists signal choices in selection and arrangement that recontextualize narratives about and their presence within Black literary history, allowing them to reframe and reject those narratives.

One way we can look at Black women's lists is as correctives to the histories and narratives of lists penned by white persons and Black men. White supremacist historians revised Black people out of American history and culture. Even if they were not white supremacists, white persons wrote lists in which you would find few, if any, Black men let alone Black women. To return to a conversation from chapter 2, Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell uses *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* to engage

with Annie Nathan Meyer's *Woman's Work in America*, a text that overwhelmingly celebrated the achievement of white women under the umbrella of "women." Yet Black men's lists were also guilty of either featuring few Black women or none at all. Pennington's *Text Book* does not trace the history and experiences of Black women in slavery like it does for Black men. It does not mention Black women. Delany's *Conditions* focuses mainly on Black men; its inclusion of Black women is minimal, like an afterthought. Of the 215 total pages of histories, lists, and essays, he names six Black women: Phillis Wheatley, Mrs. Ann Maria Johnson, Eliza Greenfield, Mary Ann Shadd, Mary Elizabeth Miles, and Lucy Stanton. Delany caveats this by stating that it would be "unnecessary as it is impossible, to particularize all the individuals," so he has chosen only a few representatives.[25] Yet every other page is filled with the lives and accomplishments of several Black men. Delany's caveat and his choices are emblematic of what Black women were correcting: the persistent choice by white Americans and Black men to selectively include Black women or to exclude them. It is not that Delany made an editorial decision on who to include in his lists, but that his inclination in making his choices were to favor the stories of men over women. When Black women crafted lists, they were collecting and sharing Black women's history against the editorial choices of white Americans and Black men. These lists edit the prevailing narratives that there were few or no Black women who were historical agents or producing literature. Black women had been creating literary history for years, and they had to work against narratives crafted by those who refused to acknowledge or were unaware completely of that historied work.

Yet Black women's lists are also engaged in the work of defining how they would represent themselves as Black historical subjects. This is the complex work of

defining what narratives they would keep or craft for themselves as well as wrestling with the language they would use to reflect their stories. Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell's *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* can operate remains a strong example of how lists wrestle with narratives and the language surrounding Black women, as, like most histories, Mossell leans on the list as an effective way of demonstrating Black women's history. In her section on Black women's literary history, Mossell opens with a question, "Have the women of this race yet made a record in literature?"[26] She answers this in the affirmative. The list of Black women writers and their works that follow are the counter narrative through which she rejects the cultural narrative that Black women had not made their mark on literature. But Mossell grapples with how to narrate Black women's literary work in this section. She shapes this section as a reflection of Black women's triumphs in literature despite their "meagre attainments." Enslavement gave them nearly none of the resources that led to a Black women's literary history that Mossell traces from Phillis Wheatley to Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Anna Julia Coper, Josephine Heard, Mrs. M. A. Dove, Lucretia Coleman, Mrs. Harvey Johnson, Amanda Smith, Miss Florence and H. Cordelia Ray, and, finally, Victoria Earle Matthews. Mossell's list is modest. That is its function, certainly, but I am struck by how to read the list against the narrative Mossell proposes: that this indicates Black women have made a "record in literature." She makes a clear argument. The impact of the Black women writers she lists was, and remains, immense. Yet her question is open-ended. Mossell makes a judgment, but the reader is asked to agree or disagree with her response. She invites us to consider that she may be wrong or inadequately representing Black women's literary history in this moment; the burden of proof is on the reader. It puts Mossell's narrative about Black

women's literary history into flux. We are left with the choice to accept or reject her narrative about the achievements of Black women writers despite slavery, or we must define what it means to make a record and who may constitute that literary history. What seems straightforward immediately is complicated by its own incompleteness in a way that challenges any clear narrative about Black women and Black women's literary history. Mossell's question suggests a thinly veiled narrative, but it underscores the complexity of collecting and assembling narratives about Black women's literary history.

Black women's listing practices remain an important part of Black literary history, print culture, and education. A list creates a knowledge infrastructure through which Black literary history could be collected, shared, and saved. By doing so, it solidifies Black literary history as a subject—a field of research and study. That is not to say that it made coherent the disconnectedness of Black literary history but rather attempted to make it into a recognizable field in the way that the classics or white literary history presented itself. Lists also precede familiar print culture and library technologies—the catalogue and bibliography. Both of which hold a particular history with Black bibliography and Black librarianship. As Laura Helton has shown, these bibliographers and librarians made Black authors, and Blackness itself, a site of inquiry as they worked to enumerate every piece of Black literature they could find. Helton's description of Vivian Harsh's 1936 lists can also be applied to Black women's listing practices in their texts: they operate as "guides for readers to navigate a landscape of information where black literature was missing, literally and figuratively, from the main stacks."[27] As Black Americans received education and, in some instances, higher education, establishing Black literature as a field of study

brought the work into classrooms, colleges, and universities. Black listing practices are complex, multitudinous genres. By using lists to collect Black literary history into an academic field of inquiry, Black women created knowledge infrastructures through which their audience could learn Black literature and its history.

The Lists of Matthews and Frazier

Victoria Earle Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature* and S. Elizabeth Frazier's "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" are strong examples of how Black women use lists both to edit narratives that restrict their expression as well as to create a way to disseminate and remember Black literary history. Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature* may be the most apparent example of listing available. Matthews was known for her social work and participation in several women's clubs. Born enslaved in Fort Valley, Georgia, to Carolien Smith and, likely, their enslaver, Matthews's mother self-emancipated herself and saved money to buy her children back from their enslaver. Matthews was a brilliant student and worked as a domestic servant, where she used her employers' libraries to expand her knowledge. At the age of 18, she began her work as a journalist, writing for the *New York Times*, the *Herald*, and the *Sunday Mercury,* the *Boston Advocate* and the *New York Globe*, where she wrote on issues of race and gender, including investigating fraudulent hiring agencies that "preyed on young women new to the city, luring them into urban prostitution rings."[28] She founded the Women's Loyal Union in 1892 and the White Rose Industrial Association in 1897, an organization that "trained young African-American women newly arrived in New York City for domestic service and taught them about their cultural roots," addressing the very problems she wrote and spoke on throughout her

life.[29] It is natural, then, that Matthews delivered an address at the First National Congress of Colored Women, a conference defined by its charge to provide opportunities for "earnest, intelligent, progressive colored women" to better the lives of themselves, Black Americans, and women broadly.[30] Matthews's delivered her speech, "The Value of Race Literature," on the second day of the convention in the evening, following Margaret Murray Washington's address, "Individual Work for Moral Elevation."[31]

The Value of Race Literature edits the prevailing narratives in white literature about Black Americans and makes a strong case for both the existence and importance of Black literature.[32] Matthews makes clear her point: "But all this impious wrong has made a Race Literature a possibility, even a necessity to dissipate the odium conjured up by the term 'colored' persons."[33] She traces throughout the work how white-authored portrayals of characters—Dred, based on Nat Turner, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example—participate in a long history of white writers portraying Black characters in foreclosed narratives; narratives that innately held presumptions of Black writers as inferior.[34] In response, Matthews suggests both that Black literature has a long history and contains works that negate the inherent anti-Blackness and misogyny of much literature. This corpus of Black literature, produced throughout the past two centuries, demands recognition and attests to the exceptional talent of Black Americans.[35] She demonstrates this through long lists of Black writers and their texts, one after the other:

> "Light and Truth," a valuable volume published many years ago; Dr. Perry's "Cushite!" "Bond and Free, or Under the Yoke," by John S. Laudue; "The Life of William Lloyed Garrison," by Archibald Grimké; Joseph Wilson's "Black

> Phalanx"; and "Men of Mark," by Rev. W. J. Simmons; "Noted Women," by Dr. Scruggs; "The Negro Press and Its Editors', by I. Garland Penn"; "Paul Dunbar's Dialect Poems," […]; James Whitcomb Reilly, "Johnson's School History"; "From a Virginia Cabin to the Capitol," by Hon. J. M. Langston; "Iola Leroy," by Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper; "Music and Some Highly Musical People," by James M. Trotter…"[36]

If we reformatted Matthews's paragraph to list each author and their work on a single line, then we would recognize it as a list—the structure of one item following another sequentially would make the form immediately visible and legible to readers. And if we were to arrange them alphabetically, it would also be legible as an enumerative bibliography of Black literature. Her work details the long practice of anti-Blackness and misogyny in white literature and how those portrayals have shaped narratives about both Black literature and Black Americans—that these white literary narratives had a tangible and intellectual impact on the Black community. Her lists are also an exercise in recitation, reminding the gathering of Black women that there is a history that preceded this moment. She collects this history and, as result, reminds or teaches her audience of what work their ancestors had done and, as the convention itself charges, hoped that this gathering of Black women would uplift the Black community and women in general.[37] Matthews's text, though it may be remembered as a speech or a pamphlet, an important element in that speech is the list that seeks to edit dominant narratives that erased Black literary history and delimited Black women's expression.

Other Black women intellectuals, such as S. Elizabeth Frazier, craft lists within their collective biographies to engage with and move beyond restrictive narratives

about Black women's literature. Much like lists, collective biographies are collections of data points. Black women who compile collective biographies are collecting names, histories, and work to chart a history or context that is not represented in American history, white American narratives of Black history, or of even those narratives about Black history written by Black men. Black women found their stories minimized or only remarkable when they were seen as an exception—a singular striking example of one woman, while lists of great white men, great white women, or great Black men were prolific. These collective biographies, as I argued earlier with lists, also provide a lost or minimized history of Black women's literature and work. Frazier acknowledges this in her opening sentence: "We have heard and read much of men of mark of our race, but comparatively little is known of able Afro-American women."[38] Her work is drawn from archival work in public and private libraries and through conversations with the women themselves. She has done the work where, as her opening implies, others have not, collecting and recording these stories. Frazier makes Black women's stories—by adding context—as integral and central to American. She acknowledges the intentional gaps and fissures in the narrative, and her work is an effort to redress those historical silences. Frazier's work points us to how collective bibliographies operate as lists: They bring together successive lists of influential persons with biographies that carry little narrative; they are strings of data that are missing from others' recounting of American and Black history, and these collective bibliographies often solely group persons by their identities, such as race or gender, or their profession. We see this in texts like I. Garland Penn's *The Afro-American Press and It's Editors*; Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell's *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*; or Rev. William. J. Simmons's *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (1887).

Rev. William J. Simmons's *Men of Mark* is a prime example of the editorial function that S. Elizabeth Frazier's "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" demonstrates. Frazier's title and opening line are not mistakes or plagiarism; they are intentional references to Simmons's collective bibliography. Frazier opening her text with the statement that "[w]e have heard and read much of men of mark of our race," when there is a dearth of comparable information on Black women is an indictment upon the work of others to collect Black history and, when doing so, intentionally removing or quarantining Black women from that history.[39] Frazier had spent much of her life working to better Black women's lives and championing education for the entire Black community. She graduated from Hunter College in 1888, and she taught at a mixed-race school in New York, becoming the first Black public-school teacher, though that came after a lengthy legal battle.[40] *The Gazette* writes that Frazier was denied appointment to School 58 in New York because of her race. Her appeal to the board was denied, so she pursued her legal options, eventually leading her case to the Supreme Court where it was argued in either 1895 or 1896.[41] She went on to found the Women's Auxiliary of the Old Fifteenth National Guard, "an organization that helped Black soldiers and their families during World War I."[42] Her reputation as an educator, writer, teacher, and organizer shape her response to Simmons's *Men of Mark*. Frazier's life was shaped by her work to better the Black community, whether that was through material support, education, or writing.

Much like how Frazier spent much of her life correcting the mistakes of white supremacy and misogyny in the hopes of bettering Black life and for Black women, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" continues that strain, editing the narratives perpetuated by Simmons and his contemporaries. The text was originally a speech

delivered at the Brooklyn Literary Union on February 16, 1892.[43] The Union had an impressive roster of members—Frederick Douglass, Asa W. Tenney,[44] Frazier, and Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper—and was celebrated for its work to both break "down the color line" and to disseminate "intellectual truths" and establish "a new era for a people long outraged and maltreated."[45] The Brooklyn Literary Union was an appropriate venue for a paper such as Frazier's. The audience members included victims of what her speech worked against: the erasure of Black literary history and Black women's contributions to that literary history. As Hollis Robbins and Henry Louis Gates Jr. note, Simmons work is "a list of one hundred and seventy-seven influential African American men."[46] Frazier takes seriously the work of reasserting Black women's presences in Black literary history. Her collective biography lists Black woman after Black woman, enumerating one after the other in an implied genealogical connection wherein each Black woman builds on the last. She traces these roots from Phillis Wheatley through Frances E. W. Harper to H. Cordelia Ray and beyond. Her enumeration is not as prolific as Victoria Earle Matthews's, yet it carries the same traits: a list of Black women and their lives sequentially that only holds itself together by a thin narrative. Frazier creates her text, her list, of Black women as a means of engaging with how some white persons and Black men erased Black women. Koritha Mitchell's observation that "success often inspires aggression, and the accomplishment need not be monumental or spectacular to inspire large-scale and extremely hostile backlash" articulates why white supremacists erased Black women from history and the vigilant violence the used to enforce and to police that erasure.[47] It is know-your-place aggression before such a phrase existed, and white mediocrity demands such places be upheld or else they would not have anything. In

other instances, neither of those groups seriously consider that they should account for Black women in their work outside of an occasionally flattering or demeaning notice. Her collective biography is more than just a collection of stories—it is a collection of Black women, whose work was integral to the progress of the race and America broadly. Frazier's actions in collecting and sharing this list works to edit narratives that erased Black women from literary history as well as to collect and remember their work for posterity. Without her work, these stories were in danger of being lost to time.

Though they may be known better as speeches, texts, or collective biographies, both Matthews's and Frazier's utilize, I argue, lists—lists that edit cultural narratives that erased Black women's voices or constricted how they could express themselves. They shaped the discourse on which Black women and their work would be remembered. Yet these Black women took to a lesser studied print form, the list, to demonstrate a wealth of both Black literary history and Black women's literary history. They use volume and the impressiveness of their subjects to overwhelm racist and misogynistic narratives that had real effects on not only racial progress but the documentary record of Black expression. Through the list, Matthews and Frazier string together pieces of data about Black literary history and recover the historical context that was lost, the Black lives that had shaped so much of American history and culture for centuries. At the same time, their work also shapes a means of learning, remembering, and preserving Black women's literary history for future generations, enumerating and reciting them for their audiences. These women structured Black literary history as a subject and found new ways to teach it that were accessible outside educational institutions; they became arbiters of American culture and

assumed authority in shaping Black literary history and defining who and what would be included. Black women use lists to edit narratives and shape knowledge and learning to both save their history and offer a foundation from which future generations could build.

Reading Lists, Reading Narratives

Victoria Earle Matthews's and S. Elizabeth Frazier's lists took seriously the interrelatedness of literature, narratives, racism, gender, and power; the narratives created by white America about Black Americans shaped understandings and representations of Black America that perpetuated stereotypes and systems of oppression. Matthews writes, "Except the characters sketched by the writers of folk-lore, I know of none more representative of the spirit of the writers of to-day, wherein is infiltrated in the public mind that false sense of the Negro's meaning of inalienable rights, so far as actual practice is concerned..."[48] What Matthews outlines is that popular narratives about Black Americans do not, in fact, truly represent Black Americans. Her lists operate as a response to this work, much like S. Elizabeth Frazier's work is a corrective to the numerous narratives about prominent Black men, excising Black women and their contributions to racial advancement entirely. These narratives were integral. As Sterling A. Brown notes, anti-Black and misogynistic stereotypes were so endemic within American literature as to be unquestionable, and because of this, they are "generally accepted as contributions to true racial understanding."[49] This section closely reads the lists within Matthews's and Frazier's texts and examines how these Black women were using their lists to edit these prominent narratives about Black literature. Viewing harmful narratives about Black

Americans—such as whether they could produce Black literature and what Black literature was allowed to be—shaped racial understanding of Black America by white America. It could become the foundation upon which everything—laws, legislation, everyday interactions—that affected Black America was built. Thus, when Matthews and Frazier use lists to edit these narratives, they make clear statements of how these narratives are incorrect, calling for a narrative to be created and arguing for a recognition and expansive understanding of Black literature.

Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature* uses lists to edit the racist and misogynistic narratives perpetuated in popular culture by white men, white women, and Black men. She spends the opening portions of her text—the portion before her listing of Black authors and their works—outlining why a recognition of Black literary history is necessary. She spends time explaining how Black literature is endemic to American literature; she quotes Dr. Dvorak's essay explaining how Black music is American music.[50] This foregrounds a reading of Black literature as American literature, of Black Americans as just Americans, which is the ultimate hope that this literature will be acknowledged and re-write prevailing narratives. This opening portion, however, also makes clear the current problem with narratives about Black persons and the necessity of a Black literature. It is the recognition that literature by white Americans about Black Americans propagates limited perspectives and harmful stereotypes that become justifications for anti-Black and misogynist actions, narratives, legislation, and actions by men and white Americans. "The novelists most read at the present time in this country find a remunerative source for their doubtful literary productions based upon the wrongly interpreted and too often grossly exaggerated frailties," she writes.[51] White authors justified their works on the false

narratives circulating throughout American culture, not just in American literature. Literature justified popular understanding and the legal and material responses to the Black community, and literature was, in turn, justified by the popular, ideological, and legal narratives about Black people that persisted.

We see these narratives across a range of literature. These narratives were all equally anti-Black or misogynist, though I would suggest that the response of white Americans differed based on what the narrative posed about Black Americans. For example, Matthews explores how Mark Twain's *Pudd'n Head Wilson*, "'the very best of the productions which gives us hope for a distinctive American drama,'" perpetuates negative stereotypes that would become cultural narratives that justified Black oppression and anti-Black violence. In a work centered on exploring race and race relations, Twain makes the mixed-race character of Valet de Chambre into the fool and a comedic character, who is sold into slavery as a part of the book's final "joke." Though I disagree with Matthews's reading that Twain "unconsciously avenges" Black Americans in his book, I do agree with her reading that any kind portrayal he has of his book's Black characters is despite "his best [attempt] to disparage them."[52] Twain does not reflect many white and white supremacist authors of the time. For centuries, white supremacists had used stereotypes and cultural narratives as justification and a catalyst for violence against Black Americans. Stereotypes that Black women are sexually promiscuous or maternal mammies justified years of sexual abuse, dehumanization, and perpetuated the obsession with Black women's reproduction that started with chattel slavery, where her body and her children were not for her but for the capitalistic gain of their enslavers. Engaging these narratives—editing these narratives—was a necessary work for women like Matthews.

As she wrote, to be called "Black" at the time was conjure up an odium, "to express not only an inferior order, but to accentuate and call unfavorable attention to the most ineradicable difference between the races."[53]

What works like Matthews's list do is respond to the groundwork of these narratives by demonstrating a vast history of Black literature that represents the Black experience as told by Black Americans. She seeks to refute and dispel notions that to be Black, and to be a Black woman particularly, was to be inferior and ineradicably different from any white American. By doing so, she is making a counterclaim to white (mis)portrayals of Black Americans that had justified centuries of enslavement and violation. She outlines how portrayals of American literature barely represent Black literature, if at all.[54] Those who are represented are seen as anomalies; as though Phillis Wheatley was an exception to the narratives surrounding Black women and their literary abilities. What she believes to be the solution is for Black literary history to gain its due recognition: "we have done nothing so brilliant, so effective, so startling as to attract the attention of these editors."[55] It is after this that Matthews begins her list. The portrayals of Black Americans and Black women in literature that are shaped by white Americans are supplanted by this vast amount of Race Literature she defines. We begin with "Dr. Blyden's essays, Dr. Crummell's sermons and addresses, and Professor Greener's orations," all of which are "high specimens" that are "good enough for anyone to read" and "reflect the highest credit on the race."[56] She delves deeper, tracing from William C. Nell, "our first real historian," and his history "The Colored Patriots of the Revolution" to William Well's Brown.[57] She connects these to the long paragraph I quoted previously within this chapter before continuing to R. T. Greener, a "metaphysician, logician, orator, and prize essayist."[58]

She moves from ecclesiastical and pivots to the "poems, songs, and addresses by our veteran literary women": Frances E. W. Harper, Charlotte Forten Grimké, H. Cordelia Ray, Gertrude Mossell, and Mrs. G. E. Johnson.[59] Journalists, editors, and Black newspapers round out the end of her recitation of Black literary history; her list offers an extensive and detailed list of Black literature throughout the centuries that irrefutable and rhetorically powerful. Indeed, like Alexander says, Matthews's is "a compendium that seems to be attempting to list everyone, not to miss a soul."[60]

It is her focus on those "veteran literary women" that make a case for their recognition as contributors to and innovators of Black literature. If, as I argue, Matthews is recontextualizing American literary history by defining and demonstrating an impressive Black literary history, then her inclusion of Black women makes a similar claim—that Black women were integral contributors to a Black literary tradition long overdue for its day in the sun. Though I will return to examine how Matthews frames her recognition of Black women's literary history and the women included in that history, it is an attempt at placing Black women back into the literary work for which Black men had been recognized as much as it is the work of decentering the great Black men in literature. For example, she introduces Ida B. Wells after T. Thomas Fortune, who Matthews lauds as their "journalistic leader."[61] Matthews's choice of arrangement in this list is interesting. What I find most interesting is that she refers to Fortune as a journalistic leader to place him next to someone who was famous, certainly, for her activism, editing, and journalism, though Wells would not be called a leader of the Black press. It allows Matthews to acknowledge Fortune's position in the Black press, but it immediately decenters that prestige by placing him with someone that was not recognized in the same way.

