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“Rosebloom and Pure White,” Or So It Seemed

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WE HAVE A PICTURE OF ROSA DOWNS, THOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT SHE thought about having it made. In a photograph taken in a studio in New York in 1864 (fig. 1), she appears to have been a little girl born into the Victorian middle class, like the unnamed child who sat for a photographer in Philadelphia the same year (fig. 2). Both girls' portraits were rendered in vignette, a style popular at the time in which only the head of the sitter was visible, surrounded by soft white space—a style that made young children look very much like angels.¹ But the similarity between these young girls ended at appearances. Their faces had been photographed for very different reasons. Their prospects, too, would never be the same. And those viewers who, at first glance, took Rosa for a white child would have seen her otherwise once they read the words that were beneath her portrait: “Rosa [her name in lovely script], A Slave Girl from New Orleans.”

Rosina (known as Rosa) Downs, age “not quite seven,” was one of five children and three adults freed at the city of New Orleans by Union Major General N.P. Banks in 1863. Colonel George Hanks, serving on a commission appointed by Banks that was responsible for the education and labor of freedpeople, took this group of eight emancipated slaves north that year with the help of representatives from the American Missionary Association and the National Freedman's Relief Association.² Their tour involved both public appearances and visits to photographers' studios to sit for portraits, which were in turn sold to raise money to fund newly established schools for freedpeople in

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Figure 1. Portrait of Rosina Downs. *Carte de visite* (1864), “Rosa, A Slave Girl from New Orleans.” Sophia Smith Collection, Women’s History Archive, Smith College.

Louisiana.³ A photographic portrait of the entire group from Louisiana was made into an engraving and printed on a full page of *Harper’s Weekly* in 1864 with an accompanying letter to the editor from one of the missionary sponsors, appearing under the provocative headline, “White and Colored Slaves” (fig. 3). Nearly all of the individual and small group portraits made, however, featured the children—Isaac, Augusta, Rosa, Charles, and Rebecca. Of these portraits, most included only the whitest-looking children: Rosa, Rebecca, and Charles (fig. 4).⁴

The decision to display white-looking children was due, in part, to the earlier success of a girl child named Fanny Lawrence (fig. 5) (to whom we shall return) who had been “redeemed” in Virginia.⁵ As Fanny had done, Rosa, Rebecca, and Charles captivated white northern audiences. In an account of the group’s appearance in New York, these children were singled out: “three of the children,” said the *Evening Post*, “were perfectly white, and had brown hair.”⁶ Isaac and Augusta,



Figure 2. Head of a child in vignette, sitter unknown. *Carte de visite*, handprinted, Philadelphia (c. 1864). William C. Darrah Collection, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, Pennsylvania State University Libraries.



Figure 3. “Emancipated Slaves, White and Colored,” illustration from original *carte de visite*, printed in Harper’s Weekly, January 30, 1864. Courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection. Museum/Research center.



Figure 4. Portrait of Rebecca Huger, Charles Taylor, and Rosina (Rosa) Downs. *Carte de visite* (1863). Courtesy the Historic New Orleans Collection, Museum/Research Center.



Figure 5: Portrait of Fanny Lawrence. *Carte de visite* (1863). Library of Congress.

both darker-skinned than the others, along with the clearly black adults, were mostly absent from the photographs. When the sponsors opted to take the children on to Philadelphia for more appearances and sittings in photography studios, Isaac and Augusta were left behind.⁷

The whitest-looking girls, however, seem to have received the most attention. There are more surviving *cartes de visite* of them in archives than of the others, suggesting that perhaps more people bought pictures of them. And unlike photographs of Charles, the white-looking boy, representations of Rosa and Rebecca seemed especially tailored to pique viewers' interest. In *Harper's Weekly*, Rosina Downs was described as "a fair child with blonde complexion and silky hair." Her rather mature-sounding name was shortened to "Rosa" for the photo-

graphic portraits, presumably to emphasize her innocence and youth. Rebecca Huger, age eleven, was a little older, and photographers often dressed and posed her to seem more a young lady than a child. Of Rebecca, the missionary wrote to *Harper's*: "to all appearance, she is perfectly white. Her complexion, hair, and features show not the slightest trace of negro blood."⁸ These white-looking girls, in sweet, innocent form, troubled notions of racial difference and fostered an unease laced with fascination among white, northern viewers. Indeed, what made Rosa and Rebecca so beguiling for nineteenth-century audiences was that these lovely white girls were not "white."