Through Matthews's arrangement, Fortune can be the fore-most man of the Black press, but he can also be equal to a Black woman who is not. It implies Fortune may have prestige, but that is in flux, recontextualized by his proximity to Wells. Matthews repeats this. She offers new readings of how important Black press men like Frederick Douglass and William C. Nell are by putting them near Black women writers and journalists like Frances E. W. Harper, Sarah Douglass, and Grace A Mapps. [62] We can read this as an elevation of sorts, drawing Black women writers and journalists in the Black Press to the fore in ways that was most often done with famous Black newsmen like Frederick Douglass. Yet Matthews's arrangement suggests a destabilization of a hierarchy of whose work was lauded in Black literary history. It upends the preference toward the work of Great Race Men for the recognition that Great Race Men do not exist without Great Race Women, whose work was often excluded or minimized. But I am drawn to how Matthews rejects that Great Race Men narratives are effective or useful for understanding Black literary history. By making apparent how Fortune's prestige is in flux—something that is always recontextualized by the persons and paratexts surrounding it—Matthews directs us toward a re-vision of Black literary history in which there is less focus on "greats" and more so on the numerous people at work creating Black literature. In this moment, her list wrestles with how narratives that focus on Great Race Men, and even Great Race Women, create larger gaps than is necessary when collecting this history. More people fall through the gaps of such exclusionary logic when we focus on who is deemed great or not. Matthews's list suggests an attempt at not exhaustiveness but at compilation; volume is more important than the preference for those who are great. She leans into how lists, as a

genre, inherently call into questions narratives that can be reductive or exclusionary in favor of a somewhat egalitarian attempt at enumeration

Collecting and enumerating this history of Black literature rhetorically overwhelms any histories that leave it unaccounted, removed from the context of American literature. The sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph, and page after page of data—strings of Black authors, editors, poets, academics, historians, and writers that Matthews document--are of a scale that is hard to ignore. Indeed, her work alters a reading of her remark that Black Americans had "done nothing so brilliant, so effective, so startling as to attract the attention of these editors."[63] We can read Matthews's work as solely overwhelming arguments that there was not and could not ever be a "Black literature." To claim that Black Americans did nothing "brilliant" or "effective" enough to draw the attention of editors before listing an extensive, multi-page recollection of Black literary history acknowledges the irony of the situation. It is impossible to believe that this list that fills pages of Matthews's text reflects works that are lacking or are not captivating. Rather, it underscores exactly how narratives about Black literature and Black women's expression works: they intentionally crafted narratives to claim Black Americans were incapable of producing literature, and so an entire literary history and tradition, one still producing literature despite these remarks, was dismissed and erased. It was not accounted for, and when dismissed, it was not considered an influence upon American literature and culture. In the face of narratives wherein Black women were silent, harmfully stereotyped to diminish both them and their work, Matthews makes a powerful point by not only placing Black women alongside Black men in her list of Black literature but by also assuming Black women should be recounted and next to Black men. There is no posturing in the gesture. It is

effortless and natural; it is assumed Black women were a part of Black literary history, for why would they not be?

If Matthews makes her inclusion of Black women in literary history appear natural, effortless, then S. Elizabeth Frazier goes to lengths to assure us there is tremendous effort in collecting and enumerating Black women historically. She opens her essay with direct acknowledgement of the labor she had in collecting the stories of these Black women for her text: "It is my delight to present brief sketches of the lives of 'Some Afro-American Women of Mark,' having gained my information concerning them from libraries, public and private, from correspondence and from personal knowledge."[64] Frazier, like many that would follow her, takes a recognizable approach in collecting Black women's history; she turns to those stacks, and when those are empty, she turns to letters and to the persons around her. For those who study Black women's history, Frazier's comments are all too familiar; those who would study Black women's history continually turn to the archives, stacks, stories, and communities to relocate Black women or to critically fabulate their presences.[65] For Frazier's text to utilize libraries, she must build upon the work of others—other biographies or collective biographies that shared the stories of some or all of the Black women she includes in "Some Afro-American Women of Mark." Yet Frazier's comments also, like Matthews, bely another truth. By drawing attention to the fact that she collects her information for the collective bibliography from libraries, letters, and personal knowledge, her words suggest that some of this work had not been done before; that no one had done the type of research she had. It is not simply that "comparatively little is known of able Afro-American women" because of the proliferation of media on Black "men of mark"; it is also that no one is seeking out the

stories of Black women as told in their own words or, worse, at all.[66] Her words imply that the information is out there, but because of narratives that dismiss Black women and their importance to literature and culture, their lives and stories will be slowly forgotten over time until they are gone forever—written off as unnecessary and unneeded.

Though she had limited space, Frazier diligently chose Black women who were prolific and awe-inspiring to make her point. In contrast to the stories of great Black men, Frazier is using her list to compose an impressive story of how Black women, despite all obstacles, had achieved equally, if not more so, impressive feats over the centuries.[67] Frazier uses her list to overwhelm narratives that claim only Black men are impressive and "great"—that their stories deserve recording while Black women's' do not. By compiling a list that starts with Phillis Wheatley, accepted as one of the most popular poets before the nineteenth century, and Frances E. W. Harper, who Frazier claims to be as culturally recognizable as Wheatley was in her time, she couches her narrative in the power of the lives these women held.[68] Whereas Matthews seeks the power of the many, Frazier turns to the strength of the mighty. To follow the life of Phillis Wheatley from the slave auction, through her enslavement and education, to her time in Britain, and eventual passing, Frazier shapes these as researched, extensive, and triumphant stories of Black women, who succeed despite all obstacles. Frazier intentionally omits parts of Wheatley's life, her enslavement, and literary population, painting a picture that is hard to refute: that Black women's achievements came despite white supremacy, despite misogyny, despite oppression, and despite violence. By doing so, she recenters Wheatley's success on Wheatley herself, her abilities and talents. It is a strategic, intentional choice. And while I point

to Wheatley because it both starts and frames Frazier's approach; she takes the same approach to each woman's life within "Some Afro-American Women of Mark." Frazier is asking readers who would believe that Black women have never produced literature of merit or worthy of recollection what they think of the impressiveness of these Black women's feats despite all that they endured.

Frazier uses lists to point at the underlying hypocrisy of narratives that diminished or removed Black women from literary history. Certainly, there is an unevenness in recollecting Black women. Frazier directly alludes to Rev. William J. Simmons's *Men of Mark*, and other collective biographies, like W. H. Quick's *Negro Stars in All Ages of the World* (1890), are indicative of a trend that prioritized the lives and success stories of Black men over Black women. The success of great men of the race was portrayed as, simultaneously, the indicator of Black progress and excellence as well as Black futurity. It was as though Black men had brought progress and freedom to Black America by themselves and would continue to lead it to them; there were only the slightest acknowledgements of Black women in these narratives. At worst, they were, to return to *Men of Mark*, mentioned in fleeting moments, such as footnotes or dedications: "This volume is respectfully dedicated to the women of our race, and especially to the devoted, self-sacrificing mothers, who moulded the lives of the subjects of these sketches, laboring and praying for their successes."[69] Even those narratives that included Black women did not include as many entries on them as their Black male counterparts. William Wells Browns's *The Rising Son, or, the Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race* (1882) includes 67 biographies in fiftieth chapter entitled "Race Representatives." Of that 67, eight are women: Phillis Wheatley, Edmonia Lewis, Charlotte L. Forten, Louise De Mortie, Fanny M. Jackson,

Frances E. W. Harper, "Moses" (Harriet Tubman), and Mary Ann Shadd Cary.[70] Each of these Black women, who led impressive lives, were still considered to be the only ones worthy of record for Brown's collective biography.[71] Brown's choices of which Black women to include in his history of race representatives mirrors Martin Delany's in *The* Condition: He relies on narratives of exceptionalism that truncate and one-dimensionalizes Black women's literary history. It focuses on the few to the cost of the many and creates its own narratives about Black women and their literary history. If Black women were not characterized by their lack of participation in Black literary history, then they were given few examples of how to live their lives in such a way as to merit their documentation, their recollection. These representations paint few molds for Black girls and women to learn and grow from, if it offers them any. Rather, it can imply there are only certain ways to be Black, to be a woman, and to be worthy, or that they were not worthy at all.

This is what Frazier uses her lists to edit: her lists edit into narratives that erased Black women's literary history entirely or minimized it, hoping that it would remain unacknowledged or eventually be forgotten. She fights against narratives that are already shaping Black literary history to favor the narrative of the great Black men, the men of mark, who fought for the race time-and-time again and would lead them to racial uplift and liberation. Her list is not like Matthews'. She is not struggling with the urge to list everyone, "not missing a soul."[72] This is both practical and rhetorical. As she acknowledges, "There are other Afro-American women of mark, brief accounts of whose lives I would be pleased to give, but the limited space will not permit."[73] Originally published in the April 1892 issue of the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review*, Frazier is speaking directly to the column restrictions of a paper:

practically, she cannot go farther than what could be contained in the columns or page(s) of the publication. Her space is a premium. As I will turn to later, this bares on her decision of what Black women she records in her collective biography. However, there is also a rhetorical function in limiting who she records in her text. It makes her focus more on the power of a select few Black women to prove that Black women have an important history worth knowing and telling; she hinges her point on compiling a list of several notable Black women with impressive lives and work. She starts with Phillis Wheatley, charting her life from Mrs. Wheatley purchasing a young not-then-named Phillis[74] to her writing, personal tragedies, and death. She then pivots to her biography of Frances E. W. Harper and her works. Frazier fills her work with remarkable Black women: Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Charlotte L. Grimké, H. Cordelia Ray, Sarah J. S. Garnett, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Dr. Consuello Clark, Dr. Caroline Anderson, Dr. Hall Tanner, Dr. Susan McKinney, and Edmonia Lewis. Each of these women led impressive lives—they were editors, publishers, writers, poets, educators, speakers, physicians, and sculptors. With Edmonia Lewis, for example, she documents the life of the first African American and Native American woman sculptor to "achieve international recognition."[75] Lewis had a studio in Rome and several famous works, including "Forever Free," "Old Arrow Maker," and "The Death of Cleopatra" works still shown today at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.[76] In Shadd Cary, she documents the first Black American woman publisher and editor in North America for her newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman* (1853-1857). Each Black woman is as impressive as the last.

Frazier's editorial expression—how she uses her lists to confront narratives about Black women and their literature—pushes to express these unstated narratives

for the limitations they imposed upon Black women. It is hard to argue against the impressive lives of people like Phillis Wheatley or Edmonia Lewis. In fact, Phillis Wheatley and Frances E. W. Harper may be the most recognizable Black women writers for much of the nineteenth century. They were prolific, and yet they did not often make it into the accounts of literary history by many white Americans. Much of Wheatley's work was flat-out dismissed, as I referenced in chapter 2. Despite their impressive oeuvre, even Wheatley and Harper can be unaccounted for, removed from the context of American literature and culture. This point stands even more so for those Black women who were not as potentially popular or well-remembered throughout the years—numerous Black women slipped through the cracks to not be remembered over the centuries because not everyone was or could be recorded. When Frazier's lists edits, it reinstates these Black women into the narrative of American literary history and Black literary history as well. However, in rupturing this narrative and recontextualizing what defined American literature, Frazier also underscores a guiding question of this work: How could you *not* include these women?

Rather, Frazier's text makes apparent intentional choices at numerous levels to exclude Black women. Those that chose selectively what Black women to include in their tomes of Black literary history and those that excluded Black women entirely. If one could overlook the story of Frances E. W. Harper, for example, then they would not notice the brilliance of even a S. Elizabeth Frazier. While I draw on Frazier's explicit call-outs in her text—her statements on how many do not research the lives of Black women and the focus on great Black men—she is also more subtly gesturing to the larger silences on Black women. She asks readers: what is the threshold for a Black woman to be worthy of recognition as integral to Black literary history, to

American literary history? Despite their impressive lives and works, some of the women featured in her garnered recognition in narratives of Black literary history, and few to none were recognized by white Americans for their talent. Compiling a list of remarkable Black women and detailing why they were remarkable, what they overcame and accomplished, Frazier asks us to acknowledge what the threshold Black women had to cross to earn recognition. I do not pose this question as though Frazier asked it solely to identify what Black women needed to do to please Black men and white readers. I believe it to be rhetorical. The answer was apparent. You do not overlook Black women of this magnitude by accident; you do it with intention. Her question undercuts the authority that popular narratives have in shaping Black women's literary history. I suggest that Frazier, posing this question within her text, offers her own pathway—that her text marks a departure where Black women define Black women's literary history on their terms for themselves, as a guiding star on the way forward. For, as she writes, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark" contains the story of those "noble and brilliant examples of women, who, under all trying circumstances, have labored earnestly for the elevation of their race, their sex," suggesting this text will inspire future girls and women for "the success of the futurity of the race."[77]

Frazier and Matthews believe in the power of questioning why Black women are not present in narratives of Black and American literary history, and they also believe in the necessary work of gathering and enumerating these Black women in order to remember and to progress. Matthews compiles lists of Black authors and works by men and women as a testament to the vast tradition of Black literature, and she uses these lists to ask how one could overlook such a prolific history of Black

writing. Frazier uses her lists to disprove narratives that Black women did not produce literature or that only a select few of them were worthy of recognition for their work, and in doing so, she suggested that these arbitrary benchmarks—what determined Black women's merit—were not in their favor. Both Matthews and Frazier suggest collecting and recollecting Black literary history is necessary, not just as a corrective but as a way of remembering the past to better chart the way forward. As both acknowledge, knowing the past of Black literature was necessary for any future of the race.[78] Matthews and Frazier both gesture to how their works, how their lists, have an additional purpose as an educational tool—one that could participate in that aspiration to help others "know" Black literary history. In the next section I will look more at how Matthews and Frazier are also using their lists in an important and necessary way, creating a necessary infrastructure of knowledge for their audience. As Matthews asks, "Do we know our dwelling and those who under many hardships, at least, gathered the material for its upbuilding?"[79] I argue Matthews and Frazier believed their lists offered a way for their readers to know from whose dwellings and hardships they were given the chances they had in the decade before the twentieth century.

"What a Galaxy!"[80]: Collection, Recollection, and Knowing Black Women's Literary History

I start this section from the contemporary moment, looking at the now before looking to the past. In her book, *Black Women Taught Us: An Intimate History of Black Feminism*, Jenn M. Jackson writes about her experience with Black women's writing and Black feminism. Jackson's recounting shows us the importance of this work and its precarity: Jackson's story is of how Black women's history was lost for

her. It is the story of how Black women have worked constantly, providing blueprints for how to be better people and how much losing those narratives cost Jackson and us all. Jackson recounts how in the wake of the 2009 murders of Oscar Grant and Aiyana Stanley-Jones she felt a need to end them and called her mother to ask a central question: "who were the Black women who wrote those books on your shelf back at our house in East Oakland?"[81] Jackson reads her way through and learns Black history from seeking the stories of women like Alice Walker, Terry McMillan, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Melissa Harris-Perry, Zora Neale Hurston, Sister Souljah, and many more. She learned the history of Black women untaught, of "General Tubman," for example. I start with Jackson because this personal recounting of a Black woman discovering Black women's writing and history is intimately tied to what Victoria Earle Matthews and S. Elizabeth Frazier addressed in their works—the fear of Black history and literature becoming so buried as to be unconnected from future generations. Jackson had to come to this literature rather than it being assumed to be a part of American literary history and culture; it was not a part of the curriculum. And like Matthews and Frazier, Jackson recognizes the importance of knowing this history. Her words stretch across time and reach Matthews and Frazier, harmonizing on one chord: "From these traditions have emerged a whole host of words and gestures referring to the connections that Black folk build with one another and how we should create modern movements, communities, families, and relationships," she writes.[82] "Black women have given us guidebooks on how to be better humans. In fact, they have often done it for free."[83]

Jackson's words harken to one of the key aspects of Matthews's and Frazier's lists: they provided a framework from which audiences could access and learn Black

literary history. I return to the words of John Ernest—that Black history was brought together from the scattered and fragmented, if extant at all, records of Black life: "The task of early historians was to write not a continuous narrative but rather a story of disruptions, of fragmentation, so as to identify the contours of a story beyond the reach of representation."[84] So much of Black life had been unrecorded and destroyed or fragmented by white persons throughout the century. In other instances, Black lives entered the documentary records and archives in the spaces between. As Kim Hall shows, sometimes Black bodies appear in ledgers, tallied as objects; Black persons accounted for as objects not as people with lives, stories, and feelings and that objectification persists in the archival record left behind.[85] Just as the record of Blackness was fragmented so too was the record of Black literary history. It was difficult to account for everyone. Black literary historians chart the same terrain as any historian, cobbling together the vast Black print culture from the past two centuries. They were not attempting coherent narratives; lists do not create true coherent narratives. Rather, they were making a record, necessarily incomplete, for it was for other generations to continue building upon this work, adding their work and the works of other predecessors they would discover. As Laura Helton writes, "[o]perating at a distance on the 'yet unwritten,' such interventions are structured by deferment."[86] By reading lists, I ask that we consider this genre as a complex space that intervened in narratives, created new ones, and asked its audience to look to those spaces in between for the lives and works of a interconnected universe of Black women writers. I build on scholars like Ernest, Hall, Saidiya Hartman, and Helton to consider how these lists are both spaces of critical fabulation for their audiences and spaces of deferment. Black women used lists to compile Black literary history as best they could

for others, but their work was always deferred; the benefit of such work would come one day for those who use this data.

Creating lists of Black literary history meant Black women were crafting some of the first indices from which Black Americans could engage with their history. Black women's lists were tools for those who, as Matthews and Frazier note, needed to learn from those who had come before to better shape where the Black community could go.[87] Reading or disseminating these lists to the Black community meant there was a localized place where Black literary history was acceptable. For many, it may be their first engagement with Black literary history, with the authors that Matthews or Frazier list in their works. Lists would be the first opportunity to learn of what history there was for Black thought and theory. Audiences could look to these lists if they wanted to find more Black women writers or other Black writers more broadly. They could connect to a history they did not know and had not learned before. Much like Jenn M. Jackson over two hundred years later, Black Americans could find a list of Black writers and start their journey on seeing where they had come from and begin to imagine where they could go. Black women created lists not only, then, as a means of editing cultural narratives about themselves and their expression, they also made one of the first resources on Black literary history for their listeners and readers. Black women's listing bridges the gaps toward the Black bibliographers, who aggregated as much Black history as possible in their works, and the Black librarians, who continued to collect, catalogue, and preserve Black literature for their communities. One need not look further than Virginia Lee at the Roanoke Library, and her choice to show her collection of Black literature in displays titled "forgotten accomplishments" and who hid her collection underground when she was told by the City Council to slow

collecting and remove "'offending books'" from her shelf.[88] Or Dorothy Porter's intentional "wayward classifications" where she re-made and, at times, unmade Dewey decimals to more appropriately catalog Black texts and see Black collections.[89] Lee and Porter both continue the spirit of Black listing into the libraries and the work of preserving and making accessible Black literary history.

Black women listers—and later bibliographers and librarians—ushered their audiences in to a new understanding of literature and showed them how Black Americans had shaped so much of American literature and culture. As Matthews states:

> The lesson to be drawn from this cursory glance at what I may call the past, present and future of our Race Literature apart from its value at first beginnings, not only to us as a people but literature in general, is that unless earnest and systematic effort be made to procure and preserve for transmission to our successors, the records ,books and various publications already produced by us, not only will the sturdy pioneers who paved the way and laid the foundation for our Race Literature, be robbed of their just due, but an irretrievable wrong will be inflicted upon the generations that shall come after us.[90]

Frazier echoes this sentiment, writing that "young women of the race have a great work to do," and that they should strive with education "to carry out the aim of our noble predecessors—the success of the futurity of the race."[91] For Frazier and Matthews, their lists are part of this possible education—the correction of the erasure of Black women's literary history and Black literary history from American culture. Their lists may also literally become sites of education, entering Black schools as

textbooks or recited to audiences, who listened with baited breath and committed authors and works to memory. Indeed, they had created one of the first "guidebooks on how to be better humans," and they gave it back to their community in the hope that one day it would help Black Americans achieve racial uplift and liberation.[92]

That is not to say they stabilized Blackness as a category and defined its parameters; they suggested that Black literary history was in flux and yet to be determined. This is a beginning in defining Black literary history as a subject, surely, but it does not create a concrete definition of what that is. What is strikingly important about Black women crafting lists is that it gave them control in defining literary history and, in turn, defining both Black literary history and American literary history. They were the ones defining Blackness and culture, and they were doing so explicitly and with authority. Black women's lists were not just an educational tool, they also substantiated Black women's place as creators and authorities of culture. As Frazier acknowledges, the space within her list is at a premium; she cannot include every remarkable Black woman.[93] Matthews, however, is on the opposite end of a spectrum, a list that is far closer to a compendium; she attempts to leave no person behind in her recounting of Black literature. I suggest these are not opposed approaches to defining Black literary history. Typically, when we talk of selection in editing, we are talking about what Frazier acknowledges: that print has material and practical restrictions. It cannot be endless but must fit within the number of pages or columns provided. But Matthews's underscores that selection can work in two ways—that yes, Matthews doubtlessly excluded some persons from her list of Black writers and their works, but that she also reminds us that selection includes the choice to include as many as possible. When crafting her list, Matthews made an intentional choice to include as

many Black persons as possible, and though that list likely excludes some, it reminds us that she attempted, as best she could, to be exhaustive. There is multidimensionality to the editorial act of selection, whether that be one of restriction and/or abundance. Regardless, when Matthews and Frazier make decisions on who they will include, they are necessarily determining who may be forgotten from Black literary history. They took on a calculated and important position in doing so, becoming arbiters of culture. If narratives supposed Black women were silent or that they could only speak in certain forms or manners, then wresting the power of determining Black and American literary culture directly threatened those restrictive narratives.

In having cultural authority of determining Black and American literary history, Black women were also using arrangement to make provocative statements about these cultural narratives. As I mentioned earlier, Matthews includes Black women in-line with prominent male figures, such as her recounting of the Black press—Ida B. Wells stands beside T. Thomas Fortune and Frances E. W. Harper, Sarah M. Douglass, and Grace A. Mapps hold place next to persons like Frederick Douglass and William C. Nell. Frazier's text works to assert, overall, that the remarkable Black women within her text deserve the same recognition Matthews enacts within *The Value of Race Literature*. Matthews and Frazier are both calling into question, through their arrangement (actual or implied), an undergirding logic of literary historians. It was necessary and important to elevate Black women where they had been forgotten and unconsidered. However, solely focusing on the idea that Black women's lists elevate Black women overlooks how their narratives reduce or decenter Black men. It is not that proximity to Black men makes Black women—whose achievements were less celebrated—into key parts of literary history. Rather, Black

women's listing practices entirely recenter Black literary history on Black women by recontextualizing Black men through arrangement. It shifts the paradigm, the intellectual axis through which Black history had been understood previously. This is possible because lists have a distinct generic authority. Their gestures to a vast network of Black women's literature, in a genre wherein they wished to establish Black literature as a field of study, suggests Black women's literary history to be a necessary sub-field; one researchers and students should research and know. In the act of recentering Black women, of recentering understandings of Black literary history, Black women's lists make explicit claims for a need to revise and rewrite narratives. Their lists become a textual center—a new constellation and axis from which to understand Black literary history.

However, I would not suggest that Matthews or Frazier employ their selection and arrangement evenly. Their choices are constitutive of how lists were not exhaustive, yet their editorial actions in terms of selection and arrangement do affect understandings of Black literary history. While I extol how Matthews does much in terms of representing the Black women of the press as equal to their male peers, that is not the case with female poets, songstresses, and lecturers. In her section of Black literature, she contains Black women to a singular paragraph—the "veteran literary women" Frances E. W. Harper, Charlotte Forten Grimké, H. Cordelia Ray, Gertrude Mossell, and Mrs. G. E. Johnson I mentioned previously.[94] I would like to build off my examination of T. Thomas Fortune, Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossel, and "Our Women's Department" from the first chapter. Recoding Black women's literature in a singular paragraph is, to an extent, confining; it pushes Black women to be a quarantined subject rather than one that was informed by and informing Black men's

writing. This ripples throughout American literary culture, for if Black women were not seen as contributing to Black literature equally, then it became even more impossible for their narratives to correct white narratives about Black women—to rectify the erasure and imposed limitations perpetuated in popular American thought. Further, it replicates the quarantining logic behind much of white literature's inclusion of Black figures. They note only exceptional Black persons, but they do so by framing their works to be only relevant to Black Americans. There is an intellectual divide intentionally crafted by white theorists, perpetuating the idea that Black voices and experiences should not and could not be heard by white Americans. I do not proclaim that Matthews did this willingly, segmenting Black women from Black male writers or white men and women writers. Rather, I believe to her this made sense and charitably read this as her staging a moment to showcase Black women writers, singers, and lecturers. However, it is necessary to acknowledge how this is a moment where her thoughts don't let her outside of the box. What she achieves in her recollection of the Black press, putting women in-line with their Black male contemporaries, does not happen within literature. Matthews does not think outside the box, to borrow from my chapter one, for how to portray Black women's writing within her list. Unintentionally, she reinforces the narrative she is attempting to write them out of.

Frazier unintentionally participates in the same sort of exceptionalism that both are fighting against—the narratives that prioritized writing about Frederick Douglass over Frances E. W. Harper, for example. In choosing to write about only a few remarkable Black women, Frazier makes an intentional decision on who is in her formations of Black literature, and much of them are middle-class Black women who either wrote fiction or poetry or were educators, doctors, and sculptors. If we were to

give a tenuous narrative to this collected biography, then it would be that these Black women exemplified the possibilities of Black women writers and of education for Black women. However, there is not true unifying logic as to who is included or why other than Frazier believes them to be "Afro-American women of mark," whose stories are "brilliant examples of women" that fought for the uplift of Black Americans and women despite the adversities they faced.[95] Frazier does acknowledge that there are many other Black women who deserve recording, but she cannot. Yet that does not diminish the fact that her choices are shaping Black women's literary history, shaping who would be accounted for in that history. It is necessary to acknowledge that her focuses leave the numerous Black women that were involved in the Black press or Women's Era organizing, for example. Her piece includes Mary Ann Shadd Cary, but her mention is fleeting. There are plenty of Black women involved in the press by the time of Frazier's piece in 1892. It seems hard to believe that an Ida B. Wells does not merit recognition as a Black woman of mark. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin is not mentioned (nor is she in Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature*), Mary Church Terrell (who was a member of the Colored Women's League with Charlotte Forten Grimké), or Anna Julia Cooper (also not in *The Value of Race Literature*) do not earn the distinction of being Black women of mark. While space in Frazier's collected biography was restricted, it is undeniable that her choices were shaping Black women's literary history in a way that excised much of the work of Black women in the press and in other areas, such as organizing. It also diminished the accomplishments and importance of many Black women, including Anna Julia Coooper, whose life almost perfectly represents what Frazier is portraying: the story of Black women overcoming all odds to be successful and change the future for Black

women. Much like Matthews, however, Frazier fails to go outside the box. Certainly, the material shapes much of this, but ideologically, she reifies a select few women at the cost of a diversity of representation that would shape a more representative landscape of Black women's literature at the end of the nineteenth century.

The small failures of Matthews's and Frazier's lists, however, do not diminish the power of what these lists are. It meaningfully reminds us that these narratives—those that push exceptionalism or contained Black women's speech—are all-encompassing. They are so natural as to be unquestionable at moments. The limitations of Matthews and Frazier show us where they struggle to think through and beyond those narratives, for they had been enclosed in them so long. The work of negating and rewriting these narratives would be a gradual, uneven one; one naturally encumbered by trial and error. Despite the most forward-thinking innovations they had—to create lists and infrastructure for teaching and remembering Black women's literary history—they were still held back by those narratives that had become endemic to American culture. How do you look past something that is as natural a thought as breathing is? How do material constraints unintentionally make apparent what narratives have been internalized? Matthews and Frazier make apparent the underlying logic of much of American literature. They demonstrate how such an impressive and vast oeuvre of Black women's writing meant that Black men and white men and women were ignoring Black women's literature intentionally. There was no other explanation for how they could dismiss or overlook such an impressive and historied tradition. However, these very texts turn themselves back on their writers and make apparent their own limitations in recognizing narratives that worked against Black women. How Matthews and Frazier "fail" to create a perfect framework is a

glimpse into the complicated and difficult work Black women were undertaking in attempting to define new pathways toward liberation.

Yet I want to recognize the importance of how Black women created lists to edit narratives. They generated lists that function as the first resources—prototype bibliographies and indices for readers to refer to and learn from. They democratized learning Black literary history. But I want to acknowledge that this work was also a work of preservation. Preserving this history for future generations was a continual theme. Matthews asks if her audience, a gathering of Black women invested in the betterment of their lives and the Black race as a whole, if they whose work came before.[96] Frazier believes her list will help young women learn and aspire for "the success of the futurity of the race."[97] Part of the deferment of the work of collectors, listers, and later bibliographers is not just the ideological deferment of hoping future generations will scour over and effectively use the data collected.[98] It is also the work of preservation. The physical action of recording these names and their works meant that they were recorded. There was a hope that a record or a memory would carry this knowledge forward for those who would use it in the future. And those future generations would craft their own lists, bibliographies, and works on Black literature. The future generations that Matthews, Frazier, and other Black women who created lists for were the Dorothy Porters, the Vivian Harshs, and the catherine Latimers. It was also the Zora Neale Hurstons, the Margaret Walkers, the Alice Walkers, the Toni Morrisons, and the Jenn M. Jacksons. Their works were for the yet-to-be Black girls and women, who sought voices that could understand them, across time and space, and speak to them. Their work was just as much of preservation as it was of promise—

that no matter how much time separated them, these works would lead you to someone who could hear you, really *hear* you.

In my title for this section, I included the quote, "What a galaxy!" from Matthews in *The Value of Race Literature*.[99] It is a short sentence, following her listing of Frances E.W. Harper, Sarah M. Douglass, and Grace A. Mapps. She simply writes, "What a galaxy!" I could not stop thinking about that sentence because it is the most succinct way to phrase what the importance is of the work Black women are doing with lists. Listing does not have a vast presence in our understanding of Black women's print culture, yet it turns us to such a moment as Matthews's exclamation that there is something beautiful and immense when we look at Black literature, when we see it listed for us and when we consider the innumerable people unstated. It is also a beautiful recognition of the interdisciplinary work each of these women were doing. Harper was an abolitionist, a suffragist, a poet, a temperance activist, a teacher, a public speaker, and a writer. Sarah Mapps Douglass was a teacher, a writer, a painter, and a public lecturer, and she was the first Black student at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania and a founding member of the Female Literary Association and the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Grace A. Mapps was a poet, an educator, and an administrator. She was also potentially the first Black woman to graduate with a four-year college degree. The immensity of their work leaves us feeling that each woman was a galaxy herself. Mossell's exclamation conveys a pure sense of reverence and awe in three short words—"What a galaxy!" I argue that Black women used lists to edit narratives that removed them from Black literary history and American literary history or attempted to dictate how they could express themselves should they seek recognition from Black men or white men and women. They instead

carved spaces out for themselves to document their literary tradition on their own terms. In moments, they try to fit everyone in, crowding paragraphs and pages with names and works. In other instances, they chose select Black women in the hopes they would inspire Black girls and women to follow in their footsteps, achieving great feats and bringing in a better future. Black women made those lists to document Black women's literary history, to share it with their audiences, and to preserve it. They hoped future generations would look through these resources, these indices of Black women's writing, and build on it for a better tomorrow. But what I think Matthews draws us back to is the basic function of these lists—that when you looked at a page, you saw a list of Black writers, of Black women writers, and you saw constellations of Black lives, interconnecting. And for one moment, there were as many Black writers and texts as there were stars, and you cannot help but admire them. *What a galaxy*…

ENDNOTES

[1] 515.

[2] *The Morning Times*, "Colored Women Confer," 5.

[3] They did pass a resolution to form a national organization and, after merging with the Colored Women's League, formed the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

[4] "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 31.

[5] "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 32.

[6] "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 32.

[7] "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 32.

[8] "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 32.

[9] "'The Progress of Colored Women' (1898)," 440.

[10] Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," 514.

[11] "The Value of Race Literature," 525.

[12] Duncan, *Index, A History of the: A Bookish Adventure from Medieval Manuscripts to the Digital Age*, 1–2.

[13] Duncan, *Index, A History of the: A Bookish Adventure from Medieval Manuscripts to the Digital Age*, 3.

[14] *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 9.

[15] *A Text Book of the Origin and History, &c, &c. of the Colored People*, 11.

[16] Pennington, *A Text Book of the Origin and History, &c, &c. of the Colored People*, 49.

[17] Lewis, *Light and Truth; Collected from the Bible and Ancient in Modern History, Containing the Universal History of the Colored and the Indian Race, from the Creation of the World to the Present Time*, 306–7.

[18] *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States. Politically Considered.*, 16.

[19] *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, with Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons: To Which Is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans*, 21–22.

[20] Lincoln qtd in Casey and Salter, "With, Without, Even Still," 254.

[21] Casey and Salter, "With, Without, Even Still," 254.

[22] "With, Without, Even Still," 257.

[23] Casey and Salter, "With, Without, Even Still," 255.

[24] Patterson, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Living in Periodicals," 142.

[25] *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States. Politically Considered.*, 86.

[26] *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, 13.

[27] "Making Lists, Keeping Time," 88.

[28] Bader, "Matthews, Victoria Earle," 205.

[29] "Matthews, Victoria Earle," 205.

[30] Ruffin, "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 32.

[31] *History of the Club Movement*, 6.

[32] Bader, "Matthews, Victoria Earle," 205.

[33] "The Value of Race Literature," 307.

[34] "The Value of Race Literature," 510.

[35] "The Value of Race Literature," 515.

[36] "The Value of Race Literature," 516.

[37] Ruffin, "Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference," 32.

[38] Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 586.

[39] "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 586.

[40] Robbins and Gates, Jr., "S. Elizabeth Frazier (1864-1924)," 585.

[41] *The Gazette*, "Susan Elizabeth Frazier," 1.

[42] "S. Elizabeth Frazier (1864-1924)," 585.

[43] *The Gazette*, "Susan Elizabeth Frazier," 585.

[44] Asa Wentworth Tenney (1833-1897) was a United State district judge for the Eastern District of New York.

[45] *The Freeman: A National Illustrated Colored Newspaper*, "Approving Words," 2.

[46] "S. Elizabeth Frazier (1864-1924)," 585.

[47] "Identifying White Mediocrity and Know-Your-Place Aggression," 253.

[48] "The Value of Race Literature," 510.

[49] "Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors (1933)," 56.

[50] "The Value of Race Literature," 508.

[51] Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," 508.

[52] "The Value of Race Literature," 512.

[53] "The Value of Race Literature," 507.

[54] "The Value of Race Literature," 515.

[55] "The Value of Race Literature," 515.

[56] "The Value of Race Literature," 516.

[57] "The Value of Race Literature," 516.

[58] "The Value of Race Literature," 516.

[59] "The Value of Race Literature," 517.

[60] *The Black Interior*, 121.

[61] "The Value of Race Literature," 520.

[62] "The Value of Race Literature," 518–19. Jane Rustic is likely the pseudonym of Frances Ellen Watkins. See Derrick R. Spires's "*Aliened Americans*: Pseudonymity and Gender Politics in Early Black Social Media." *African American Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 33-49.

[63] "The Value of Race Literature," 515.

[64] Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 586.

[65] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11–12.

[66] Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 586.

[67] Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 586.

[68] O'Neale, "Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784)"; Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 592.

[69] Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 3.

[70] Louise De Mortie was a writer and public reader in bottom, who left for New Orleans following to Civil War. She opened an orphanage to help the children who had lost their family members during the war. Fanny M. Jackson was a writer, speaker, and principal in Philadelphia. She graduated from Oberlin College.

[71] There are two collective biographies of Black women written by Black men: L. A. Scruggs's *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character* (1893) and Monroe Alpheus Majors's *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (1893). Compared to the numerous texts produced about Black men between autobiographies, histories, collective biographies, and biographies, two texts are a small portion of this era's drive to collect and record Black history.

[72] Alexander, *The Black Interior*, 121.

[73] "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[74] I note this because, in a chapter that explores the intentional loss of Black women as historical subjects, I must acknowledge that "Phillis Wheatley" was not her true name. It was not the name given by her parents. She was named after the slave ship she was brought over on, *The Phillis*, and given the last name of her enslavers, The Wheatleys. No one who had the authority to record anything about Wheatley asked her what her true name was. Though it does not diminish her life, her importance to Black literary history, or to American literature, it is necessary to acknowledge that because Phillis Wheatley's real name is unrecorded, she is remembered under a name that most ties her to two powerful symbols of chattel slavery: the slave ship and the enslaver. Not as one of the names she knew herself as. Whatever name the young African girl, who stood on the auction block with her mother in Massachusetts on July 11,1761, was we will never know.

[75] Smithsonian American Art Museum, "Edmonia Lewis." For more on Edmonia Lewis, see Harry Henderson's *The Indomitable Spirit of Edmonia Lewis: A Narrative Biography*. Milford, CT: Esquiline Hill Press, 2012; or Lee Ann Timreck's *Pieces of Freedom: The Emancipation Sculptures of Edmonia Lewis and Meta Warrick Fuller*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023.

[76] Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604; Smithsonian American Art Museum, "Edmonia Lewis."

[77] "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[78] Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," 525; Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[79] "The Value of Race Literature," 515.

[80] Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," 519.

[81] *Black Women Taught Us: An Intimate History of Black Feminism*, xiii.

[82] *Black Women Taught Us: An Intimate History of Black Feminism*, xxii.

[83] *Black Women Taught Us: An Intimate History of Black Feminism*, xxii.

[84] *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861.*, 9.

[85] "I Can't Love This the Way You Want Me to," 177. Hall's work on recollecting Black lives in early ledgers within this piece draw also on Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation," as the Othello Hall researches cannot have more of a story within her piece. His story will have to be imagined, much in the way Hartman asks for and Ernest gestures to as the work of Black historians in the nineteenth century.

[86] "Making Lists, Keeping Time," 83.

[87] "The Value of Race Literature," 525; "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[88] Helton, *Scattered and Fugitive Things*, 97, 99.

[89] Helton, *Scattered and Fugitive Things*, 110.

[90] Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," 524–25.

[91] "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[92] *Black Women Taught Us: An Intimate History of Black Feminism*, xxii.

[93] "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[94] Matthews, "The Value of Race Literature," 517.

[95] Frazier, "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[96] "The Value of Race Literature," 515.

[97] "Some Afro-American Women of Mark," 604.

[98] Helton, "Making Lists, Keeping Time," 83.

[99] "The Value of Race Literature," 519.

Chapter 5

"THE QUALITY OF LIGHT"[1]: BLACK WOMEN'S FICTION AS EDITING

I finally want to express how much easier both my waking and my sleeping hours would be if there were one book in existence that would tell me something specific about my life. One book based on Black feminist and Black lesbian experience, fiction or nonfiction. Just one work to reflect the reality that I and the Black women whom I love are trying to create. When such a book exists then each of us will not only know better how to live, but how to dream.

Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism"[2]

In attendance that same day when Victoria Earle Matthews delivered her speech, "The Value of Race Literature," was a young Pauline E. Hopkins. Sitting in the audience, Hopkins had listened to that day's speakers. In fact, she had been there since the opening, listening to Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's call to work against the narratives that stunted Black women. But on this Tuesday, she had heard arguments for industrial training and an address by Booker T. Washington that evening at 8 p.m., she listened to his wife, Margaret Murray, deliver an address entitled "Individual Work for Moral Elevation." Yet it was Matthews's "Value of Race Literature" that seemed to have had the most impact on the young Hopkins. In the downpour of the evening, Hopkins found "she could embrace another crucial woman's role that Matthews espoused."[3] She could write the kind of literature Matthews believed would be necessary for the uplift of the race but also to solidifying Black literature's place in the larger canon of American literature. In 1899, only four years later, Hopkins would publish *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*.

Her work answers Matthews's call, arguing that "[f]iction is of great value to any people as a preserver of manners and customs—religious, political and social," a direct engagement with Matthews's belief that Black fiction would be the largest testament to Black intelligence, capability, and progress.[4] And her work claims that it represents, faithfully, " the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro" that was "as yet, unrecognized by writers of the Anglo-Saxon race," a parallel to Matthews's claim that white writers who write about Black writers do not accurately represent Black experience or expression.[5] Hopkins left that Tuesday session late in the evening, rushing through the rain with thoughts and ambitions swirling through her mind. Her fiction would play a part in changing the lives of Black Americans.

This chapter examines at length how Black women's fiction functions as an editorial act. Each chapter of this dissertation has argued for more abstract conceptualizations of editing. It has moved from the most recognizable forms within periodicals to lesser recognized acts of arrangement and selection in Black women's nonfiction and lists. Each proposes that Black women generate their texts with the intent to rectify a record that removed or limited their expression or participation. For fiction, I turn to arguably the most abstract conceptualization of editing. Rather than looking for how Black women are literally re-arranging or re-contextualizing the words of white/male persons, I look to how they were identifying misogynoir narratives and stereotypes popular in American literature and culture. These are narrative foreclosures that portray Black women under common stereotypes and stories: the jezebel, the mammy, or the fallen woman. These narratives limit Black women, reading them only through these depictions and punishing them if they do not perform these roles. Black women writers depicted the effects of these narratives on

Black girls and women—how they shaped their understandings of themselves and attempted to box in their lives. Yet they craft stories that show Black girls and women working past these narratives, finding futures for themselves these narratives could not imagine. As such, I examine the moments where Black women writers' characters engage with these narratives as moments of "adjustment, innovation, rejection, or overwriting" that editors often do when creating their publications.[6] Portraying Black girls and women as capable of rejecting these narratives and re-writing their stories by finding resolution on their terms, Black women writer's used fiction to edit cultural narratives.

To show this, I look at the work of three Black women writers: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Pauline E. Hopkins, and Jessie R. Fauset. Each of these Black women provide an impressive professional oeuvre and are famous voices in the canon of Black women tradition, though in their own distinct ways. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper is one of the most famous and prolific Black women writers, and her serial fiction provides compelling insight into how she mobilizes her fiction to work against claims that Black women are innately sinful and base. I look at this in her serial work, "Trial and Triumph," published in *The Christian Recorder* from 1888-89. Hopkins and Fauset add interesting perspectives, for they also bring an explicit editorial connection, having both served as editors. Though I have looked at her work as women's, literary, and editress-in-chief of the *Colored American Magazine*, I look here to Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*. As noted earlier, her work is a direct intervention into the discourse surrounding Black representation in American culture. In this work, I read how she engages with the jezebel and fallen woman narrative through Sappho Clark. Finally, I look to the serial fiction of Jessie R. Fauset, who is

most known for her work as literary editor for *The Crisis*. Langston Hughes immortalized her importance as an editor when he defined her as one of "the three people who midwifed the so-called New Negro literature into being."[7] Though she did publish a novel in 1928, *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral*, I look to her serial literature in *The Crisis*, specifically "Emmy." Published as a two-part piece in the December 1912 and January 1913 issues of the magazine, Fauset tells the story of "Emmy," a Black girl who does not believe in the narratives that she should feel lesser nor that she is inherently wanton and greedy. Each of these three works provide us different and interlocking perspectives on how cultural narratives shaped the lives of Black women, why these narratives existed, what it took to move beyond those narratives, and what futures were possible when they were not limited by these narratives.

I argue Black women's fiction edited misogynoir cultural narratives. White supremacists and misogynists use misogynoir narratives to disenfranchise, justify violence against, and oppress Black women. I look at how Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Pauline E. Hopkins, and Jessie R. Fauset wrote serial fiction and novels to edit these narratives as well as the discursive and narrative tropes misogynoir narratives use. The fiction of these three Black women authors name those narratives, recognize how those narratives have affected their own communities, and suggest new narrative possibilities for future generations of Black women. I show how Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset craft complex stories of Black women's lives under these narratives and the struggle to live beyond them, and the importance of this editorial work in, hopefully, achieving what Barbara Smith asks for—stories that would reflect the lives of Black women and teach them to live and to dream. My first section looks to the large

intellectual tradition of Black feminists and theorists writing about these cultural narratives and how they foreclosed Black girls and women's lives. I cite scholars like Toni Cade Bambara, Audre Lorde, Hazel Carby, and Darlene Clark Hine to name only a few, connecting their work on misogynoir narratives and how white supremacy uses misogynoir narratives to diminish Black women. I also look at how these scholars trace the tradition of Black women editing misogynoir narratives through their work, which I use to look at editing as another example of this tradition. By doing so, Black women writers of the post-bellum, pre-Harlem hoped to prevent the continued oppression of Black women by these narratives. I turn to the narratives that Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset demonstrate in their works, examining their appearances, affect, and importance for the characters as they navigate what it means to be a Black woman and to be interpolated by these stories and myths. My final section brings Harper's, Hopkins's, and Fauset's fiction together to read how editing manifests in these works and the complex conversations they have about Black womanhood, motherhood, and the dangers of internalizing those narratives within the Black community. This chapter showcases the editorial work Black women undertook when creating their fiction and their labors to use these works to edit into being new possibilities for future generations.