The photographic portraits of Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny Lawrence were spectacles with multiple meanings, inviting a combination of sympathy, speculation, voyeurism, and moral outrage.⁹ Because the girls looked white, their images appealed to Victorian sentiments about white rather than black or "colored" girlhood; indeed, while they pressed for the abolition that would free white-skinned children like Rosa, they left the black child and her plight in the shadows. Furthermore, the pictures played upon fears that white people could become enslaved in the South, should slavery continue to spread, fears that had become more prominent as the sectional debate deepened. They also raised for consideration the interracial sex that had produced seemingly white non-white progeny, and they fanned northern fascination with light-skinned "fancy girls" sold as slaves in the New Orleans market. Indeed, in the invitation to scrutiny and in their sale price, these photographs mirrored the activities of the slave market itself. Further still—no doubt, unintentionally—they raised anxieties about emancipation and what place there would be in American society for freedpeople who perhaps looked white but who were not considered to be white.

These tangled interpretations are most readily explained, perhaps, with a portrait of Isaac (the darkest-skinned child in the group) shown arm-in-arm with Rosa (fig. 6). Both of the children were dressed fancily, with Isaac in a suit and starched collar and Rosa wearing a flowered hat and tailored cloak over a dress with full petticoats. From first glance, the contrast in skin color between the two is striking (what Roland Barthes might have called the photograph's "punctuation"), and this was, no doubt, the point.¹⁰ Isaac's dark skin served to accentuate Rosa's paleness. Next to her black-skinned companion, she appeared unmistakably "white." But placing Isaac and Rosa together had the opposite effect as well. It assured viewers that their own eyes deceived



Figure 6. Portrait of Isaac White and Rosina Downs. *Carte de visite* (1863). Prints and Photographs Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

them, that Rosa could not have been “white” since a white girl never would have appeared in public on the arm of a black boy.¹¹ For playing upon uncertainty, Rosa’s image was the perfect metaphor, one that signified blackness and whiteness, racial mixture and racial purity, sexual innocence and sexual promise, and slavery and freedom.¹² In the ambiguous, vulnerable body of a white-looking “slave” girl, white northern audiences saw the precarious future of their divided nation—a nation many of them still considered (despite increasing doubts) to be a “white” one.¹³

If the portraits of Rosa and the others presented a nation’s uncertain future, however, they also illustrate the nature of its past. Rosa’s image,

so full of meaning, makes manifest the inextricable histories of black children and white children in the nineteenth century. Both in image and in reality, these two groups were bound together by what one historian has termed the “relational nature of difference”—that is, white children lived as they did because black children lived as they did, and both white and black childhoods were shaped (and still are) by race.¹⁴ In the nineteenth century, images of black and white childhood were mutually defining and mutually reinforcing; representations of the two, like the real lives of children themselves, were forged together out of prejudice and privilege. Although historians have paid childhood little heed in their discussions of race, adult ideas about race and racism have often been reproduced and put into practice through the lives of children.¹⁵ To study the history of white children and black children in isolation, then, is to see only part of the story. As these pictures so cleverly remind us, we cannot look at one group of children, black or white, without seeing the other.