Fiction as Editing

Reading Black women's fiction as editing asks that we consider how and where editing happens radically. Radical considerations do not, however, forsake foundations. At its core, fiction still involves fundamentally a choice of selection and arrangement. When Black women wrote fiction, they were selecting what characters,

scenes, and narratives best represented themselves—their realities as Black women. Black women's fiction also addressed the misogynoir narratives that circulated throughout American literature and culture. Their works were careful choices of selection and arrangement in the hope of efficacy, whether that efficacy be in racial uplift or in the hope of, simply, showing other Black girls and women they were not alone in their experiences. At their boldest, those stories hoped to commit the reality of Black women's lives under and after chattel slavery to yet another form of permanent record: American literature. And in other instances, Black women's fiction told Black girls and young women that there was hope despite these difficult realities, and that they were more than capable of realizing the futures of which their ancestors had only dreamed. To do so Black women's fiction engaged with narratives that attempted to portray their lives in ways that did not fully represent Black women's lived experiences; the narratives, stereotypes, and limitations that spoke for Black women and spoke to them, telling them how to speak and what stories to tell. Anna Julia Cooper's words on white writers who wrote on race is prescient. She writes that white writers who have written about Black Americans often, whether "through sheer ignorance" or "design occasionally," fail to "put themselves in the darker man's place."[8] "The art of 'thinking one's self imaginatively into the experiences of others' is not given to all," she writes, "and it is impossible to acquire it without a background and a substratum of sympathetic knowledge."[9] Without a sincere sympathy for Black persons, white persons portrayed "death's heads or caricatures" that could never represent Black life or experience.[10] White writers would tell "you that all colored people look exactly alike and end by noting down every chance contortion or idiosyncrasy as a race characteristic."[11] White writers often failed to see, truly, Black

life because they refused to sympathetically view Black men and women, and so they often portrayed one-dimensional caricatures and false narratives about what was Blackness, what Black people thought, and what was Black life. They peddled caricatures as truth and circulated these narratives as gospel, and by doing so, they entrapped Black Americans, particularly Black women, within these narratives and the prejudices they perpetuated. This was the work Black women's fiction took on—editing these narratives to speak for themselves and to generations of younger Black girls and women.

Indeed, what made anti-Black and misogynist narratives about Black life believable was how embedded they had always been in American literature and culture. Sterling A Brown notes as much in his "Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors (1933)": "All of these stereotypes are abundantly to be found in American literature, and are generally accepted as contributions to true racial understanding."[12] The white supremacist print culture that Wells-Barnett observes post-Reconstruction is a part of a long history of white print culture that generated and circulated anti-Black and misogynoir stereotypes and narratives. And as Brown notes, these stereotypes—these narratives—were dangerous for two reasons. First, they were foundational to American literature, they were prolific, and they circulated widely. Second, they were believed, unquestioningly, to be true. White and male writers and readers believed what they wrote were offering some understanding of who Black Americans were, what they thought, and what they wanted. Ida B. Wells-Barnett's work, and other anti-lynching activists like Mary Church Terrell, record the true violence of these stereotypes and stories propagated about Black lives.[13] As Elizabeth McHenry argues that "Terrell's 1904 article, 'Lynching from a Negro's Point of View,'" brought her

"face to face with the power and efficacy of [a] fictional narrative against which her own nonfiction writing was no match."[14] Though Church Terrell approaches this through nonfiction, McHenry's words could easily extend to many Black women fiction writers as well; white fictions, wherever they appeared, were a danger. And as Brown's words remind us, these narratives are insidious when they are normalized as a "truth" about Black Americans. Seen as a real reflection of Black Americans, cultural narratives could justify any belief or action taken by white Americans. In this way, these narratives underscore the circular nature of whiteness: white supremacists justified anti-Black and misogynist actions by the narratives they wrote and believed to be true, and they generated those narratives to sustain whiteness and the violence it required.

The most dangerous aspect of the relationship between fiction written by white persons and the realities of Black life was how endemic misogyny and anti-Blackness were to white and male American culture. Charles Mills presents whiteness as promoting an epistemology of ignorance, one that requires its signatories disavow reality in favor of one wherein whiteness is normalized and unchallengeable.[15]. It encodes race with morality and humanity; whiteness re-writes moral and empirical epistemologies to justify non-white oppression and subjugation. To do so, it codifies white as moral and human, while non-white is proscribed to be the inverse—immoral and inhuman, "*un*free and *un*equal."[16] Mills's explanation of whiteness is useful for understanding both the power of fiction and why Black women took to using it as a means of editing cultural narratives. What Mils makes apparent is that whiteness is an interpretive framework for the world—one embedded in the creation and sustainment of whiteness as a power structure. Signatories to the racial contract do not see that

their very understanding and interpretation of the world are mediated by the dichotomy of white and nonwhite, moral and immoral, human and inhuman. This does not dismiss intentionally written racist or misogynist fiction. Rather, it underscores that there is a spectrum of racist and misogynist narratives at play in nineteenth-century American literature. Some narratives were written intentionally by white supremacists and misogynistic persons, and other narratives were written unintentionally by white Americans and men; they signed on and did not distinguish fiction from reality for the purpose of upholding the power of whiteness. Equally damaging, whiteness had made white supremacy and anti-Blackness an inherent framework in much of white American literature. White fiction held an immense power then; it had the ability to further circulate anti-Blackness and misogynoir through fiction and, in turn, shape Black Americans' political, legal, and material realities.

Of course, Black women had distinct experiences with white narratives about them that affected and shaped their lives. Throughout history and after the end of slavery, sexual assault and violence against Black women were justified by the misogynoir narrative of the jezebel, a stereotype that claimed Black women were licentious. The Jezebel was "the counterimage of the mid-nineteenth-century ideal of the Victorian lady," a white, respectable woman of patriarchal standards.[17] Deborah Gray White traces the history of this misogynoir stereotype from white, Western imperialist engagement with Africa. Colonialists intentionally misinterpreted African culture and clothing to lewdness and sensuality. Their presumption of white civility and nonwhite barbarity "mistook seminudity for lewdness," interpreted polygamy as "uncontrolled lust," and reduced tribal dances "to the level of orgy."[18] This narrative

traveled back to the West and across the Middle Passage to America, where white Americans perpetuated the myth of the Black woman Jezebel. The Jezebel myth then seeped into and embedded itself throughout American culture and literature. Fiction like Metta Victoria Victor's *Maum Guinea and Her Plantation Children* (1861) and the works of Thomas Dixon Jr., to name a few examples, utilize the Jezebel narrative to portray Black women as a foil to the white women characters of their novels, defining Black women as not white women and as not exhibiting a "true womanhood." Hazel Carby writes on how Black women's ability to be raped during chattel slavery was one of the defining differences between Black women characters and white heroines in sentimental fiction. A Black woman could be raped and exist beyond that moment, but for a white sentimentalist heroine, she would choose death rather than be violated. [19] Sentimental fiction recirculated the Jezebel stereotype as a justification for Black women's rape and then used their victimhood to signify that they were not women and could not be seen and treated, legally or morally, as such.

Misogynoir was not built solely around the jezebel. Stereotypes about Black women came from every possible angle and seeped into American literature and culture. The tragic mixed-race woman and later the Sapphire are examples of other narratives that perpetuated a fixed understanding of those women's lives. Tragic mixed-race women were prefigured to narratives where they faced terrible lives and terrible ends. Some Black women writers use tragic mixed-race characters to question race and racism within their stories—such as Fauset, which I will turn to later in this chapter. For many white authors, the tragic mixed-race character was proscribed by their in-betweenness; their inability to exist in either a Black or white world and, as such, was prefigured to be either suicidal or to die. Tragic mixed-race women

experienced misogynoir as well as the mutability of racial construction. It was not just that they could and often did experience misogynoir when they were "deemed" Black rather than white by white Americans. Their ability to be racialized by those around them speaks to an additional racial dimension that mixed-race women experienced. Mixed-race women were forced into misogynoir, and their supposed in-betweenness made it easy to dismiss, diminish, or erase them entirely within American culture. Other more prominent stereotypes, such as the Mammy, held a transcendent and, at times, unquestioning place in American literature and culture. A Mammy appeared in Isabel Drysdale's *Scenes in Georgia* (1827); Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; *or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852); E. D. E. N. Southworth's *The Hidden Hand; or, Capitola the Madcap* (1888); and Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1905) to name only a few pieces of literature, and she crossed into film at the turn of the century in *The Jazz Singer* (1927), *Imitation of Life* (1934), and, most famously, *Gone with the Wind* (1939). There was a material culture of Mammy dolls and imagery throughout nineteenth and early-twentieth century American culture as well, and she was a commercial icon in the form of Aunt Jemima, the Mammy and cook whose pancake mix sold "the idea of a slave, in a box."[20] Thanks to Aunt Jemima, white America did not have to separate themselves from enslaved or hired Black women's labor in their homes; the Mammy came in a box and, by just adding milk, she continued to serve white Americans across the country.

The Mammy is the most compelling example of the full spectrum of these narratives, for many did not consider the Mammy to be a harmful stereotype. Like Brown worried, the Mammy was seen as a true understanding of enslaved Black women, particularly in the South. The Mammy exists on the opposite side of the

spectrum from the Jezebel narrative. Whereas the Jezebel pushed the narrative of Black women as inherently sexual, the Mammy was nearly asexual, beloved for her maternal presence and labor. Yet she is not as harmless as literary culture would portray her—the overly concerned Black woman in charge of the home and childcare of her white enslavers or employers. A Mammy's care for white children was a stark contrast to her own care for her children. In fact, her care for these children was "in addition to and often instead of her own children."[21] A Mammy's work underscores the difficulties and impossibilities of Black motherhood in the system of slavery, a system that cared most about Black women's reproductive possibilities, viewed children as objects, and sought to prevent or dissolve Black families as necessary. Her attributes—her "soothing voice," "infinite patience," "raucous laugh," "self-deprecating wit," and "implicit understanding and acceptance of her inferiority and her devotion to whites," as Kimberly Wallace-Sanders writes—"all point to a long-lasting and troubled marriage of racial and gender essentialism, mythology, and southern nostalgia."[22] Circulated as a contented enslaved Black woman, the Mammy was sold to American culture as indicative of Black women's inherent love to care for white homes and white children. Limiting Black women to domestic work was one result of this. The Mammy made it believable to white Americans and Black men that Black women were best at domestic labor and, somehow innately, fulfilled by their work in white homes as well as in having and raising children, particularly the children of their white enslavers or employers. Though only one example, the narrative of the Mammy had boxed Black women in as contented "slave[s] in a box," like Aunt Jemima, telling Black girls and women that domestic labor and childcare, whether their own children or others', was one of the few futures they could achieve.

These stereotypes—from the Jezebel to the Mammy—reflect the physical and ideological effects that misogynoir narratives, circulating in American literature, had on Black women's lives. This was the literary and cultural landscape into which Black women entered—into which their fiction entered. Misogynoir narratives justified physical as well as epistemological and ideological violences. White supremacists and misogynists used these narratives and justified sexual and physical violence against Black girls and women, and they used them to proscribe how or whether Black women could talk about themselves. Limiting Black women's representation and understanding of themselves attempted to tell Black girls they could only grow to be a limited number of things—a tragic figure or a domestic worker. If their narratives were not what American literature and culture deemed acceptable, then they were not to be printed, not to be heard. Black women saw, in real time, as the Mammy image, for example, eclipsed Black women's narratives of their own voices. Patricia A. Turner's study of the Mammy in American material culture argues that the popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Aunt Chloe, the novel's mammy character, outstripped the sales of narratives by Black women published around 1850—narratives like Sojourner Truth's *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave* (1850) and Harriet Tubman's *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (1868) did not surpass the "permanent place" in American culture that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had, and continues to have, or the audience that Aunt Chloe reached.[23] Turner's observations make clear how these narratives overshadowed Black women's voices when they were not what the narratives sought: "In order to accommodate the needs of Aunt Chloe, the reader need only pursue the elimination of slavery."[24] Misogynoir use of the Mammy narrative in American literature and culture made caricatures of Black

women and promoted a feel-good experience for white liberals, who believed their choice to hire Black women to manage their homes and children was a benevolence on their part. Even if one were to trace whether the Mammy was ever real in American chattel slavery or not, her existence presented one box of many into which misogynists and white supremacists pushed Black girls and women.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper articulated her fear of how these narratives were seeping into the Black community and being used to limit Black girls in her serial fiction piece, *Trial and Triumph*. We meet the main character's grandmother, Susan Harcourt, who expresses her frustration over her granddaughter: "If you want to keep that child out of mischief just put a book in her hand; but then she has her living to get and she can't get it by nursing her hands and reading books. She has got to work like the rest of us."[25] One neighbor, listening to Mrs. Harcourt, counters her proscription of what her granddaughter can do with her life: "Why not give her a good education? Doors are open to her which were closed against us. This is a day of light and knowledge."[26] Mrs. Harcourt's statement fulfils the fear articulated by Ruffin and by other Black women: Black women would internalize these narratives and limit themselves, but they would also turn these narratives outward, policing and limiting the expression and dreams of future generations of Black girls and women. Mrs. Harcourt, then, is a stark reminder of what these narratives would achieve if left unchecked by Black women. What liberation could be imagined if every way of knowing yourself and understanding what you could be were foreclosed before you could even begin? Harper's opening exchange sets the stakes for her main character's growth as a young Black girl in these post-bellum, pre-Harlem years. It was not only that she may struggle under the realities of misogynoir narratives and how they shaped

what opportunities she had in life; it was that she also faced those restrictions from other Black women, who had been so foreclosed by the white supremacist and misogynistic narratives that they could not see outside of it. When what it means to be human, to be equal, to be a citizen, and to be safe are continually defined and redefined by white supremacist and patriarchal logics, these narratives becoming all-encompassing. For many Black women, as Harper demonstrates, these narratives could become internalized and turned outwardly to other generations of Black girls and women. If these narratives went unquestioned, Harper poses, then Black women risked perpetuating the same misogynoir narratives against themselves.

Misrepresentation could, and sometimes did, shape Black girls and women's understandings of themselves. In turn, it risked limiting what they could imagine themselves becoming. Black women foresaw how interconnected misogynoir narratives were with understanding and how those narratives could be shaped for oppression. Todi Cade Bambara writes on this directly in her essay, "Why Black Cinema?" Though Bambara's argument is on the importance of Black cinema, her words ring true for Black storytelling:

> *TO BE ENTRAPPED IN OTHER PEOPLE'S FICTIONS PUTS US UNDER ARREST. To be entrapped, to be submissively so, without counter, without challenging, without raising the voice and offering alternative truths renders us available for servitude. In which case, our ways, our beliefs, our values, our style are repeatedly ransacked so that the power of our culture can be used—to sell liquor, soda, pieces of entertainment, and the real deal: to sell ideas.*
>
> *The idea of inferiority.*
>
> *The idea of hierarchy.*

The idea of stasis: that nothing will ever change.

These ideas, or ideological imperatives, are the real products of the so-called entertainment industry.[27]

Misogynoir American fiction threatened Black girls and women; it threatened to "entrap them" in its fictions. Other peoples' fictions, particularly white fictions or men's fictions, perpetuate specific ideas of inferiority and of hierarchies—labels and narratives in which Black women had particular places. And though Bambara's words note how narratives enshrine white supremacist ideas of inferiority, of hierarchy, and of stasis, it is extractable to how we recognize Black women navigated these similar realities in the print culture of the post-Bellum, pre-Harlem.

Harper and Bambara were not alone in their concern. Audre Lorde's writing reflects the same worry that American literature was shaping Black girls' and women's understandings of their own experiences and their ambitions. This chapter's title comes from a line in her essay, "Poetry Is Not A Luxury." She begins by observing, "The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes we hope to bring about through those lives."[28] Lorde's essay articulates a similar feeling to Ruffin and Bambara—that language, or the light, shaped how Black women would see themselves. It simultaneously reminds us that white and male language had held power over Black women's expression; it defined and controlled the language—the narratives—into which Black women entered and navigated. Lorde reminds readers that light too shapes Black women's understanding. Not only could they not be seen, but they could also not grow or flourish without light. Lorde's comments draw us to the realities that Black women needed a new language for themselves as a result of this misogynoir

American narrative culture. She writes, "[F]or it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are—until the poem—nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt."[29] Lorde writes both of poetry, a genre of feeling and emotion, as a pathway toward a distinctly Black women's expression of experience and language outside of white, western traditions. But language is not the singular pathway forward, to point to poetry specifically is to suggest a need for new discursive possibilities for Black women. Lorde's call is to be in new ways of feeling and expression—to find a discourse and language from and for Black women that exists beyond the limited frameworks that had existed for centuries. Where one could read Spillers's interstices as place into which we lose Black women and their expression, Lorde articulates how spaces outside of white and Western tradition can be filled with love, hope, possibility, and freedom. Lorde's call to find new means of language, expression, and discourse suggest that one could read Black women's editing in fiction as a Black poetics of editing.

Barbara Smith echoes Lorde's call and shows us the importance of why Black women needed their own expressive means and discursive possibilities. Her foundational essay, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," which I use for the epigraph of this chapter, argues for a framework for reading Black women's literature and recognizing the long history of working against misogynoir narratives. A Black feminist criticism would be intersectional, as it required reading Black women's literature with an understanding of the reality of Black women's lives—what life was like when one is Black, is a woman, and is a Black woman in America. Smith's framework, she argues, recovers how Black women's "language and cultural experience in books *by* Black women *about* Black women results in a miraculously

rich coalescing of form and content and also takes their writing far beyond the confines of white/male literary structures."[30] The tradition that Ruffin, Harper, Bambara, and Lorde argue for is the one that Smith's work recollects. She identifies the long history of Black women writers who penned fiction to write in their own voices, writing outside those white/male narrative structures that limited and erased Black women's expressive possibilities. Further, she pivots to the importance of this work by Black women. When she writes of the need for "one book in existence that would tell [her] something specific of [her life]," one that "reflect[ed] the reality" of her life, Smith speaks of those same concerns as Ruffin, Harper, Bambara, and Lorde.[31] Without representation of her experiences as a Black woman—and a Black lesbian woman in Smith's specific case—there was no way to understand herself fully. Smith harkens to a resource that would provide a language, a narrative, for her life, a way for her to understand how to be, love, and imagine as a Black woman. "When such a book exists," she writes, "then each of us will not only know better how to live, but how to dream."[32]

It was not only scholars and Black feminists of the twentieth century that recognized the relationship between misogynoir, narratives, and the foreclosure of Black girls' and women's futures. Hazel Carby's analysis of Black women's novels of this era reflected how slavery shaped understandings of Black womanhood and motherhood, and those understandings persisted. Carby's work, as noted in the introduction, dovetails nicely with Patricia Hill Collins's own readings of controlling images—the cultural images or stereotypes pervasive throughout American media that shaped the economic, legal, political, and cultural realities of Black women. Carby's reading of Black women's novels recognizes how they write about and work through

the narratives that shaped, and continue to shape, Black women's lives through literature. Darlene Clark Hine and her work on dissemblance also explores the misogynoir of postbellum America. Dissemblance, as Hine defines it, is "the behavior and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors."[33] Black women used dissemblance to control their sexuality and representation, as they remained illegible to others. This allowed them to achieve a form of invisibility that provided them with protection and peace from the ever-present threat of sexual violence. Like the control Hine asserts dissemblance gave Black women, Claudia Tate explores how domestic fiction provided Black women control over the home and over marriage in a way that was impossible, legally and culturally, during this era. Black women's domestic fiction provided rights they were precluded from: the right to self-definition, the right to marry, the right to economic prosperity, and the right to familial growth and success were all available to them. From Carby's understanding that chattel slavery continued to shape American literary, and legal, understandings of Black woman hood to Hine and Tate, Black feminist scholars of the nineteenth century have explored how Black women's writings explore the distinct experience they have with race and gender—whether that required them to find new ways of presenting and hiding themselves or explore literary fiction in ways that allowed them domestic and political rights unavailable to them otherwise, nineteenth-century Black women's writing attests to the long history of misogynoir before there was a term for Black women's particular experience.

This tradition of Black women writing fiction "far beyond the confines of white/male literary structures" is an editorial one. Editing is both the action of Black

women engaging with the misogynoir narratives and stereotypes of American literature as well as creating, as Patricia Okker and Sharon M. Harris and Ellen Gruber Garvey argue, space for their own voices.[34] Previous chapters have focused on the intrinsically tied physical and ideological work of editing—the selection and arrangement of a work as well as its engagement with dominant cultural narratives about Black women. Reading fiction as editing still attends to the physical and ideological action, though it has some amount of indeterminacy. The physical act of using fiction to edit is more complex here than in previous chapters. It requires we read fiction with an awareness to how it was in conversation with dominant cultural narratives about Black women and Black Americans; narratives that were dangerous physically and ideologically themselves.

Narratives in the Fiction of Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset

To propose that fiction is editing requires reading Black women's fiction for moments where their characters engage with dominant cultural narratives and then how those narratives are worked against throughout the text. Sometimes these narratives are explicit. They are exclamations that Black women are sexual objects to be used and discarded, and at other times, they are the hinted at—the logics of misogynoir that require Black women recognize themselves to be the lowest in the intersecting racial and gender hierarchy in the U.S. It is a bleak requirement that white advancement and male advancement necessitates Black women be made stagnant. As a result, any movement for Black women requires complete deconstruction of these hierarchies and their concomitant oppressive systems because the logic that undergirds it is that Black women *cannot* be conceived of as human, rights-bearing, and equal.

Looking to Black women's fiction, the narratives they place within their works, their characters' engagement with those narratives, and the way the work responds to and works past those narratives are all engagements with that undergirding logic of American literature and culture. Frances E. W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph* Annette Harcourt encounters narrative about her nature and the narratives internalized by her own family and community that limit her as well as how she moves through those totalizing cultural narratives. Pauline E. Hopkins's *Contending Forces* shows us how Sappho navigates the Jezebel narrative, the real struggle of being a sexual assault survivor in post-bellum America, and how she comes to define motherhood and love in a way that accepts her own past. Lastly, Jessie R. Fauset's "Emmy" shows us how young Black girls are interpolated in narratives from the beginning, in every aspect in their life, and how Black girls can decenter white cultural hegemony and define narrative possibilities that allow for anger and resistance. They were more than the myths of jezebels, more than myth of the mammy, more than the myth of their innate sin and evilness, more than the boxes that stole futures and hope from them. Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset demonstrate how narratives pushed Black women out, sometimes from their own community, and how those women crafted new stories for themselves. They moved from being outsiders to not necessarily in, but something beyond; they were insider-outsiders, whose stories were entirely their own. An imaginative reclamation and imagining of their own stories.