* * *

To fully understand the appeal of these portraits and the particular ways in which audiences might have read them, we must look in several directions: to Civil War stories of “white slaves,” to popular representations of white and black children in the nineteenth century and those of girls in particular, to antislavery ideas and white audiences’ fantasies about light-skinned slave women, to the significance of the new “truth-telling” medium of photography, and into the labyrinth of race that both guided and confused white northern sympathies. Although it is difficult to know who saw these images or purchased them, their production at a time when white working-class people were openly opposing the Civil War—most notably during the New York Draft Riots of 1863—suggests that they were aimed at a broad northern audience rather than just limited to middle class viewers.¹⁶ Indeed, the girls’ portraits seem to have been, in part, an effort to circumvent issues of class by pressing the argument that southern slavery threatened the freedoms and privileges of all white people.¹⁷

By the 1850s and 1860s, white slaves had become some of the peculiar institution’s most “vile” specters, and accounts of white people enslaved in the South proliferated in newspapers and antislavery journals in the northern states. These reports sprang from fears that if

slavery went unchecked—if the southern slave power had its way—it would soon deny the liberties of non-slaveholding white people.¹⁸ In one such story, a correspondent from the New York *Tribune* reported in 1863 that a white woman, “through whose veins courses the Anglo-Saxon blood, and who has no negro taint about her,” had been sold into slavery near Beaufort, South Carolina apparently by her own husband, with whom she had had a dispute. “The selling of wives is not uncommon in South Carolina,” the writer explained, “especially when their health is broken down and they are unable to do hard work.” Mrs. Cribb, the woman in question, even produced a bill of sale for herself for the (suspiciously meager) sum of five dollars.¹⁹

Another story reported by the *Tribune* involved the son of a white woman. The woman, the paper explained, had been the product of a planter’s daughter’s “seduction” out of wedlock by a white man and was given to a slave woman to raise. The child grew up to be a planter’s mistress, and the children she then had by him were treated as his slaves. One of them, a son by the name of Charles Grayson, was sold away from her, but not before the truth about his parentage was revealed to him by his mother. According to the *Tribune*, Grayson had “straight, light hair, fair, blue eyes, a sandy beard, and evidently is a white man, with no drop of black blood in his veins.” Perhaps even more frightening to readers was the writer’s description of Grayson’s demeanor: “He is totally ignorant. He scarcely knows what freedom is,” the writer remarked. Although “a negro slave has a subdued, and yet, at times a gay air, Charles Grayson is continually abject and gloomy.” Grayson managed to escape into Union lines in 1862 where he was aided by members of the 3rd Michigan Cavalry.²⁰ A story like Grayson’s proved quite useful to the Union military and to abolitionists. Given the increasing unpopularity of the Civil War in the North, abolitionists and Union officials hoped to divert northern eyes from the largely black slave population for whom the war was, arguably, fought. Instead of black freedom, these stories implied, it was the white man’s freedom that needed to be defended against the inevitable encroachments of southern slavery.

Tales of “white slaves” had more dramatic appeal, however, when they concerned beautiful white girls, for whom not only freedom but virtue was at stake. The *National Antislavery Standard*, for instance, ran a two-part story, around the time the correspondences from the *Tribune* appeared in 1863, entitled “Sold at Savannah.” The apparently

fictional story featured an Irish girl named Ellen Neale who, while in the South, had lost all of her kin to cholera.²¹ Although taken in by kindly Quakers, Ellen soon was seized as a fugitive slave under orders from the “yellow-eyed” Elder Mathewson who had been propositioning Ellen without success for several months. Ellen’s face, the narrator explained, was “more than pretty, for it was downright beautiful, with its rosebloom and pure white and the dark, lustrous eyes and well-shaped mouth.” Ellen eventually found herself on the auction block, subjected to the scrutiny of the “chivalry” (white male spectators who attended her sale.) “They did not come to buy,” the narrator observed, “but for the most part to look on, scrutinize, and exercise their critical powers.” The auctioneer informed his audience, “high bids are expected, for it isn’t every day such angeliferous loveliness comes to the hammer.” He proclaimed her “a very white mulatto, . . . but I have never heard a fair skin objected to in a slave. A housekeeper, gentlemen, governess, *or* companion.” Ellen was rescued at the last moment when her Quaker friends brought forward proof of her British citizenship, but her story was a harrowing one meant to show white readers how little distance remained between a white woman’s purity and the abominations of slavery.²²

Accounts of white-*looking* people who had been born into slavery—that is, those who had “African” blood yet appeared to be “perfectly” white—were effective in ways both similar to and different from stories of white people enslaved. William H. DeCamp, for instance, working among black regiments in Tennessee, wrote home to the *Grand Rapids Eagle* that he had discovered a number of soldiers in the “negro enlistment” who appeared to be white men: “When one sees standing before him a man of mature years, who possesses not the slightest trace of negro blood in a single feature or complexion, and hair straighter than you can generally find in the pure Anglo-Saxon race and he tells you that his father is Col. Higgins, now of the rebel army, [then the] ruling passion in the South” became quite clear. Encountering white-looking former slaves seemed to further convince DeCamp of the righteousness of his duty: “I never was an Abolitionist,” he wrote, “but I am not in favor of white slaves in a white country, and that where we call our nation a white one.”²³

In one sense, then, DeCamp viewed the soldier as a white man, and his outrage stemmed from the thought of white men enslaved. By the same token, audiences were horrified to imagine white-looking children like

Rosa as the chattel of southern slaveholders. Yet because of their African ancestry, the furor that white-looking enslaved people inspired was more complex than reactions to accounts of “Anglo-Saxon” people “accidentally” enslaved. Both the soldiers DeCamp encountered and the “white slaves” brought north by abolitionists did more than demonstrate white people’s vulnerability to enslavement. Such white-looking people were the embodiment of racial transgression, living proof of the “ruling passion of the South.” Historian Martha Hodes (writing about sexual relations between white women and black men in the nineteenth-century South) observes that “it was the problem of the child that brought the illicit liaison into the public realm beyond the confines of gossip and scandal. . . .” Although relations between white male slaveholders and their black female slaves were not illicit in the antebellum South, the “mulatto” children resulting from those encounters were nonetheless public manifestations of the relations between master and slave. One need only recall southern diarist Mary Chestnut’s famous quip: “every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody’s household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think.”²⁴ But very light-skinned slaves were, for whites, the most problematic group since they were capable of claiming to be white even though they were of “mixed” race. Photographic images of white-looking slaves, in particular—through which viewers could see for themselves—simultaneously fascinated and tormented viewers because of both the subjects’ “invisible” ancestry and the sexual history that produced them.²⁵

For white northern viewers, the act of reading the images of Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny was further complicated by the girls’ status as children. White childhood was increasingly sentimentalized in the nineteenth century as middle-class children became separated from both the world of adults and the world of work. Instead of contributing to the family income, they became “priceless” members of the middle-class family: innocent, unproductive, and primarily the focus of nurture and attention.²⁶ Images of white childhood, in turn, idealized in fiction, advertisements, and illustrations, highlighted the supposed “innocence” and “vulnerability” of white children. These sentiments were reflected, as well, in family portraiture of the middle and late nineteenth century. The soft vignettes in which both Rosa and Rebecca appeared and the image of Fanny perched on a chair, holding a bouquet of flowers (fig. 7), were the sorts of children’s pictures that would have



Figure 7. Portrait of Fanny Lawrence (1863). Library of Congress.

been familiar to most northerners.²⁷ By 1860, the widespread production of *cartes de visite* made portraits affordable to middle-class people and pictures of one's children—surrounded by all the trappings of middle-class domesticity—were an increasingly common sight in the homes of many Americans.²⁸ Using the genre of the child's portrait, then, the producers of these images of white-looking girls sent a pointedly political message. With each child framed in the vignettes and parlor scenes associated with white northern middle-class girlhood, these images of “slave girls” brought antislavery into the homes, perhaps even the family photograph albums, of many white northerners.²⁹