Throughout *Trial and Triumph* Annette continually finds herself interpolated by a narrative that forecloses her to be evil and to be base in America's social and cultural hierarchy. My reading of Harper's *Trial and Triumph* focuses on these narratives and how Annette is foreclosed by them both from within and without her

community as well as her journey to work within and beyond those narratives. I build on Nazera Sadiq Wright's understanding of how integral community is to Annette's story. However, I do not read her story as singularly supportive of Annette, as Wright does. Rather, I look at how her community does, in moments, entrap Annette within narratives that are complicated by issues of gender, race, respectability, and morals. As well, I look to how Harper focuses on issues of morality within her story and the narratives that shaped Black girls and Black women's lives—taking a new perspective on the work of scholars like Andrea Williams, who look at the function and grammar of morals within *Trial and Triumph*. Building on the work of scholars like Wright and Williams helps me to articulate how narratives appear in numerous contexts and read Annette throughout the story, and in turn, we can better understand how Annette's triumph provides new narrative possibilities for Black girls and Black women.

From the minute we meet Annette, we find ourselves engaged in a discussion of how frustrating and mischievous Annette is. Her grandmother, Mrs. Susan Harcourt, proclaims to Annette that she is the "scabby sheep in the flock," one that "give[s] her so much trouble."[35] This narrative is somewhat inescapable for Annette. Annette is the daughter of Lucy Harcourt, Susan Harcourt's youngest daughter. Lucy slept with a man out of wedlock, became pregnant, and was abandoned by the man. She returns home with a broken heart and, unwilling to fight for her life, passes from consumption when she contracts it. The narrative of Annette's wickedness seems to be born alongside her, interpreting her from the minute she enters the world. Annette was born into her family as "an unbidden and unwelcome guest, associated with the saddest experience of her grandmother's life."[36] And though Mrs. Harcourt does love her granddaughter, she nevertheless views her as "an increased burden."[37] In fact,

narratives that Annette is a burden and has some innate mischief or trouble to her are pervasive within her community. They call Annette an "ill weed" in her home, who only wants to kiss boys.[38] Effectively these narratives make her an outsider in her own community, as her community itself is shaped by damaging narratives, assumptions, and discourses, particularly about Annette and Black girlhood. Before Annette can defend herself, these narratives were shaped and begin to shape her. It is little wonder that the story starts with Annette causing trouble to her neighbors when she is painted as "born for trouble"; someone who "[n]obody will ever put up with," nor that Annette has a noticeable "unhappy disposition."[39] She is told consistently that she is to be evil and is irredeemable. She is foreclosed as that black sheep that mars and troubles her family. Of course, it is untrue Annette is innately evil. Rather, her interpolation by these narratives signal how her community has distinct ideas about Black girlhood and what it should look like—narratives that, in themselves, do not reflect the reality of young girlhood. An outsider and simply a young girl, Annette's status as someone outside her community allows her throughout the story to navigate those assumed norms that are unconsciously embodied and promoted by others.

We can trace Annette's exposure to narratives about Black girlhood outside of the home and in her community. In school, students continue to push this narrative onto Annette. Annette recounts to her former teacher and mentor, Mrs. Lasette, that she fought with an Irish classmate and daughter of the local saloon-keeper, Mary Joseph. Seated next to Annette, Mary Joseph becomes physically uncomfortable, jittering: "after the teacher put her in the seat next to me she began to wriggle and squirm and I asked her if anything was biting her, because if there was, I did not want it to get on me."[40] Mary Joseph asserts that what bothers her is Annette, and when she

later makes a rude comment about how she is not used to eating with Black students, the girls progress to slinging racial slurs at each other. When Mrs. Lasette asks where the teacher was, Annette tells her the teacher was not there but that her presence would not have mattered: "No; she was out of the room part of the time, but I don't think she likes colored people, because last week when Joe Smith was cutting up in school, she made him get up and sit alongside of me to punish him."[41] This treatment persists throughout Annette's education from the saloon-keeper's daughter, and that of other girls of her ilk."[42] When Annette discovers a love for writing poetry, others reject that her work is poetry at all.[43] It is impossible to them that Annette could write anything that would be recognized as poetry, and those that think Annette might believe she could be something remark that she has "got too many airs for a girl in her condition."[44] Even Mrs. Lasette acknowledges that it is unsurprising to hear these narratives about Annette, for the girl is not up to anyone's "social standard."[45] At every turn, Annette is boxed in by the narrative of her incapability, of her impossibility to be more than low and wicked. She will have to give up her poetry and intelligence to work one day because it is the only option available to her. No one will encourage her otherwise, for it would be useless—Annette will always be that evil child that does not meet anyone's standards.

There are several preceding narratives at work within Annette's. The presumption of her wickedness is intertwined with her birth. Lucy's story is the tragedy necessary for the religious and sentimental tones of *Trial and Triumph*: Lucy's choices are a parable for her young Black girl readers, telling them to seek marriage from good men before children or else terrible things will come to pass. But in the era of the cult of womanhood and respectability politics, Lucy's life and death mark a dire

moment for the Harcourt family. They mark Lucy by transgression as well as tragedy. Though these years predate the Black Baptist women's flourish at the turn of the century, there is a tension toward an acceptable performance of respectability and morality that must be done. Mrs. Lasette chastises Annette for not being "lady-like" by fighting with Mary Joseph and charges her to "hold her head high" and "respect herself"—to be "noble, true and pure."[46] Mrs. Lasette's words draw on the familiar refrains of respectability politics that Evelyn Higgenbotham identified. By claiming "respectability through…manners and morals,' Black women "define themselves outside the parameters of prevailing racist discourses"[47] In particular, Black women's respectability politics reject the jezebel, the Black-woman-as-sexual-being, and the Black women as immoral narratives pervasive to American culture.[48] Respectability politics and how it shaped Black womanhood and motherhood compound in Lucy's life, her decisions, and her death. Annette's evilness is born in the ripples that stem from Lucy's life. What Lucy did was unwomanly and threatened the march toward Black women being seen as respectable. Annette is the after image, the specter, of Lucy's action and is therefore perceived as wicked. She marked a moment where Lucy's choice put Black women in peril by association; her actions would forever be on display through Annette. As such, Annette is foreclosed by this respectability politic and push for virtue and purity. It is both demanded of her and impossible for her to achieve because the nature of her birth made her born to be that "burden," that "scabby sheep."[49]

It is not solely the narrative that she is innately evil that Annette navigates, it is also that she is base—that there is no lower position in the social or cultural hierarchy than that which she holds. We see this most in her interactions with Mary Joseph, her

teacher, and other educated adults. They each attempt to restrain Annette within this narrative, for they cannot understand her through any other means. For Mary Joseph, it is that Annette's baseness is what provides whiteness power; for her teacher, it is that Annette's baseness maintains order; and for her classmates, it is that they cannot conceive of Annette as capable of being creative and being more than what their limited framework allows. The narrative that Annette is inherently below them is one that sustains their world: race, order, and prestige all function when Annette is contained in a narrative that forecloses her as never truly achieving anything nor living a fulfilling or meaningful life. In other words, these narratives reveal how success in America's racialized and gendered cultural hegemony requires the Black girl or woman's stagnation. If they advance, then the system fails; it does not work. Indeed, we could argue that the hierarchy does not operate if Black women can and do transcend its limitations at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. To advocate for Black girls and women to succeed during this time was to require, fundamentally, the deconstruction of the social and cultural logics at work in America.

Mary Joseph's fear of Annette stems from her fear that being sat next to Annette will re-racialize her, taking away what power and privilege whiteness provides her. We learn that Mary Joseph's status has not always been what it is. Mrs. Lasette discloses that Mary Joseph's family were previously poor; her father's work in the saloon brought in money and moved them into a new class and, as a result, their ethnic identity has shifted.[50] Other characters note the change in the Josephs—that they shared in class struggles with the Black community, but once they received money, they began distancing themselves from the Black community and putting them

down, as Mary Joseph is doing with Annette.[51] They mark it by the instability of the Josephs' new identity: "The nearer the beggar the greater the prejudice."[52] These comments impart that the Josephs potentially identified with the Black community members on issues of class, but now that they have earned money and advanced in terms of class, they have forsaken the Black community. Andrea Williams looks at how class and morality are intertwined in *Trial and Triumph* and how Harper attempts to unmoor morality from materialism.[53] Williams's reading hints at what has happened with Mary Joseph and Annette: because Mary Joseph's family has ascended in class, they have gained access to a new moral designation within their community. It dovetails the relationship between morals, race, and materialism. It also underscores the instability of Mary Joseph's new social position. Mary Joseph's actions are indicative of her precarious identity: she must assert and maintain, at whatever cost, the distance between herself and Annette to earn the elevated promise her class and race afford her now. Matthew Frye Jacobson shows how Irishness moved into whiteness readily when the racial dichotomy of white/Black had "greater and greater purchase on the nation's political life" post-Reconstruction onward because of the fear of Black political and civic action. [54] Annette's proximity threatens her newly determined whiteness, a form of racial (re)formation that "refers instead to race's changeability through different factors—relations."[55] Because Mary Joseph's identity is precarious, she feels uncomfortable risking her racial identity by being sat near Annette.

Annette's teacher capitalizes on this fear of Annette to instill order amongst the white students of Annette's class. Though not all students are upset by their proximity to Annette—Joe Smith, the punished student Annette tells Mrs. Lasette of, likes being

near Annette—the implication is that he *should* be is wherein the narrative is embedded. The teacher's actions imply that what Annette represents in a white and male America are things that should be feared, for they may seep into the lives of those around them as a corrupting force. Being near the young Black girl should make white students repentant. It is a dehumanizing narrative. It conceives of Annette as a useful disciplinary object to be used for the betterment of white students. In a way, this leans into the fear that Mary Joseph has near Annette and hopes other students fear racial (re)formation. However, in other ways, it evokes a fear of becoming Annette, a fear of falling to the lowest social and cultural position. Toni Morrison observes that the "black population was available for meditations on terror—the terror of European outcasts, their dread of failure, powerlessness, Nature without limits, natal loneliness, internal aggression, evil, sin, greed."[56] For the students, Annette embodies all of these terrors, and by being near her, they entertain the fear of holding her position; the teacher aims to evoke this discomfort and, by doing so, put them in line. Using Annette as a disciplinary object underscores the necessity of the narrative that Annette is beneath her in this setting, for according to her actions, fear of Blackness inspires white order and organization. Extrapolated outward it suggests that Black women's social and cultural stagnation through narrative foreclosure is necessary for the maintenance of white and male determinations of law and order. The narrative demands Annette be trapped in her place, or else the racial hierarchies, the order of the world around her, are thrown into chaos.

Like Annette, Sappho feels herself entrapped by a narrative she is forced into, believing it is inescapable. She is a biracial woman in Boston, who has left New Orleans, and the past she is escaping by migrating north is tragic. As a young girl, her

white half-uncle kidnapped and raped Sappho and then abandoned her in a brothel. Her family, searching for the missing youngest, hire a detective that tracks Sappho down. She suffers a mental breakdown, and as her half-uncle murders her family and burns down her home, Sappho is taken away to a convent during her uncle's attack on their home by a friend, where she gives birth to a son, Alphonse. She chooses to have him live with her aunt and believe that his mother died. Sappho then travels to obtain a new start after leaving the convent. What she knows is that this story—the young girl with Black ancestry who is raped—would invite a particular interpretation or reading of her. Her history is interpolated by the myths of the lustful Black woman and embodied as a sin she committed rather than one committed upon her. Like Lucy, respectability and Christian values, to Sappho, classify her as irredeemable and reinforce the jezebel narrative in turn. If that story circulates everyone will foreclose Sappho into specific narrative; they will suppose things about her and interpret her words and actions with that narrative in mind. In a way, she is right. Sappho is introduced in the plot as someone who is legible. Dora Smith, who rents out rooms at her family's home, refers to Sappho as a "woman with a story written on her face."[57] Dora believes there is something sweet and sad in the eyes of Sappho that allude to a troubled history that weighs on a woman remarked upon for her beauty, morals, and virtue. She notes throughout that she shares her past easily and readily while Sappho "never spoke of her early life."[58] Sappho's silence piques curiosity even in her closest confidant, Dora, telegraphing exactly what Sappho fears—her narrative is out of her control and affects others' understanding of her.

Sappho's silence is, in fact, a compelling part of the narrative. DoVeanna Fulton writes of silence in *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's*

Narratives of Slavery. Silence has, for Fulton, subversive power to reject narratives and resist oppression. In the case of Sappho, her refusal to tell her story rejects attempts to foreclose her in a narrative that purely reads her as a rape victim. Rather, as Fulton states, Sappho's choice to re-name herself, obtain a job, and carve a new future for herself crafts a new narrative.[59] In doing so, she "rewrites her experience…[and] the experience of all sexually exploited Black women."[60] While Sappho's silence piques Dora's curiosity, it also is a choice of Sappho's to control her own depiction. However, Dora's interest—her curiosity about Sappho—indicates the gulf between Sappho's intention and her audience's, Dora, response. That is not to say that Sappho's silence has no power. Her choice not to tell her story allows her to take control over a situation and narrative that culturally told her that she had no control. Sappho's repeated, intentional silence throughout the narrative is her most vocal act throughout *Contending Forces*. She upends the power structure that sees silence as a way of oppression, finding empowerment in her ability to determine who she is and how she is read. Much like Dora, however, Sappho navigates this empowerment under the real cultural effects of narratives about sexually exploited Black women, aware that she cannot fully escape its effect on her life.

Sappho is not unrealistic to believe the jezebel narrative would have a profound effect on her life, both in terms of the violence it justifies and its social effect. After learning what happened to Sappho, her father confronts his half-brother, threatening legal action against his brother for the rape of his daughter. His half-brother rejects the idea: "What does a woman of mixed blood, or any Negress for that matter, know of virtue? It is my belief that they were a direct creation by God to be the pleasant companions of men of my race."[61] For the offense of kidnapping, rape, and

abandonment, Sappho's half-uncle is willing to pay "a thousand dollars and call it square."[62] To Sappho's white half-uncle, she embodies the jezebel myth innately. Her existence justifies her abuse, for in this man's logic, she exists solely for a white man's sexual gratification—she was made by God for that very reason in her half-uncle's eyes. Sappho is not an autonomous human being; she is an object to be used and discarded as wanted. As Angela Davis states, white men "possess an incontestable right to access Black women's bodies," for they only exist as an economic object, as Sappho's uncle's willingness to pay, literally, for his crime denote.[63] He demonstrates the afterlife of the dehumanizing and misogynoir narratives of slavery—narratives that sustained that "incontestable right" white men claimed—far after the end of slavery. Sappho's half-uncle believes he has a right to Sappho's body because of her Black racial heritage and is paying for the damaging of goods in his opinion. The physical and mental violation that Sappho suffers from her sexual assault thoroughly foreclose any understanding of herself that does not internalize this moment in her life as an inescapable red letter she bares.

Sappho's internalization of the hypersexual Black woman narrative is a response both to the jezebel narrative and ideas of womanhood. It was not just that Black women's bodies were possessions to be used by white men. White and patriarchal culture equally demanded Black women take on the narrative that their violation was their fault. Hazel Carby's exploration of rape culture and its effect on Black women articulates how this narrative relied on the gendered and racialized logic that white women "'civilize the baser instincts of man."[64] Black women, however, inspired the opposite reaction. Around Black women's bodies, seen as objects and not women, "these baser male instincts were entirely uncontrolled."[65] Within this logic,

white men's urge to assault was "natural," a response that shifted blame to the victim and absolved the offender. "Thus, the white slave master was not regarded as being responsible for his actions toward his black female slaves," Carby writes.[66] "On the contrary, it was the female slave who was held responsible for being a potential, and direct, threat to the conjugal sanctity of the white mistress."[67] The white and male hierarchy demands that Black women internalize that it was both inevitable that they be violated and that it be their fault as well. In the case of Sappho, her half-uncle's admission that she has no virtue and was created for his sexual pleasure reflects the moment where, within the narrative, she transitions from human to non-human, from niece to sexual object. His callous and unaffected response makes clear that he feels no shame; he did what was inevitable, per the narrative in which he thrives. Yet Sappho is entrapped by this narrative, left to feel as though she actively instigated or participated in her sexual assault—a moment of sin she may try to but never truly atone for.

We see that this narrative has taken hold in Sappho herself from the questions she poses to others about sin and forgiveness. She explores others' opinions on women and sin, probing for their opinions on when a woman's sin is unpardonable. During a conversation with Dora about religion, Sappho asks, "Then you are not one of those who think that a woman should be condemned to eternal banishment for the sake of one misstep?"[68] In a discussion about the Black women and virtue, Sappho poses a similar question to the elder church woman, Mrs. Wilson. "So many of us desire purity and think to have found it, but in a moment of passion, or under the pressure of circumstances which we cannot control, we commit some horrid sin, and the taint of it sticks and will not leave us, and we grow to loathe ourselves."[69] Sappho's questions

belie two things. First, it shows us that she internalizes the narrative Carby documents. Referring to her sexual assault as "one misstep" that would earn her condemnation "to eternal banishment" or "a moment of passion" or pressured circumstance she could not control make clear that she believes her sexual assault to be, in some part, a sin she committed. She speaks as though she were an instigator and participant rather than victim. Secondly, her questions sound the depth of her friend's and community's forgiveness for persons like herself. She wants to know whether it will be possible for her to achieve redemption for herself as much as she wishes to see what her new community's reaction would be. Sappho does not solely internalize the narrative of her lust; she internalizes its concomitant narrative that she is at fault and forsaken because of her sexual assault. It is a narrative that limits how she will be understood by others or how she understands herself, and it is a potentially isolating one. Sappho hiding her past is a reaction to these compounding narratives. Her sexual assault telegraphs that narratives proceed her—they are not true, and she does not have to participate in them to be hurt by the jezebel myth. And her belief that it is her fault makes her inclined to fear how others respond to and bring their own narratives to her life story. Her choice reflects a wish to not be interpreted, to be read, in ways she cannot control.

She wrestles with this idea in the face of a stark moment wherein her life story is narrativized literally for a particular message. Where readers and characters learn Sappho's story is not through any admission of her own. Rather, her story is told to others during a meeting about a recent lynching in the South. The American Colored League of Boston, a branch of the National League of American Colored Men that provided money and support to Black Americans, meets to discuss what their response and next actions will be. They invite speakers, including a white judge, Hon.

Herbert Clapp. Clapp narrativizes an address rife with anti-interracial and anti-Black rhetoric as well as the charge that when a Black man assaults a white woman, he falls under the purview of "mob law," as Clapp refers to it.[70] Clapp's words fall on an unbelieving and unhappy audience, who only sigh at his words—the common refrain of so many white persons and papers. What it sparks is a counter-narrative to testify to the realities of rape in South. Luke Sawyer tells the story of Maubelle Beaubean and what happened to her. What Sawyer tells is the story of Sappho Clark under her true name, though his story ends differently. Where Sappho recovered and left the convent, leaving her son to her aunt, Luke recounts to his audience that Maubelle Beaubean died in the sanctuary while giving birth. Sawyer is moved to tears at the memory of the horrors Sappho suffered and the murder of her family by her half-uncle. His story is meant to strike at what is really the disease that rages throughout the South and hinders Black life—it is not the Black rapist but the white rapist. It is white supremacy and lynching. For Sawyer, Sappho's tale is a tragedy, a cautionary tale that draws everyone in. The audience is "grief-convulsed" and silent at the story of the beautiful and innocent fourteen-year-old girl brutalized by a white family member and left broken.[71]

In this moment, Sappho witnesses her life as a narrative, one that exists beyond her. She cannot control even her own narrative. Though it is being used to demonstrate the horrors of the situation of many Black girls, she sees that her own story is not her own to control. It is the moment where she comes to know that even the worst moment of her life can be taken and used by anyone despite her wishes. We can read how Sappho's story is, to an extent, the feeling of being out of control. She had no control in the darkest moment of her life, and here, in the hall of the American Colored

League, she has no control as her story is recounted before her. The narrative has had a life of its own, a reality many Black women would recognize. None of these narratives were based on truth, on reality, but they were always embedded within them. Listening to her story, Sappho's narrative begins to encroach upon her, despite how she had run from it. Darlene Clark Hines claims the "most common" and "compelling" reason for escaping northward was that Black women could escape rape, their lives as survivors of sexual assault, and secure some freedom for their children.[72] Yet the narrative catches up to Sappho, a story carried by someone else, endlessly circulating throughout the country with Luke Sawyer and whoever repeats it. The narrative of her as "the 'fallen' woman, the whore, the slut, the prostitute," the accomplice, and the instigator are all that she can see, foreclosing any relationship or understanding of her in this Black Boston community.[73] The narratives coalesce in this hall for Sappho. Her narrative will invite a particular interpretation of her to the members of the community; she will no longer be Sappho Clark, the respectable woman, but Maubelle Baubean, the fallen woman, will form and solidify. Admittedly, this is Sappho's internalized narrative. She does not hear the grieved sounds or the crying of the audience in the chamber. All she can hear is the narrative refrain of what she believes others will think of her. Sappho's narrative threatens to foreclose her, disconnecting her from opportunities and from a community, but it is also a narrative that prevents her from accepting that there can be anything more to herself than what she believes to be her moment of weakness.

Whereas Aboth Annette and Sappho, to an extent, read themselves through these narratives, other authors, like Jessie R. Fauset, explored the stories of how girls who did not read themselves within these narratives. Both Harper and Hopkins

demonstrate an idea akin to Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's charge—that these misogynoir narratives were limiting Black girls' development and opportunities. Yet Fauset is interested in crafting the story of a Black girl, who does not believe narratives about her nor give into them. While many know Fauset's editorial work as literary editor of *The Crisis*. She was also the editor of *The Brownies' Book*, a children's magazine published by *The Crisis*. This publication creates an ideological throughline for Fauset and her editing—what she thought her editorial work could do in racial uplift. Julia A. Charles-Linen writes that Fauset's fiction in *The Brownies' Book* "depicted 'That Middle World' through sustainable mixed-race communities that confronted and usurped—rather than acquiesced to—the color line."[74] Fauset recognized that her work and Black children were integral to a better tomorrow for the Black community; that they desired better opportunities and sought empowerment to enact change. Michelle Taylor Watts details how children's letters to the editor display "a desire and capacity for education and labor, racial pride, and community" as well as "an awareness of and access to a network of Black people who had a vested interest in the outcomes of [their lives]."[75] Fauset's editing labor, throughout her career, attests to a continued commitment to not only writing stories that resisted the color line but inspired younger generations toward the resources and means of racial uplift they sought. It is within this editorial history and ideology that her work, "Emmy," emerges.