The language and ideals of middle-class domesticity had often been employed by abolitionists to condemn southern slavery. The domestic disorder slavery produced—slaveowning fathers who sold their own

children, slave women forever subject to the sexual desires of their owners, and slave families torn apart by the market in human beings—made enslavement terrifying, both for slaves themselves and in the eyes of northern abolitionists. Both former slaves and white abolitionists highlighted stories of outraged motherhood and torn families in order to bring enslaved people into the realm of Victorian sentiment.³⁰ And yet the supposed distance (both geographical and racial) that separated northerners from southern slavery's evils must have shrunk considerably at the sight of little Rosa.³¹ Although white abolitionist writers often fantasized about their own enslavement as well as the enslavement of their children as a means of sympathizing and empathizing with slaves, Rosa's photograph introduced something quite new.³² Fixing visions of seemingly white slave children through photography was for northern viewers a step away from fantasy, closer to "truth," and ultimately more frightening. The effect of these photographs—both despite and because of their Victorian veneer—was that they asked white northern viewers to look upon the enslavement of their own children.

Pure sentimentality is perhaps not the only light in which these images can be understood, however. The reform literature of the nineteenth century, for instance, introduced another facet of the white child. In the idealized American home of nineteenth-century reform literature and child-rearing manuals, love and affection replaced punishment as the proper means of disciplining children.³³ Yet domestic order achieved through affection rather than harsh reprimand involved a reciprocal role on the part of the child. Children, and girl children in particular, appeared often in temperance literature "not only as objects of discipline but also . . . as its agents."³⁴ In narratives verging on the incestuous, for instance, drunken fathers found salvation in the tender embraces of their young daughters. (He swore never to drink again; she showered him with forgiving kisses.) The purity, innocence, and vulnerability of young children made them powerful disciplinary agents of reform, able to subdue their fathers despite and because of the child's inherently weak position. Likewise, in the images of Rosa and Rebecca, notions about white little girls as pure and precious things may have been employed to redeem those viewers who had yet to rally around the antislavery cause and encourage them to act on the girls' behalf.

The meanings that audiences would have invested in photographs of white-looking slave girls, however, were founded also on nineteenth-

century ideas about racial difference. Images of innocent white children in the nineteenth century, whether sentimental or moralistic, developed largely in relation to their imagined opposite.³⁵ Popular images of black children in the nineteenth century often rendered them not as virtuous ideals of feminine beauty but rather as tricksters of untamed and immoral stripe. Harriet Beecher Stowe's characters Little Eva and Topsy were the most well-known symbols of young, white, feminine purity juxtaposed with young, unschooled black devilishness. In one scene in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe explicitly compared her two characters to one another:

Eva stood looking at Topsy, . . . the two children, representatives of the two extremes of society. The fair, high-bred child, with her golden head, her deep eyes, her spiritual, noble brow, and prince-like movements; and her black, keen, subtle, cringing, yet acute neighbor. They stood the representatives of their races. The Saxon, born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral eminence; the Afric, born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice!³⁶

The two little “representatives of their races” in Stowe's narrative existed in contrast with one another, like good and evil. Through the details of their features and their behavior—Eva's “prince-like movements” and Topsy as her “black, keen, subtle, cringing” counterpart—the author aimed to reveal the true nature of the difference between them. Stowe even explained that Eva was fond of Topsy and her antics “as a dove is sometimes charmed by a glittering serpent.”³⁷

The invidious distinctions that Stowe drew between Eva and Topsy were drawn in real life as well. In the letters of northern missionaries, black children were described with far less affection than white ones. Strangely, such prejudices become clearer when the “white” child in question looked white, but was not. For example, a northern missionary woman in New Orleans during the war was shocked to learn that an orphaned child named Clara Wilbur was the property of a man who lived on the Red River. “Oh! The thought that that child had been a slave!” she wrote. “It was almost naked, but its little rosy cheeks and dimpled chin, all told too plainly that Saxon blood was in those veins.”³⁸ Of a freedchild named Bess, on the other hand, a missionary teacher wrote: “She is very black, and in outward appearance stupid and unprepossessing,” even though the woman admitted that Bess was one of her best students.³⁹

Even when black children were depicted as good but unfortunate (rather than “devilish” or “stupid”), the tragic stories of their lives still

served to shore up an idealized white childhood. This opposing, mutually defining relationship between white childhood and black childhood comes across most directly in antislavery appeals to white children. The “Children’s Department” of the *American Missionary*, for instance, was particularly keen to link the lives of its young white readers and black children; yet inevitably white childhood’s preciousness and separation from the evils of the world was affirmed through the telling of these stories, while slave children’s lives remained wretched and forlorn. “Don’t you pity the poor slave children?” read one column. “Will you do all you can, as you grow up, to put away slavery from the land? O, be thankful that you are not slaves.” The writer then asked each young reader to say aloud, thankfully:

I was not born a little slave,
 To labor in the sun,
 And wish I was but in my grave,
 And all my labor done.
 My God, I thank Thee, who hast planned
 A better lot for me;
 And placed me in this favored land
 Where I may hear of Thee.
 Placed me in the *free* States! O, how thankful I am and how kind I shall be to
 all who are not so well off as me.⁴⁰

Even while persuading white children to identify with the plight of their black counterparts—thus disciplining the conscience of the white child by pointing to the misfortunes of the slave child—antislavery writers continued to draw lines of difference between the two groups. In a column from the *American Missionary*, the writer explained to his young readers that enslaved children lived a life of sadness and fear of being torn from their parents, and that though they (as white children) might empathize with the black child, they would never be subject to the ravages of the slave trade. “We should remember that parents and children are separated every day by the cruelties of slavery, never more to meet on earth. And such separations are just as wicked and cruel as it would be for the same men to come and separate *you* and *your* parents, and sell you into all the horrors of bondage!”⁴¹ The sentiment aroused by sympathy for the black child’s plight not only privileged white childhood but also placed the white child readers in a position of power by asking them to “remember” enslaved children in their prayers.⁴² White children also read of “a poor little heathen girl” in

Africa whose father sold his own children. “Dear children,” the magazine asked, “are you not thankful that you have Christian parents, who love you, and teach you what is right and good. . . . Will you not then remember the poor little heathen children who have not the priceless blessings you enjoy?”⁴³

In the most familiar of all antislavery narratives, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe seemed to bestow happy, intact families and sugared sentiment upon only the white and light-skinned children in the story. Little Eva, of course was the precious child of loving parents. Harry—“a small quadroon boy . . . beautiful and engaging” with “glossy curls about his round, dimpled face”—avoids being sold from his mother, Eliza, and when she bravely runs away with him, Harry is later reunited with his father, too, and grows up in freedom.⁴⁴ Uncle Tom’s children, however, lose their father to slave traders early in the story. And the infamous Topsy was altogether parentless. After Miss Ophelia (a northern white woman with abolitionist sympathies living in the home of her slaveholding brother) was given charge of Topsy, she asked the child where her mother was. Topsy explained that she had never had one. “Never was born,” she said. “Never had father nor mother, nor nothin.’ I was raised by a speculator, with lots of others. Old Aunt Sue used to take car on us.”⁴⁵ Through such renderings of black slave children, the white (and near-white) child was recreated again and again as precious, protected, and fortunate, while the black child remained woeful and alone.