Emmy's story is one of a young Black girl with genuine for her blackness, and it is the story of how Emmy navigates a world with that love at her core while cultural narratives would demand she recognize her blackness to be contemptible and herself to be a base or sinful being. A short story, "Emmy" is the story of its pseudonymous

character in her teen years while she attends school and falls in love with Archie, a multiracial boy that passes for white for a job in the story. Much of what Emmy experiences is like Annette in *Trial and Triumph,* though it seems based more significantly on Emmy being successful and brilliant as well as Black. While Annette was starved of opportunities because they were deemed unnecessary, Emmy has succeeded and been encouraged by her family and friends. Yet her encounters with the racist and misogynist narratives stem from interactions with white characters that she knows and does not know. White students and teachers consistently attempt to "teach" Emmy what it means to be black, and in other instances, Archie's white employer repeats cultural narratives that Black women would date men for money, a further spin of the sexualization mythology that effected Sappho. Though not all these narratives make it back to Emmy—the words of Archie's employers do not, but her absence in the conversation is notable—she refuses to take them as correct simply because the exist and are circulated as "truths." More often, her directness makes apparent the misogynoir logic they are espousing. Despite her attempts at rejection, the persistence of white characters to force the narratives upon Emmy, to change her understanding of herself and her place within American culture and society, provide insight into how necessary this misogynoir narrative project is for whiteness and for manhood at the turn of the century.

Emmy's white female classmates and teacher play a significant part in attempting to force Emmy into a white and patriarchal cultural hierarchy through dominant narratives. At the story's onset, we are introduced to a girl who loves her blackness. As I mentioned previously, when Emmy is asked if she would like to wash off her blackness to become white, she rejects the idea. She does not want to. "I guess

my hands are as nice as yours, Mary Holborn," she says to her white classmate.[76] Emmy's words make apparent the narrative in which Mary Holborn lives—that Emmy, a Black girl, should *want* to become white. When Mary Holborn responds with, "…if you don't mind---" Emmy's response is clear: "If she didn't mind—but why should she mind?"[77] Emmy does not understand why she should mind her blackness. Indeed, this opening is about Emmy finding herself engaged with these dominant narratives. Like her response to Mary Holborn, Emmy does not see herself in a particular way. During a lecture on race, her teacher, Miss Wenzel, asks Emmy to which race does she belong. Emmy hesitates. "She was not white, she knew that…She regarded the color of her slim brown hands with interest—she had never thought of it before."[78] What Fauset introduces to us and Emmy is how her school and classmates are arbiters of the cultural hierarchy; they serve as a space to socialize Emmy, and other Black girls, into their place. Yet Emmy's hesitation to answer what her race is and her rejection that she should aspire to be white show how she has not internalized these cultural narratives. She has not been exposed to nor thought through the implications of her race within this social and cultural structure that would place her at the bottom and her white female classmates as well as white men at its top. When she recounts the story about her exchanges with Mary Holborn, Emmy insightfully remarks that she is not worried. "It's white people, they're always minding."

Miss Wenzel, in fact, does mind a lot about Emmy's understanding of what it means for her to be a Black girl in America. Posing the question to Emmy about what race she belongs to is described as a test. Emmy fears failing, and before their exchange, Mary Holborn remarks she is "so glad [Emmy] didn't fail."[79] This is a test that Emmy must past before the class, alone, before she may enter the school yard.

And when Emmy hesitates to answer what race she is, Miss Wenzel begins to worry. "[I]f Emmy had chosen to ally herself with any other race except, of course, the white, how could she, teacher though she was, set her straight without embarrassment."[80] Her request that Emmy recite the five races of the world ask that Emmy understand how others have quantified and defined race globally; the early white and colonialist work of identifying racial categories and forcing people into those determinations. Emmy encounters this through Miss Wenzel's question. This one exchange mirrors what Hortense Spillers notes to be the displacement of "indigenous names/land marks" as well as other identities that dehumanized Africans when they were enslaved and trafficked across the Middle Passage.[81] Frances Smith Foster notes how in this same moment of nowhere wherein Africans were made into nothing, they were instead recounted under a racist grammar that qualified them by the pigment of their skin, revising their bonds and kinships along new structures; this white and male grammar rewrote the logics of African lives to make them legible within a new cultural hierarchy in which they were objects, not people.[82] By testing whether or not Emmy recognizes herself to be Black, Miss Wenzel poses the same question. Do you understand that you are Black and what that means? She asks the young girl before her and the class.

What Miss Wenzel wants assurances on is that Emmy accepts, fully, what her Blackness and her girlhood mean. She cannot imagine Emmy will assume herself to be white; that is impossible for her to do in Miss Wenzel's opinion. Rather, she worries that Emmy may assume she is any other racial identity than Black. That is the error or failing that Miss Wenzel would have to "set…straight without embarrassment." Not embarrassment for Emmy—embarrassment for Miss Wenzel, for

she would have to speak the narrative aloud *to* Emmy rather than Emmy *know* it deep down. This is not the sole moment with Miss Wenzel in which she enforces race. She more explicitly states it to Emmy during a conversation the following day. She calls the girl because Miss Wenzel feels a "sense of duty". She must "make the child see wherein her lot differed from that of her white schoolmates. She felt herself that she hadn't succeeded very well" the day before, when Emmy passed the test before her class.[83] Miss Wenzel proceeds to deliver a lecture to which Emmy responds, "'Then because I'm brown,' she had said, 'I'm not as good as you.'" Miss Wenzel stammers at this. She cannot "quite say that" to Emmy directly. She wants to impart it through obtuse language and double speak, couched in language about abstract terms, race, and gender; she cannot directly say to Emmy that her narrative space is to be below Miss Wenzel and her classmates. That is the narrative Emmy must live by. When Emmy leaves, confused by the conversation, Miss Wenzel complains to her sister: "I couldn't make her see what being colored meant."[84]

Miss Wenzel's complaints of what Emmy does "wrong"—what needs to be fixed about the Black girl—are made apparent in her evaluation of Emmy. She remarks that Emmy needs the wind taken out of her sails, and that she dresses too well: "Of course it doesn't cost much to live here, but Emmy's clothes! White frocks last winter, and a long red coat—broadcloth…And big bows in her hair."[85] Emmy's clothing are expensive and elaborate. The dichotomy between the excuse that the cost of living makes it easier for Emmy's mother to afford her clothes is offset with the derision in the comments. Emmy's mother buys clothes that are expensive for her daughter, and her white teacher is horrified by that because it means a Black girl dresses better than many of her white students. It disrupts class and race by making it

apparent Emmy's family can support her better than other students, potentially. Emmy's mother disrupts much of the town's understandings of race, gender, and class—what roles Black women are expected to play as always being fallen, destitute, or incapable. Economic, racial, and gendered superiority require that there be Black women from which to base those identities upon. These signals are all read by Miss Wentzel as disruptive. Her need to make Emmy understand her place in the world derives from Miss Wentzel's anger at Emmy's mother disrupting the racialized and gendered status-quo and that her daughter would further erode the narrative foreclosures that her mother escaped. For Miss Wentzel Emmy is too much the opposite of what a Black girl would be, and that is threatening. She ends her complaints against Emmy and her mother with the bleak statement: "I must say I like colored people to look and act like what they are."[86] She needs Emmy to be what the narrative demands. Wentzel demands that there be an essential, and within the patriarchal and white supremacist American society, right kind of Black girl for Emmy to be, and she works desperately to lock that girl into what limited possibilities that narrative has. "What she had meant to do was show Emmy kindly—oh, very kindly—to her proper place."[87] She leaves Emmy with a message. "[U]sing the [oblong] in the little tissue-wrapped parcel as a sort of text, to preach a sermon on humility without aspiration."[88] These are the stakes of the test that Emmy must pass in this society. She must learn to live humbly and without dreams; she must know her place as inescapable and limited.

Emmy's presence, however, is not always required for the narratives that prescribe her to circulate. Her love interest, Archie, is white passing and passes to have a job with Mr. Fields, a white businessman. Mr. Fields takes a liking to Archie,

so much so that he suggests that Archie learn how to run his business, having his biological son inherit the business in name only. Archie's close connection to Mr. Fields and his son, Nicholas, means they often offer him life advice. During a date with Emmy, Archie is spotted in the back car by Nicholas Fields, who is taken aback by seeing Archie with Emmy. When he sees Archie at work the next day, Nicholas nonchalantly asks Archie, "Where'd you get your black Venus, my boy?"[89] It is a nonchalant moment, one Archie slowly realizes is an insult against Emmy.[90] To call her a Black Venus is to allude to Saartje Baartman. Born in South African in 1789, Baartman was placed on exhibition on stages and within a cage throughout London and Paris starting in 1810. Baartman's body and the white supremacist notions of her African identity as primitive and sexual are what drove white Englishmen to take her to England on this tour. We do not know if this was consensually or willingly, but Baartman was given the stage name, the "Hottentot Venus." A racial, and now derogatory, term, Baartman's name translates to "Black Venus." This point arises earlier in the story, as Emmy notes that "the Hottentot" is "chosen with careful nicety to represent the entire Negro race."[91] To call Emmy a Black Venus is to draw similarities between her and Saartje Baartman, whose body had been marked by its supposed sexuality. The Black Venus, and her body, had become connected to the myth of Black women's hypersexuality.[92] Regardless of their differences, Nicholas grammatically connects Emmy, a girl he does not know and who does not look like Baartman, to the Black Venus, asserting her to be hypersexual and primitive; he collapses distinction between the two women, connecting them only by gender and race. Calling Emmy "Black Venus" forecloses her in the same narrative about Black women's sexuality as Sappho and so many others.

Yet it is not solely the narrative of her sexuality that Nicholas Fields forecloses Emmy within. Both he and his father connect her to a narrative that Black women seek out the wealth of white men. When Nicholas first sees Archie and Emmy together, he remarks: "Got her dressed to death, too; so that's how his money goes!" And later, when Emmy rejects Archie after a fight, his boss comes to find him, for he left work early, upset. He finds Archie staring at a portrait of Emmy. Mr. Fields misreads the situation. He thinks that Emmy will not let Archie go despite Archie trying to leave. "Won't she let you go?" He remarks to Archie.[93] "That's the way with these black women, once they get hold of a white men—bleed 'em to death."[94] Nicholas and his father belie a logic within their statements, one that suggests that Emmy has nothing and requires Archie to have any nice things. They obsequiously gesture to Black women's economic disenfranchisement, a result of several interlocking systems and narratives that prevented Black women from achieving an education and work or denied them access to a variety of fields based on racist and misogynistic understandings of Black women's abilities. They often worked low paid domestic work or hard labor.[95] What foregrounds this is Emmy's clothing—her ability to dress above what Nicholas or his father believes to be possible for a Black woman invites a narrative. She must be draining Archie of his money. Otherwise, it would be impossible for a Black woman to have such nice clothes. Her appearance begs a narrative that these two white men are more than willing to complete. This young girl is hypersexual and is extorting this white boy according to their patriarchal and white supremacist logics. Emmy cannot be interpreted in any other way for them. Rather, she is necessarily boxed into an explanation that aligns with how Nicholas and his

father see the world around them: Emily must be wanton and a gold-digger, using Archie to provide for herself what she is incapable of earning otherwise.

By telling Annette's, Sappho's, and Emmy's respective stories, Black women writers document a tradition of narratives Black girls and women lived in. They nod to the realities of these narratives—that they were predicated on fiction but circulated amongst American literature and culture as unquestionable "truths," as a reality. These cultural narratives were always circulating, and they interpolated young Black girls and women even as early as birth. For situations beyond their circumstances, these dominant narratives sought to isolate and disenfranchise Black women, making them feel abandoned and unworthy. And when Black girls or women did not subscribe to the narrative or resisted it, white and patriarchal culture attempted to induct them into it as many times as necessary. Black women conveyed the relationship between white supremacy and patriarchy to the consistent exploitation of Black women and the use of a hierarchy that relied upon the logics of determining one's distance from Black womanhood. As long as Black women were consigned to status as the lowest on the cultural hierarchy, then others were assured of their power, place, and privilege upon said hierarchy. Yet these Black women writers were not simply content to document to use and perpetuation of these narratives—how they affected the lives of Black women. They also edited these narratives by demonstrating how their characters reveal these narratives and break away from these narratives. In my next section I will read how Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset use their fiction to edit the narratives I have traced here and why that work matters. I examine how their fiction documents stories of Black girls and women overcoming and exposing their narratives and, at times, their fury and outright rejection of them. By editing cultural narratives through fiction,

Black women writers chart means of how to work against these cultural narratives and live their lives with innumerous possibilities cultural narratives foreclose them from.

Editing Narratives through Fiction

To edit the controlling narratives about Black women that circulated throughout American culture, Black women's fiction depicted narratives as liminal. They were something Black girls and women could navigate and move through rather than be arrested by, to draw on Toni Cade Bambara's reading.[96] Patricia Hill Collins makes the same argument when she writes that controlling images of Black women are "ideological justification[s] for race, gender, and class oppression."[97] Being arrested by misogynoir narratives entrapped Black girls and women at the bottom of America's social hierarchy. Whiteness and maleness became solidified identities who had cultural superiority when, as Toni Morrison writes, when they marked their distance from Africanness.[98] Black women's fiction edits these narratives to provide opportunities and new futures for Black girls and women. They portray Black girls and women moving through those narratives to the futures that were once believed impossible for them. In other instances, they directly challenge those narratives. Black women fiction writers depict stories of overcoming in the hope of preventing the internalization of any narratives, though their own writing provides glimpses into just how difficult that task was. Their fiction let Black girls and women find love and happiness and vent a justified anger at the intersecting systems of oppression that sustained as well as necessitated this narrative. Black women's fiction edits these narratives, laying them bare for their readers to see, and offers blueprints for how Black girls and women could move beyond and into new possibilities with their lives.

The simplest statement of how Harper's, Hopkins's, and Fauset's fiction edits cultural narratives about Black women is that they suggest that these narratives have no true power. They upend the power of these narratives, laying them bare for what they truly are: myths and untruths that sustain a system built upon Black women's oppression. There is no truth within the images and narratives of the jezebel, mammy, fallen woman, sapphire, or any of them. They were vapid caricatures that were foisted upon Black women by a white supremacist and patriarchal culture. "The dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining Black women's subordination."[99] Yet Annette, forced into a narrative about her evilness and baseness, finds Christian morals and virtue, receives an impressive education, and becomes a nurse and later a teacher. She finds love and a family; she finds the respect and care of her community—what she did not have as a child. For Nazera Sadiq Wright, this is the true purpose of Annette's story. Her's is a tale of a young Black woman who gains the skills necessary to join her community; her work as a teacher will play a larger part in the uplift the Black community.[100] This, alongside her Christian virtue, are, in fact, the markers of her triumph. When her fiancé's wife, who they had believed to be dead, returns, Annette ends their relationship. "She is your lawful wife. In the church of her father you pledged your faith to her, and I do not think any human law can absolve you from being faithful to your marriage vows."[101] Annette puts aside her wants in favor of her morals, a moment we are meant to read as the farthest distance from the child who threw oil on her neighbor's steps. She is no longer the sheep that troubles her grandmother. She leads a respectable and modest lifestyle. By passing this "great

trial," Annette does not accept another narrative. As someone who was an outsider and now has become an "insider," so to speak, Annette continues to navigate narratives of what it means to be a Black woman, particularly what it means to be the "right" kind of Black woman, a respectable and modest one. Yet Annette can never reconcile how she has been with where she is. Her newfound respectability is instead a marker of how she continues to edit cultural narratives, to exist outside and inside simultaneously without losing her life experiences in favor of a cultural narrative. Annette's life as someone who is outside that has learned how to navigate and exist insider her community is a continual act of editing. The narrative that Annette was trapped within was the one in which she was forced to remain at the lowest point—that girl whose existence was a punishment to white students, whose grandmother referred to her as the "scabby sheep," and whose future was shaped by her need to forego her education and get manual or domestic labor.[102] Harper edits the narrative that Annette must be the Other that creates the social hierarchy, and that she must remain there. Annette shows us that someone can be both outside and outside. She can carve a space for herself that allows her to be who she has always been and what she chooses to be. Harper's editing shows how Black girls and women do not have to forsake parts of themselves as they navigate a misogynoir-laden culture, but that they ultimately have choice for the narratives they inhabit or not.

Sappho similarly finds herself reconciling her path from the narrative she was entrapped by what she defines for herself at the end of *Contending Forces*. Ultimately, she comes to accept that she is a survivor, a mother, and someone who can be loved. Like Annette, she carves a narrative for herself in which she is more than the story of finding her way to a new or better narrative; she finds her way into a narrative that

embraces all aspects of her life. Claudia Tate writes that the ascendency to standard, or proscribed, narratives was not liberatory for Black women: Black women's actions were bound by "the limitations of social texts" that were "already inadequate for the liberational task."[103] Rather, the only possibility for Black women was "the process of redefinition."[104] Black women, like Hopkins shows with Sappho, needed to redefine themselves, not be defined by any others' narratives. The narrative of her as a fallen woman and active participant in her sexual assault limit much of what Sappho believes she deserves in life. It shaped her choice to hide her past and to present herself as virtuous to her new community. As she gradually falls in love with Will Smith, and he with her, she begins to feel the tension between her want for love and happiness and what the narrative tells her will be her life. In her room, she grieves her and Will's love, for it cannot be. She opines, "What have I done, what have I done to suffer thus? To give up all joy, and have only misery for all my life. I love this man; I know it know! I want his love, his care, his protection."[105] But she cannot accept her. Her story, the narrative in which she is entrapped, does not allow it. "'I cannot! It must not be!'" She continues.[106] "'So good, so noble! Oh, the happiness of home and love! must I be shut from them forever?'"[107] After a confrontation with John Langley, who knows Sappho Clark to be Maubelle Beaubean now, Sappho ends her engagement to Will Smith and flees Boston for that very fear—that she would have to give up such a noble man because of who she is. Yet Will never forgets Sappho. Reunited years later in New Orleans, where Sappho has hidden herself, he confesses that even after knowing her past he still loves her. And finally, Sappho accepts that she can be loved as she is. She no longer must "give up all joy" in her life in favor of "only misery." She is allowed and will be loved.

Yet this transformation is not solely the work of her love for Will, but also her love of Alphonse, the son she rejected after her assault. Her choice to love her son and accept his son, the rejection of what "had made her ashamed of the joys of motherhood," allow her to find love for herself.[108] Hazel Carby reads this as one of the key intents of Hopkins's work. "The only possible future for her black womanhood was through a confrontation with, not denial of, her history."[109] What Sappho sought was impossible for her; a return to a "pure black womanhood," the "uncolonized black female body" is the impossible goal that she chases.[110] Carby suggests that Sappho's healing comes with her "retrieval and reclaiming of the previously colonized." This works in tandem with Will as a "husband/partner," who accepted her sexual history."[111] Through an acceptance of herself—her history, her motherhood, and her love—Sappho can reclaim what of her is not colonized. That is to say that while Sappho cannot return to herself before she was sexually assaulted, she can find the contours of herself that are not claimed by the actions of her half-uncle. Those portions of herself are hers to embrace and use. I would build on Carby's reading and suggest that Hopkins's choice to represent the acceptance of a difficult and often hidden reality of Black women as an acceptable form of Black womanhood and motherhood rejects narrative foreclosure. Sappho shows us how traumatic moments and narratives coalesce to asks Black women to be alone for eternity, denying their joy to repent for their very existence. By allowing Sappho to accept herself, the love of her son, and the love of another, Hopkins shows that these realities are acceptable and can be moved past. The Sapphos of the community can find their way to love and acceptance, and in doing so, they deconstruct the power of the narrative that denies them that possibility.

For Fauset, Emmy encapsulates the possibilities of Black girls to be born and exist outside of the narratives, despite attempts by white supremacists and men to force her into those narratives. Emmy's hesitation at answering the question of what race she is, and her earnest admission that she had not reflected upon it before, are at odds with Miss Wentzel's question and its logic. Emmy has not minded her race. She has not been inculcated into the logics of a white/male America. And Miss Wentzel's intention to correct that are summed up simply in the logic of Emmy's statement: "It's white people, they're always minding."[112] Of course Miss Wentzel minds that Emmy does not understand her racial identity, both in what it is and what it means for her to understand her place in American society. Emmy's refusal is a rejection of the status hierarchy by which Emmy is "low" and Miss Wentzel is "high." Emmy destabilizes Miss Wentzel's racial, gender, and social place. If Emmy should disrupt the social hierarchy by behaving in ways that Black persons do not, then Miss Wentzel, and many others, risk losing their power. It is necessary. Yet Emmy rejects that she should feel bad about her Black womanhood. She rejects Mary Holborn's comment that implies Emmy should wish to become white. What is evocative about Emmy's rejection is that it is at times angry, yet it is often depicted as a misunderstanding. Fauset edits the narratives that others try to fit upon Emmy by having Emmy simply not understand what they mean. It is her directness that throws off Miss Wentzel. Posing to her teacher that she is "not as good as [her]" because of her skin color, Miss Wentzel can only respond, "'Well, I wouldn't quite say that.'"[113] Masami Sugimori points to this moment as a moment of narrative disruption. The need to correct Emmy's belief that there is not "a substantial 'difference'" between herself and her white classmates is a moment wherein Miss Wentzel is required to state the narrative

plainly.[114] "Emmy's literal approach confounds the seemingly respectable operation of racial ideology because one cannot convey a white-supremacist message to her without presenting oneself as a white supremacist."[115] Much of Fauset's editing, that narrative disruption that Sugimori notes, stems from Emmy's rejection of those narratives. Whereas Harper and Hopkins show the power to overcome these controlling narratives, Fauset explicitly shows that they have no power at any point. Using Emmy's literal responses as a means of editing showcases the un-real and illogical nature of these dominant narratives and asks why they should even allow them to make purchase in the first place.

The tension of Miss Wentzel to reject stating overtly presenting herself as a white supremacist gets at the additional necessity of using fiction for editing. Editing cultural narratives was a multifaceted operation, revealing the multiple interlocking oppressive systems and benefactors that perpetuated these narratives for their benefit. At its core, editing through fiction allowed Black women to reveal the logics of misogynoir at play in American culture. To return to Charles Mills's work on the racial contract, he states that "[a]ll whites are *beneficiaries* of the Contract, though some whites are not *signatories* to it."[116] Mills's distinction relies upon agency, and for Miss Wentzel, her direct confirmation that she wants Emmy to acknowledge she is lesser than white persons is an explicit statement that she has signed on as a beneficiary *and* signatory to the racial contract. That discomfort stems from the need for white supremacy to have a quiet power, one that is assumed and normalized. It is unquestionable or inexplicable. It exists simply because it is. Miss Wentzel cannot define the logic of her belief because she would have to acknowledge the ignorance

she agreed to in order to benefit from Emmy's, a child she teaches, disenfranchisement and denigration.

Yet I would suggest this not only pulls at the unwillingness many white supremacists have to being exposed for their beliefs. It also strikes at a particular relationship between white and Black women. White women's part in upholding white supremacy, even at the cost of interracial feminism, has had a long history. As Angela Davis notes, white women's inclusion and support of Black women's rights historically "was, at best, superficial."[117] One could look at Elizabeth Caday Stanton, who "was determined, it seems to prevent further progress for Black people…if it meant that white women might not enjoy the immediate benefits of that progress."[118] Stanton's remarks recognize the reality of many women's rights and suffrage movements at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth. White women continually sought out kinship with Black women in the advancement of women's rights, yet they would abandon them in favor of solidifying whiteness. They utilized Black women as dispensable labor that allowed white women's progress but halted Black women's progress in favor of what power whiteness brought. White feminism relies "on nonwhite women's labor in those struggles but also ignor[es] these women's own most pressing interests."[119] Forcing Miss Wentzel, a white woman and teacher, to repeat white supremacist ideology aloud not only makes white supremacy apparent, but it also names the long history of white women's intentional participation in and benefit from white supremacy. Fauset uses Emmy's directness to lay bare the people whom these narratives benefit. Black women's fiction, then, was a way to lay bare the white signatories and beneficiaries of the racial contract and the narratives they created as part of that contract. Fiction as editing is an action of

naming the narrative and flipping it to make clear and apparent what white supremacy and patriarchy attempts to hide: its inherent fallacies and its need to sacrifice Black women through disenfranchisement as a means of maintaining white/male power.

The interconnectedness of gender and race in these narratives underscore how using fiction as editing also took on the work of redefining and representing Black womanhood and motherhood. Womanhood during the nineteenth century was a highly racialized categorization. It was implied to be white, and many narratives moved to support that claim. Womanhood was defined by its virtue, piety, and purity.[120] Misogynoir narratives that claimed Black women to be innately sinful and lascivious worked to undermine Black women's claims to womanhood, and the violent realities of their lives were narrativized as "willing participation" to justify further the dismissal of Black womanhood. What Black women's fiction did was edit these narratives that they were not women by demonstrating stories that encapsulated the principles of virtue, piety, and purity. Both Hopkins and Harper convey a Black womanhood that cannot be interpreted as anything other than virtuous and pious. Hopkins articulates a virtue that is innate to Black womanhood and that can only be lost through choice—one must choose to lose their virtue. It cannot be taken without consent.[121] Harper describes Annette's choice to tell Mr. Luzerne to be with his wife because he made a vow before God with virtuous and pious words and imagery. It is a "righteous" choice, born of "duty," that will bring "into her soul…a joy which was her strength."[122] "In surrendering her life she found a new life and more abundant life in every power and faculty of her soul."[123] Harper's portrayal of Annette as an adult and Hopkins's depiction of Sappho both exemplify Black women's virtue and piety, editing the narrative dismissal of their womanhood. Harper's and Hopkins's fiction

edits these narratives by exposing the reality that many Black women were virtuous and pious, whether that be an essential character of Black women or one they worked toward. They write for recognition of a longstanding and critical history of Black womanhood, one that had been the victim of slavery and intersectional means of oppression. Black womanhood, their editing demonstrated, was a historied and persistent tradition despite what cultural narratives asserted.

In similar ways, their fiction edits into being new definitions of purity—capacious ideas of purity that allow Black women to recognize themselves, fully, as Black women. White womanhood would assert that purity includes sexual purity, invalidating Black women, both through stereotyped narratives and their lived experience as enslaved women. Yet stories like Lucy's and Sappho's make an argument for purity based upon a sort of religious commitment, a purity of heart, mind, and soul. It centered purity in the want for change, a dogged adherence to Christian values, and intent to do good in the world. The narrator for Sappho's story makes explicit as much. When she reunites with Will and they decide to marry, the narrator summarizes their marriage as "a love sanctified and purified by suffering."[124] Hopkins's inclusion of Sappho's love as something pure marks her as something more than her narrative. It reminds Sappho that she is someone deserving of love. Sappho is not narratively excluded from purity, for Hopkins identifies purity as something that can be earned through accepting oneself. It decenters the narratives of purity dominant in white culture and in understandings of "true womanhood." Sappho's purity calls into question the purity of white women, who were supporters and participants in prejudice and accepted the degradation of Black women. By emerging from the narrative into her own formulation of purity, Sappho recontextualizes and reorients the

logic of "purity" where she inhabits purity while white women do not. This is marked in strong distinction to the narratives surrounding true womanhood. Domestic fiction circulated the standards of true womanhood and repeatedly found Black women wanting. Hopkins's work edited narrative distinctions of womanhood to conceptualize a purity that had capacity enough for Black women and accepted their lived experiences.

The work of using fiction to edit narratives of Black womanhood was not distinct from the work to have Black motherhood recognized. Black women's fiction edits the erasure of Black motherhood, the cultural delimitation that Black motherhood be only seen as an economic and sexual. Jennifer L. Morgan notes that African women were locked, narratively, "in the lexicon of conquest and exploration."[125] Their bodies on display, even when feeding children or as mothers, were marked by narratives that foreclosed them as exploitable objects for conquest. This crossed the Atlantic and into chattel slavery. Angela Davis has written of how "[i]deological exaltation of motherhood—as popular as it was in the nineteenth century—did not extend to slaves."[126] Rather, they were designated as "breeders," an intentional choice to reflect the dehumanization of Black women and the erasure of Black motherhood in favor of the economic quantifier; they were seen like cattle that propagated a stock for use.[127] Naming Lucy, Annette's mother, and Sappho as mothers disrupts these dismissals and the narratives that asserted Black women were not mothers. Lucy is only acknowledged as a mother briefly, but I note her inclusion because no one hides that. While Annette faces the social and narrative consequences of Lucy's choices, it is precisely because she is Lucy's daughter; Lucy's motherhood is not under question, but the consequences of it are far reaching. For Sappho, she learns to love her

motherhood. She finds love and fulfilment in claiming her child and doing "her duty as his mother in love and training."[128] She is devoted to young Alphonse and to motherhood. Both Harper and Hopkins are redefining Black motherhood like they do for Black womanhood. They assert that definitions must be altered, must be edited, to include the realities of Black women. These are the divides in which Black women's necessities were excluded from white women's feminism. Black women needed to disrupt the impossible definitions and narratives that did not recognize nor protect their motherhood. Lucy's and Sappho's relationship to motherhood defies traditional narrative archetypes. Restrictive narratives would ask for a perfect form of motherhood, uncomplicated by tragedy and survival. Lucy and Sappho articulate motherhood that is accepting and complicated by their lived experiences, a reimaging of motherhood that is beyond narrative foreclosure. They show readers different pathways to and experiences with motherhood that are formed in new discursive possibilities and imaginings. And as Harper's and Hopkins's stories demonstrate, Black mothers like Sappho and Lucy were accepted despite what narratives would claim.

Yet Black women's editing of narratives surrounding womanhood and motherhood as well as misogynoir narratives belie the complexity of this work, as internalizing these narratives or perpetuating new narratives was a complex part of using fiction as editing. Discourse surrounding Black womanhood and motherhood are fraught with the tensions of narrative perpetuation. To fight against cultural narratives that boxed oneself in it is sensible to create a counternarrative. Creating a narrative that portrays all Black women to be paragons of the respectability politics that Evelyn Higgenbotham writes of. As mentioned previously, the narrow confines of focusing on

constant portrayals of respectability, including dissemblance as a practice, could be read as a narrative that fixed Black women in new ways.[129] Though Higginbotham notes that what was respectable attempted to have fluid definitions so as to be widely applicable, it often "unwittingly reinforced prevalent stereotypes" and denunciated those who "rejected hard work, piety, cleanliness, sexual purity, and temperance."[130] These are the wayward lives Saidiya Hartman recounts—the "betrayed girl mothers," the rural and urban poor, those in the slums, whose lives fell out from their small, multi-generational or multi-tenant homes in excess.[131] Marked for destruction and elimination from by social organizations literally, I connect them to the grammatical and ideological elimination perpetuated by ideas of Black womanhood or motherhood that rely too closely on respectability as a basis. Defining Black womanhood or motherhood by purity, piety, and respectability flattens those identities and experiences. It left out how individual Black women, women who lived within the oppressive and violent realities of a white and male America, created their own fulfilling understandings of what it meant to be a Black woman or mother. Instead, they are ideologically marked for destruction, as unimaginable and impossible narrative possibilities. A rigid counternarrative risked finding forms of Black womanhood and motherhood to be expendable. Yet the risk was worth the potential reward.

Harper's, Hopkins's, and Fauset's work address a similar fear that Black women may internalize these narratives should they go unquestioned. There was a fear that the Black community would internalize and perpetuate these narratives, limiting future generations of Black girls and women. We see this in Annette's grandmother when she defines Annette as a scabby sheep. Annette takes her grandmother's words

to heart: “[T]hat inconsiderate prophecy struck deep into her heart and left its impress upon her unfolding life.”[132] Mrs. Susan Harcourt’s remark internalizes the narrative of Annette as a wicked and base being into her heart. The young girl’s mischief seems like a self-fulfilling cycle, yet it is arguably the reaction of a child who feels abandoned by everyone, including her only remaining family. John Langley has a similar function for Sappho Clark. He uses the narrative that Black women who survived sexual assault were pariahs and could not be loved. When Langley learns that Sappho is Maubelle Beaubean, a fallen woman, he lays plans. Long obsessed with Sappho, he demands that she end her engagement with Will Smith and marry Langley instead. He espouses the white narrative that Sappho’s sexual assault precludes her from marriage and love. “Ambitious men do not marry women with stories like yours!” He shouts at her.[133] He preys on her fear of the distance between her imagined depravity and Will’s good nature: “A man as supercilious as Will in his pride of Northern birth would take no excuse, and would never forgive.”[134] Langley, as a Black man, becomes the mouthpiece of a white supremacist and patriarchal narrative for his personal gain. He has internalized the narrative and mobilizes it to his benefit. These moments are cautionary, functioning as a warning to their readers. If these narratives are not dispelled or edited, then the Black community could internalize and re-circulate these narratives. The logics of a world that operated by limiting Black women’s possibilities may fossilize within the Black community if they, especially Black women, began believing the cultural narratives. Black women’s fiction, then, edited these cultural narratives to prevent them gaining purchase in the community. They leaned on the forms speculative nature to write any number of stories that demonstrated to Black girls and women how they were more than the misogynoir

narratives limited them to and that their lives were full of many more possibilities that those controlling narratives could imagine.

The documentary and speculative nature of fiction as well as editing is what makes fiction such a lucrative means for Black women challenging cultural narratives. The limitless possibilities of fiction to be grounded in both the real and the imaginary gave Black women space. Writers like Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset tell recognizable stories: the stories of young Black girls and women, who were forced into narratives that did not fit or represent them and silenced if they did not play their role. And they use their stories to document very real reactions to these narratives. Annette's mischievous nature is an effect of the apocryphal curse her grandmother shot into Annette's heart. Sappho's self-condemnation and vow to forego happiness because of what she experienced in life is a result of her narrative. Emmy's refusal to give in to the narrative and be re-shaped to feel shame and baseness for her racial identity is a rejection of the narrative enterprise itself. Their fiction records these stories and possibilities for current and future generations of Black girls and women, offering touchstones by which to guide themselves. It is a reclamation of the real lives Black girls and women lived against the record of fiction about Black women and girls written by white/male authors. This reclamation of the power of fiction and the written word to reflect Black women's experiences truly is an important one for the power of fiction. Karla F. C. Holloway writes that the "reclamation of women's voice is the critical accomplishment of contemporary literature by black women writers."[135] Reclaiming the power of their words demonstrates how Black women's fiction is "a source of textual power that both structures story and absorbs its cultural legacy.[136] While Holloway speaks to the Black women's writing of the nineteen-nineties, I

would suggest it is applicable even as far back as the post-bellum, pre-Harlem period, as Black women were writing in order to have their voices, and the inherent power of recording their experiences in fiction, recognized. They are so applicable because Holloway speaks of the same reclamation as Audre Lorde, as Harper, as Hopkins, and as Fauset. It was more than telling different stories; it was negotiating and editing deeply entangled narratives and discourse practices. This was charting new possibilities to escape how narratives were turned against Black women often. And I would put her words in conversation with Lorraine Bethel, who writes that Black women's fiction has always navigated the complexity of "capturing the political and cultural realities of their experience while using literary forms created by and for white, upper-class men." Black women writers navigate the complexity of a writing tradition created without imagining they would use it to record their own experiences and expression. Reclaiming that power and doing so within fiction is a powerful reclamatory and documentary act by Black women; they told the stories of Black women in a system actively hostile to such an identity. Editing these narratives through fiction, showing the complex lives of Black girls and women affected by these cultural narratives, laid bare their function—to sustain a cultural hierarchy of power that fueled itself by placing Black women at the bottom. Showing how these narratives are untrue and showing Black girls and women who move beyond those narratives took power from the cultural narratives themselves and instilled power in the words of Black women.

Yet the political and personal are always balanced with a use of fiction's natural bend toward imagination and possibility. The allure of fiction is that admixture of real and unreal, providing innumerable possibilities for Black women writers.

Pauline E. Hopkins, for example, takes a prolonged look at the jezebel narrative and portrays a complex and conflicted woman in Sappho Clark. A person, who represents a paragon of virtue, is entrapped in a narrative, and yet Sappho can escape. She can have a beautiful future with the love of her child and the man who she loves. Harper can imagine a world where Annette, plagued by a narrative that she is wicked, can find religion, community, a career, and love. She is a nurse and later a teacher; her world is open far beyond the means of what the narrative originally dictated to her—domestic or manual labor or nothing. For Fauset, she can imagine a world that was growing, a continual generation of Black girls who did not know these narratives. They challenged the white supremacist and patriarchal logics, and they moved beyond them. When these girls were asked to not be bitter about all they had to give up in life because of their race and gender, they could be rightfully angry about it, for the system was structured against them from the start.[137] Fiction allowed them to imagine any number of possibilities for Black girls and women to navigate through and live their lives beyond these narratives. In her work *Doers of the Word*, Carla L. Peterson writes that this is a feature of Black women's fiction writing: "In particular, they took advantage of the nonteleological nature of fiction to explore the different possible shapes and outcomes of the experiences of blacks in America."[138] From this they could chart new pathways forward and new possibilities for Black girls and women. This balance of the real and imaginary of Black women's fiction is why recognizing it as an act of editing is important. It recollects the many ways Black women worked against cultural narratives through their fiction, upending these narratives and rewriting their realities instead. To return to Peterson's words, "they hoped that fiction

would serve as a yet another instrument not only of social protest but also of empowerment," enabling them to use fiction to create community and new futures.[139]

On a more personal level, however, is how Black women's fiction, as editing, allows them to record stories within with Black girls and women could find themselves. It was not solely that Black women's fiction edited narratives about them, regaining the power of their word to manifest possibilities for these new generations. There is a concomitant and equally necessary urge to represent Black women's lives capaciously. Not only were these narratives tragically reductive and arresting, but they were also horrifically impossible to find oneself within. How was a Black woman to find her in a literature that foreclosed her to be only a caricature? Barbara Smith's words from this epigraph echo this point. It is the need for representation that illuminates the contours of her existence in which she finds what defines herself. To wish for a book—something, anything—that would tell her of her life. Some text that would reflect to her what it meant to be a Black woman or to be a Black lesbian woman in a world in which there were little to no representations of such experiences. By writing these fictions and editing these narratives, Black women's writing works toward a larger oeuvre of their experiences that reach out to those like Barbara Smith, desperate for some way to read and to see themselves in words and in the world. It is the work that Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Zora Neale Hurston, Ann Petry, Margaret Walker, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Gloria Naylor, Ntozake Shange, and more continue to take on.

However, I do not wish to diminish the realities of Smith's words either. Written in 1985, Smith's words would not be strangers in our contemporary time. Her words are temporally unbound. Their call for representation rings true for the women

of the period this work looks to as much as they do for Black women of Smith's time and today. What is most provocative about fiction as an act of editing is that it attests to the creation of a counter literary tradition, one by and for Black women rather than about Black women. The possibility of this work was in realizing what Smith believes a book that shared her experience would do for her: "When such a book exists then each of us will not only know better how to live, but how to dream."[140] Recognizing Black women's fiction as editing gives us insight into the long tradition of Black women writers working against white supremacy and patriarchy to deconstruct their narratives and document Black women as so much more than these misogynoir stereotypes and narratives. They connected their work to protest and progress, and they hoped it would pave the way for future generations to live unfettered by these controlling depictions. And while Smith reminds us that the work of representation is always in progress, her words speak to an earnest goal of many of these Black women writers—that their work would help future generations to live and to dream.

ENDNOTES

[1] This is taken from Audre Lorde's "Poetry Is Not a Luxury." The full quote reads: "The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives." Though she talks of poetry, Lorde's quote readily applies to fiction in this context: Restrictive cultural practices in works of fiction and presumptions surrounding Black women's fiction shape the "quality of light" in which they could represent themselves, change their lives, and imagine futures. See, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. Penguin Books, 2018, p. 1.

[2] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 173.

[3] Brown, *Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 176.

[4] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, xv; "The Value of Race Literature," 514.

[5] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, xv; "The Value of Race Literature," 513, 514.

[6] Casey and Salter, "Challenges and Opportunities," 102.

[7] *The Big Sea*, 218.

[8] "Voice from the South," 98.

[9] Cooper, "Voice from the South," 98.

[10] Cooper, "Voice from the South," 98.

[11] Cooper, "Voice from the South," 99.

[12] "Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors (1933)," 56.

[13] Scholars have written about the complexity of Church Terrell's exchange on lynching with Thomas Nelson Page in the *North American Review* in 1904. Church Terrell's rebuttal relies on several stereotypes that have led to discussions on the complexity of navigating print as a Black woman and what part her work played in that stereotyped discourse as well. See Mary Church Terrell, "Lynching from a Negro's Point of View," *North American Review* 178 (June 1904): 853-868. Reprinted

in Beverly Washington Jones, *Quest for Equality: The Life and Writings of Mary Eliza Church Terrell, 1863-1954*. (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1990): 167-181; and Martha Solomon Watson, "Mary Church Terrell vs. Thomas Nelson Page: Gender, Race, and Class in Anti-Lynching Rhetoric." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 65-89.

[14] "Toward a History of Access," 384.

[15] *Racial Contract*, 16.

[16] Mills, *Racial Contract*, 16.

[17] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 29.

[18] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 29.

[19] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 34.

[20] Manring, "Aunt Jemima Explained," 356. For more on the material culture of Mammies in America, see Patricia A. Turner's *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies: Black Images & Their Influence on Culture*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994.

[21] Hine, *Hine Sight*, 27.

[22] *Mammy*, 2.

[23] Turner, *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies*, 48.

[24] Turner, *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies*, 48.

[25] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 181.

[26] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 181.

[27] "Why Black Cinema?," 200.

[28] *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*, 1.

[29] *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*, 1.

[30] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 164.

[31] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 173.

[32] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 173.

[33] "Rape and the Inner Lives," 913.

[34] *Our Sister Editors*, 4; *Blue Pencils & Hidden Hands*, xxx, xxxi.

[35] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 184.

[36] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 191.

[37] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 191.

[38] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 202.

[39] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 180.

[40] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 215.

[41] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 216.

[42] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 227.

[43] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 227.

[44] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 228.

[45] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 231.

[46] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 216, 220.

[47] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 192.

[48] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 190.

[49] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 184, 191.

[50] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 220.

[51] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 182.

[52] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 182.

[53] *Self-Taught*, 39.

[54] *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 192.

[55] Fielder, *Relative Races*, 12.

[56] *Playing in the Dark*, 37–38.

[57] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 49.

[58] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 73.

[59] Fulton, *Speaking Power*, Chapter 3.

[60] Fulton, *Speaking Power*, Chapter 3.

[61] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 157.

[62] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 157.

[63] *Women, Race & Class*, 175.

[64] *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 27.

[65] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 27.

[66] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 27.

[67] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 27.

[68] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 56.

[69] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 89.

[70] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 149.

[71] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 158.

[72] *Hine Sight*, 40–41.

[73] hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, 52, 53.

[74] "The Blind Maze of Thought: Jessie Redmon Fauset, The Brownies' Book, and the Measure of a Movement," 41.

[75] "'My Soul Calls for Larger Things": Voice, Vision, and Justice in Children's Letters to the Editor," 78.

[76] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 79.

[77] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 79.

[78] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 79.

[79] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 79.

[80] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912.

[81] Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 217.

[82] Foster, "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture," 716.

[83] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 81.

[84] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 81.

[85] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 81.

[86] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 81.

[87] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 81–82.

[88] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 82.

[89] Fauset, "Emmy," 1913, 134.

[90] Fauset, “Emmy,” 1913, 134.

[91] Fauset, “Emmy,” 1912, 81.

[92] Gilman, “The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality,” 19.

[93] Fauset, “Emmy,” 1913, 139.

[94] Fauset, “Emmy,” 1913, 139.

[95] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 88, 90.

[96] “Why Black Cinema?,” 200.

[97] *Black Feminist Thought*, 77.

[98] *Playing in the Dark*, 8.

[99] *Black Feminist Thought*, 79.

[100] Wright, *Black Girlhood*, 142.

[101] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 280.

[102] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 184.

[103] *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 230.

[104] Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 230.

[105] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 106.

[106] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 106.

[107] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 106.

[108] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 214.

[109] *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 144.

[110] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 144.

[111] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 144.

[112] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 80.

[113] Fauset, "Emmy," 1912, 81.

[114] Sugimori, "Black Subjects' 'Literal' Resistance in Jessie Redmon Fauset's 'Emmy' and 'There Was One Time!,'" 129.

[115] Sugimori, "Black Subjects' 'Literal' Resistance in Jessie Redmon Fauset's 'Emmy' and 'There Was One Time!,'" 129.

[116] *Racial Contract*, 11.

[117] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 71.

[118] *Women, Race & Class*, 71.

[119] Fielder, *Relative Races*, 242. Angela Davis also wrote about this in her work *Women, Culture, & Politics*. She writes, "It is possible for white women—especially those associated with the capitalist or middle classes—to achieve their own particular goals without securing any ostensible progress for their racially oppressed and working-class sisters." See, *Women, Culture, & Politics*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 18.

[120] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, 25.

[121] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 86.

[122] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 282.

[123] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 283.

[124] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 248.

[125] "" 'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder," 176.

[126] *Women, Race & Class*, 7.

[127] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 7.

[128] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 212.

[129] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 194.

[130] *Righteous Discontent*, 187, 194–95.

[131] *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, 19.

[132] Harper, *Three Rediscovered Novels*, 184.

[133] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 197.

[134] Hopkins, *Contending Forces*, 196–97.

[135] "A Figurative Theory," 329.

[136] Holloway, "A Figurative Theory," 329.

[137] Fauset, "Emmy," 1913, 141.

[138] *Doers of the Word*, 175.

[139] *Doers of the Word*, 175.

[140] "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," 173.

Coda

BLACK WOMEN'S EDITING THEN AND NOW

In 1965 Toni Morrison became an editor for L. W. Singer, a textbook division of Random House. Like Langston Hughes referred to Jessie Fauset as one of the midwives of the New Negro literature movement, Morrison nurtured a generation of Black writers through one of the biggest publishing houses in the United States.[1] Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis, Huey Newton, Gayl Jones, June Jordan, Leon Forrest, Lucille Clifton, and Muhammed Ali are only some of the persons whose work crossed her desk and made it into the hands of readers. And while she edited and published a generation of Black writers, she worked on her own. While at L. W. Singer, Morrison continued work on and eventually published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison claimed her own writing was separate from her editing. "Writing was my other job—I always kept it over there, away from my 'real' work as an editor or teacher," she said. But in practice they were more intertwined than apportioned. Her novel caught the attention of three persons: Robert Bernstein, Jason Epstein, and Robert Gottlieb. Bernstein saw *The Bluest Eye* in a bookstore with Epstein and asked if Morrison was the same Morrison in the scholastic division, L. W. Singer.[2] Gottleib was then the editor-in-chief of Alfred A. Knopf, a publishing house acquired by Random House in 1960. He signed Morrison to Knopf. At the same time, Morrison transferred to Random House and became a trade editor under Epstein. In the same building that Morrison edited the works of Angela Davis and June Jordan she found her lifelong

editor in Gottleib, who worked with her for the rest of her life.[3] Morrison was now an editor and signed author in the same building.

Morrison's work as an editor had practicality and intentionality. It was a job that supported her and her two sons after her divorce from Harold Morrison in 1964. Editing also utilized her skills as a student and a teacher. She completed a B.A. in English from Howard University and a master's in English from Cornell university, and she taught English at Texas Southern University and Howard University. Yet she was not unaware of the racial and gendered dynamics of publishing. When Morrison joined Random house, editors were autonomous. "Random House was interesting in editing because each editor did his or her own thing and then went to the head guy for money. You pulled your own weight as far as selecting books. It wasn't a committee decision, it was an individual decision."[4] This is how Morrison cultivated a generation of Black writers. She focused on one Black text each season, printing and circulating Black writers that may not have had a chance at Random House otherwise: "I wanted to give back something." Her work as an editor was that something. She would get Black writers published and into the hands of readers. "I wasn't marching. I didn't do anything. I didn't join anything. But I could make sure there was a published record of those who did march and did put themselves on the line."[5] Being an editor at Random House was Morrison's activism. She found and got Black writers through a publication system built to get "a thirty-year-old Long Island woman" to buy a book. Their literature was not the interest of publishing houses like Random House. Even though she had authority on the works she acquired, Morrison did receive comments from others about the Black work she published. A salesman noted that Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* would sell to Black readers but could not be sold "'on the same side of

the street.'"[6] Black readers would buy *Corregidora*, but white readers would not; white readers do not read Black literature, he made clear.

In response, Morrison compiled, co-edited, and published a collection, *The Black Book*. *The Black Book* is both a collection and a collage. She brought together newspaper articles, documents, patent reproductions, writings, photographs, drawings, songs, letters, and more. Morrison called it "the whole potpourri of what black life was and had produced."[7] Random House thought the book was a visual disaster.[8] But Morrison loved it. It was a labor of love, in fact. She described the book as a "genuine Black history book—one that simply recollected Black life as lived."[9] The book had no order, chapters, or themes. It overflowed with content instead—with life, as Morrison said. What I would argue is that Morrison's work intervened as a work of Black historiography and Black print familiar to Black literary and print historians. Before academic interventions that expanded print culture studies, Morrison, and I am sure others, marked Black history and literature as multimodal. Black history was documentary excess. Historians, Morrison claims, were not looking in the right places—at the people and their things. *The Black Book* shows that Black history happens everywhere and in everything. White history was about exceptional persons. Black history was about the people. "[I]t is intelligent, it is profound, it is alive, it is visual, it is creative, it is complex, and it is ours. It has what I believe may be the only mythic quality unique to Black people: presence."[10] Like Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossel, S. Elizabeth Frazier, Lucy Wilmot Smith and scores of Black women historiographers before her, Morrison was a compiler and editor of Black history, and she aimed her work right at the relationship between Black history and white historiography—the place where Black history had been shaped around and in

response to white persons rather than as a lived experience by Black Americans.[11] Morrison got *The Black Book* published in 1974, and it was designed, produced, and printed by Black persons. This work took priority, sidelining her other projects, but it was urgent. "I was scared that the world would fall away before somebody put together a thing that got close to the way we really were," she wrote.[12]

Editing was Morrison's contribution to Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the continued movements of the 70s and early 80s—before she left Random House in 1983. *The Black Book* is a historiographical intervention. It insists in a Black history shaped by the lived experience of its people. Morrison defined it by its lack of authorial and editorial mediation: "There is no 'author' (although four authors, chief among them Spike Harris, got stuff together); no editorial rhetoric. The material gets its focus in quotes from things Black people have said…"[13] It is not shaped by an author or re-shaped by an editor—both of which bring their perspective to composing, revising, and arranging the materials. Though she is only one part of it, Morrison shows Black history as recorded by Black persons. Unlike *The Black Book*, her literal editing shaped Black literature. We have works by Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, and Angela Davis because of her work. Not solely because of her, but more of their texts are in the world because of Morrison. Her editing was also an archival work. In her own words, Morrison edited because she did not march. Rather than be in the streets, she edited. Editing allowed her to collect the works of and stories about those marching. Her work was to create the public record of those who fought for Black civil rights while she was at Random House. And that work persisted in her own writing, drafting stories that needed to be written about Black life and American society. And editing was inseparable from her writing. Her opinion changed

throughout the years. She writes in the preface to *Beloved* that she thought it was strange when Random House presumed she had to quit to write as her books grew popular.[14] She thought it "queer and predictable" that editing and writing were seen as distinct or incompatible.[15] She compares it to being asked how to teach and create—how to be a painter and mentor. They are two sides of the same coin; one feeds the other. When you write, you edit. When you edit, you write. Dichotomizing writing and editing was impossible for Morrison. Morrison edited in every possible way, as a trade editor, a compiler, and a writer. She was editing always.

I cite Morrison because her work mirrors many of the Black women covered within this dissertation. She stretches the chronology of the editorial labor I chart throughout this dissertation and shows how the editorial labor behind periodicals, historiography, Black women's intellectual work and theory, knowledge preservation, documentation, and imagination persist from the post-bellum, pre-Harlem to today. Much like Black women periodical editors reprint and circulate the world outside into the homes of Black women; as Black women nonfiction editors distilled and recorded history and theory for everyone to read; as Black women wrote lists of people for others to know and to remember; and as Black women writers generated fiction to expand the imagined futures of their readers, Morrison crosses through all of these strains in her lifetime. Her work also gestures to the why of editing—why take on this work? In her own words, it let her do work for a movement she was not contributing to in the streets. She took her skills and used them best where she could, as an editor in a publishing house where she had marginal freedom in seeking out Black writers and intellectuals. However, I would not claim editing to be the singular contribution of or understanding of Morrison's work. It is a part of her larger work—how she

understands her contribution to the Black rights movements of the mid- to late-twentieth century. Morrison's fiction did not exist without her editing, and in turn, her work changed the landscape of Black and American literature. Her work engages in historiographical editing, intellectual editing, and fiction edition, complicating our understandings of race, gender, class, chattel slavery, trauma, love, and hope. We cannot understand fully the impact of Toni Morrison on American literature and culture without understanding her editorial labor, both physical and intellectually.

Those whose works I look at within this dissertation took on similar work, utilizing the skills they had to enact change. Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell used "Our Women's Department" to critique T. Thomas Fortune's focus on the exceptional Black woman who furthered his and Booker T. Washington's ideas on Black advancement. More so, she used it to connect Black women readers to organizations and groups who could support them while they were disenfranchised by the racialized and gendered nature of capitalism. Black women were forced into domestic and physical labor to support their families, and this work did not allow them the freedom of seeking education or affording childcare or other needs. Mossell's columns on nurseries, kindergartens, clothing sales, offers for Christmas dinners tell readers of their options. She articulates support networks defined by the community—Black women and the Black community supporting Black women. Pauline E. Hopkins's editing is similar initially. She collects information and circulates information on organizations and their members, and she includes stories of Black excellence throughout. And she collects Black history as a record for readers. Like Mossell, we could easily see how Hopkins's aggregation of this information connects readers and other organizations. She brought into Black homes stories and organizations they

would not have heard about otherwise—clubs, people, histories, and fiction that showed the vibrancy of Black life at the turn of the century. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin mirrors this in *The Women's Era*. Her newspaper brought the art, literature, and culture Black women could not travel to consume to their home. Her newspaper recirculated culture to Black women, hoping to better their lives through exposure and education. Wells brought the realities of lynching into the homes of Black and white readers across the nation. She made her work accessible to everyone, whether they could or could not read her newspaper. It was imperative everyone, every Black person, understood what was happening in the South and with lynching. Wells's editing circulated the data of a Black genocide throughout the South as groups debated lynching and organized to end it. Editing periodicals, then, offered Black women a way to operate as aggregators, gathering information they believed necessary for Black women's survival and success.

Black women's nonfiction editing stems from a need to document and preserve Black history and Black women's theoretical work. I bridge these chapters through Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell, who returns as the compiler and editor of a history on Black women, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*. Mossell establishes her text as a response to one text that presumes women's history is white, but we can extend that to a larger issue of white and male historiography. Mossell creates a text that presumes Black history, particularly Black women's history, must be recorded. Anna Julia Cooper's collection and arrangement of essays for *A Voice from the South* edits Black women's intellectual work back into the discourse of the time. Her continual choice to name narratives and refute them through her own structure textually mirrors much of the work Black women were doing, theorizing and complicating discourse on racial

uplift. I draw a parallel between Cooper's editing and bell hooks's reading of talking back—the action of rejecting and arguing with power in ways that developed hooks as an intellectual and writer.[16] Editing lets Cooper talk back and document that practice for others to recognize and, perhaps, to enact in their own lives. Lucy Wilmot Smith marks a similar path to Mossell and Cooper, documenting the lives and work of Black women. Smith's collective biography intermixes famous and lesser-known Black women journalists. Her work gestures toward what the possibilities of this future generation. Smith sees her work as a record of Black women's endurance that connects to the work of contemporary Black women. Smith invites her readers to participate in this legacy, working toward changing the future. Each of these works were created to document and preserve these histories, and they signal that readers can participate in these movements; Black girls and women readers could become integral parts of American history, sharing space with figures like Victoria Earle Matthews, Ida B. Wells, and Cooper. To an extent, editing nonfiction allows Black women to push for Black history and Black women's intellectual work recognition. Considering the gestures that Smith makes, editing nonfiction asks its readers to find themselves in these histories and discourses, modeling themselves after the lives of these figures or mirroring the work of Cooper. Black women's fiction operates as an educational means, teaching Black history and offering blueprints for future generations to use. These texts, both books and serial pieces, could traverse far and wide and reach more readers than a classroom or lecture may.

Listing as an editorial act builds on nonfiction's documentary and preservationist drive but pivots by creating an index readers could refer to and an oral practice audiences could recite. Lists consist of a successive listing of items. In this

case, they are Black writers and their works. Victoria Earle Matthews's *The Value of Race Literature* implements a list and pushes our understanding of editing from an act of limitation to an act of surplus; sometimes listing, like Matthews uses, is the choice to not exclude any materials. Her list of Black writers and texts attests to a vastness that cannot be refuted by white supremacist and misogynist erasure of Black literary history. S. Elizabeth Frazier similarly lists persons through her collective biography. Frazier's biographies, like Matthews, provide us a list of historical Black women that gestures to their exclusion in other collective biographies on women or the race. While there is a preservationist instinct to this, I would consider lists as an early form of enumerative bibliography, listing several authors and works for readers to thumb through when they read the text. Using lists as an editorial act created a reference work that circulated through homes and exchanged hands. Matthews's work, however, adds another dimension to this reading, as her text was a speech originally. We then must consider that reading these lists aloud to a rapt audience interested in Black progress both convinced them of the importance of race literature to their work and of the vastness of Black literary history. Recitation as a part of remembering, of learning, Black literary history cannot be understated. Black women used lists to edit to create ways of indexing Black literary history for readers to learn it and when recited aloud, they began the act of remembering and truly knowing this history by heart.

Black women's fiction as an editorial act looks at how Black women wrote stories that rejected narratives and pushed to expand their readers' imaginations. Frances E. W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph* showed how Annette lived with narratives of her inherent inferiority and how those narrative attempted to enclose her. Pauline E. Hopkins's *Contending Forces* presented the story of Sappho Clark and how she was

affected and shaped by the Jezebel myth and her story beyond that myth. Jessie R. Fauset showed how these myths permeate every aspect of Black girls and are entirely fictional; they do not stem from the reality of Emmy's life whatsoever. Each of these stories take power from misogynoir narratives about Black women. It is not just that they move beyond those narratives but that each character demonstrates how young Black girls and women can move beyond those narratives. Their totalism is deconstructed. Annette finds herself in her education and religion, building a place for herself within a community. By her story's end, she is defined by her kindness, faith, and brilliance rather than the inferiority her family and community defined her in her youth. Sappho remarries and accepts motherhood, a role she refused as it reminded her of her rape. Sappho's story is the story of how the Jezebel narrative shaped her own understanding of her place within the world: she continually supposes she is marked a sinner, will be rejected, and must atone for something she did not instigate. Her story's end shows that she was not forsaken and could truly be loved. Emmy's story offers a different approach to these perspectives. She is continually asked to accept misogynoir narratives about herself, which she rejects. She refuses to feel that one of her life's dreams should be to be white; Emmy does not believe her blackness is shameful. And Fauset traces how narratives about Black women attempt to plant themselves on Black girls even when there is no truth to them. Yet Emmy always moves beyond, rejecting these narratives. Emmy's story is the story of rejecting narratives and the right to be more than what white/male America attempted to shape them to be. Harper, Hopkins, and Fauset wrote these stories to show Black girls and women struggling through these similar situations—the narratives they found themselves increasingly defined by—and presented stories that showed them ways of living beyond these narratives.

Black women's fiction as an editorial act created innumerable possible futures in which Black girls and women could imagine themselves.

Black women's editorial work during the post-bellum, pre-Harlem offers us a new perspective on Black women's participation in literary history. Editing, as a profession and an act, is invisible. At its best, it is both overt, shaping a text, and it is concealed, unnoticed by readers. Black women's editorial work is often a work of recovery. Black women's literary and print history is obscured because their histories are often erased or lost, a corollary to how editing itself is also typically invisible. Editorial scholars have recovered the presence and expression of editors, particularly in periodicals. Recognizing editing and that Black women have held these positions since Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and perhaps even before her, recollects a part of Black women's literary history. Recovering Black women's editing is seeking out the work of positions and persons doubly obscured then, both as editors and as Black women. Editing let these women have more direct control on the message of their work, and they had control over the production of their texts. These positions provided protection and power with which they used to shape Black and American literature.

However, referring to editing as concealed does not depoliticize the act. The readings of editing I visit throughout this dissertation are political acts. Editing resists the controlling narratives that white and male America intentionally placed upon Black women. It pushes against the disenfranchisement and dehumanization of Black women that sustained a cultural and social hierarchy wherein whiteness and male identities garnered, and still garner, immense power. There is a sanctity to editorial work that indicates its importance for Black women. In chapter one, I read Pauline E. Hopkins's establishment of the Editor's Sanctum as a protective action and as an

elaborative action. Referring to an editorial space as a sanctum provides it reverence. It connotes that editing—the act, its persons, and its places—are sacred. Editing is a holy action. It is also a gesture towards exclusion. A sanctum is a space where others cannot enter freely. It is, as its definition states, a place where "one is free from intrusion."[17] Hopkins's words gesture to a larger promise of editing for Black women: their work would not be intruded upon. Hopkins's words are not a fulfilled promise. This dissertation attests to how Black women's writing was interrupted by white men, white women, and Black men throughout their careers. However, I find what she implies about editing to be evocative. Editors having a sanctum suggests that Black women could work unmediated and uninterrupted. Editing promised they could write more freely and represent themselves earnestly. And they hoped their works would advance the movement for Black liberation and civil rights. Editing provided them with a means and, as Hopkins's words suggest, protected their work.

Black women's editing is also creative. Creative in that they generated numerous texts to counter the misogynist narratives endemic to American culture, and "creative" in that these works were attempts to do something more. Shawn Anthony Christian, Jacqueline Emery, and Jewon Woo each explore how editing can be collaborative work amongst two or more persons interested in getting a work completed and published.[18] For Jewon Woo this collaborative aspect underscores how editors and the texts on which they worked "constantly evolved and revived themselves under communal leadership, responding to the ever-changing dynamics of their communities."[19] Woo emphasizes editing to be a social act that collaborates with the community by continually responding to it. The editing I trace throughout this work should be imagined as interconnected pieces of a larger project by Black women.

Certainly, they are intertwined in their work to reject misogynoir narratives, but I would suggest they are engaged in interlocking attempts to better Black life. Black women's editorial works have persisted from the post-bellum, pre-Harlem until now in a diverse set of ways. From Pauline E. Hopkins to Toni Morrison, from Gertrude E. H. Bustill Mossell to Nikole Sheri Hannah-Jones, Black women continue to edit texts and to edit cultural narratives surrounding Black women and Black literature.[20] Deconstructing controlling images and changing Black life through literature is still a work many Black women take on. But each of the works I examine within this dissertation has a sincere hope that any one of these endeavors would make some change, and if they interlocked with other pieces, then significant change could be made for Black Americans.

Much like these editors, this work gestures toward the future of editorial studies and Black studies. This dissertation aims to be both a survey and in-depth reading of editing by Black women in the post-bellum, pre-Harlem, yet there are several other areas to be explored by future researchers. A change of time to look forward would be a welcome step, creating a chronology of Black women's editing. Though I briefly look at Jessie R. Fauset's short fiction, her tenure as literary editor at *The Crisis* and her work with W. E. B. Du Bois may provide interesting insights into her editorial expression. Future research may also trace other forms of editing only briefly mentioned here, such as the editing of literary collections, histories, or fiction by Black women. And, of course, this work could connect to other fields interested in the editorial work by other marginalized communities, all of which have taken on the work of creating and shaping literature as a means of resistance and progress. These

are but a few new directions in which editorial studies can continue to expand and from which we would all benefit.

Black women's editing recollects an obscured history, one that as much about resistance as it is about power. White supremacy and patriarchy perpetuated misogynoir narratives that silenced Black women or required that they speak in a way legible to white/male American wants. Black women edited to express themselves in their own words, to tell the truth of what it meant to be Black, to be a woman, and to be a Black woman in post-Reconstruction America. They told complex stories far more expansive than the boxes in which cultural narratives attempted to contain them. This expansion of editing and exploration of Black women's editing reminds us of the importance of this work and reconnects it to the continued work of Black women editors today. In an interview about editing, Toni Morrison said that "part of the business of editing is telling people to shut up." Morrison's remarks are in response to her superiors' fear about having a book party in Harlem and how they discouraged other editors from attending. However, I would suggest that perhaps Morrison hits on something intrinsic to editing and how it empowered Black women: Editing let Black women tell others to shut up and to let them speak.

ENDNOTES

[1] *The Big Sea*, 218.

[2] Als, "Toni Morrison and the Ghosts in the House."

[3] Sinykin, "Why Toni Morrison Left Publishing."

[4] Maher, "Toni Morrison."

[5] Als, "Toni Morrison and the Ghosts in the House."

[6] Maher, "Toni Morrison."

[7] Maher, "Toni Morrison."

[8] Als, "Toni Morrison and the Ghosts in the House."

[9] Morrison, "Making of The Black Book," 89.

[10] Morrison, "Making of The Black Book," 89.

[11] Morrison, "Making of The Black Book," 88.

[12] "Making of The Black Book," 90.

[13] Morrison, "Making of The Black Book," 89.

[14] Morrison, *Beloved*, xv.

[15] *Beloved*, xv.

[16] *Talking Back*, 9.

[17] *Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary*, "Sanctum."

[18] See Shawn Anthony Christian's "Editorial Collaboration and Creative Conflict in *Outline for the Study of the Poetry of American Negroes*." In *Editing the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by Joshua M. Murray and Ross K. Tangedal, 109-26. Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2021; and Jacqueline Emery's "'Newspaper Making Isn't Play': Native American Schoolgirl Editors and the *Hallaquah*." *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticisim* 30, no. 2 (2020): 114-17. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/773280.

[19] "The Colored Citizen," 110.

[20] I refer to Nikole Sheri Hannah-Jones career, but her work on the Pulitzer Prize winning project, *The 1619 Project*. This public humanities project pushed the popular understanding of chattel slavery's history in America back in time and recontextualized the history of anti-Black racism. See *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*. New York: One World, 2021.

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