In fact, much of the horror and sympathy elicited from *Harper’s Weekly* readers concerning the three “white” slave children was gleaned from their status as members of families. Rebecca “was a slave in her father’s house, the special attendant of a girl little older than herself.” Her mother and grandmother (to whom the writer had spoken) “live in New Orleans, where they support themselves comfortably by their own labor.” Rosina had a father “in the rebel army” while her mother, “a bright mulatto, lives in New Orleans in a poor hut and has hard work to support her family.” And of Charles readers learned: “three out of five boys in any school in New York are darker than he. Yet this white boy has been twice sold as a slave. First by his father and ‘owner’, Alexander Wethers, of Lewis County, Virginia, to a slavetrader named Harrison, who sold [him and his mother] to Mr. Thornhill of New Orleans.”⁴⁶ By providing detailed information about these three children and their origin, the writer was intent to prove that these “white”

children had indeed been enslaved, should anyone in the North doubt the veracity of their former status or their non-whiteness.⁴⁷ Still, readers learned almost nothing of Augusta and Isaac or how they lived and with whom. Of Augusta (the lighter-skinned of the two [fig. 8 with Rebecca and Rosa]) the reader learned that she was nine years old and that her “almost white” mother still had two children in bondage. Isaac’s parents were never mentioned. He was “a black boy of eight years; but none the less intelligent than his whiter companions,” and had made admirable progress in school. Despite praise of Isaac’s schoolwork, the personal histories the others received—histories that were denied Isaac and Augusta—served to distance black children and their childhoods from the conscience and sympathies of white northern audiences.

By the eve of the Civil War, abolitionists recognized the potential of white-looking slave children for stirring up antislavery sentiment. They could evoke the precious sentiments that surrounded white children (rather than the indifference and scorn black ones received), yet they were real (not fictional) children who had been born into the clutches of slavery. In 1860, in an event that foreshadowed Fanny Lawrence’s presentation to his congregation a few years later, the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher brought before his church a girl (still enslaved and apparently not quite as white-skinned as Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny) who had been separated from her mother and was living with her grandmother, a freedwoman. The slave traders who owned the child had agreed to let her stay with her grandmother, but when offered enough money from an interested buyer, they decided to sell her. According to a report in the “Children’s Corner” of the *American Missionary*, the girl had tried to hide but the slave traders “burst in the door and dragged her away.” (“How would you feel, children, if the slave traders should come and tear you away from your home and friends?” the writer asked. “And why should they do so to this little girl any more than to you?”) As Beecher recounted the girl’s story to the congregation, the girl stood quietly beside him, a representative of the kind of innocent, near-white girlhood towards which his audience already felt such tender sentiment and sympathy:

She was very pretty, of a light complexion, with brown, wavy hair. There was in her face an expression of innocence and gentleness, and a look of sadness too. As she stood there, in her brown frock and little red sack, and Mr. Beecher with his arm thrown protectingly around her, it made a pretty tableau. Tears came into the people’s eyes as they gazed at this child, and



Figure 8. Portrait of Rebecca Huger, Augusta Broujey, and Rosa Downs. *Carte de visite* (1863). The Historic New Orleans Collection, Museum/Research Center.

thought of the thousands of little slave girls in our land, held in a cruel and hopeless bondage. While we looked at her, we seemed to see them all.”⁴⁸

Beecher’s intent was for the audience to see the “little slave girl” as a child very like their own children, and he drew pointed parallels between the enslaved girl and the children of his parishioners. “Mothers,” said Beecher, “how would you feel if your little daughters were to be sold away from you? I know you will not let this child go back to slavery.” With the presentation of the light-skinned “little slave girl,” then, the black slave child was replaced in the minds of sympathetic white northerners with visions of their own (white) children enslaved. The collection plates were passed around Plymouth Church for the “little slave girl” until enough money had been raised to buy her from the slave traders. When Beecher at last exclaimed, “*the child is free!*” the audience “clapped their hands for joy.”⁴⁹

The photographs of Rebecca, Rosa, and Fanny, then, were more than a visual trick, a *trompe l'oeil* meant to play on the emotions of white viewers. Lines of sympathy had already been drawn in the antislavery rhetoric of the day, lines that held the white child in a cherished and protected light and the black child in a tearful, motherless place. Empathy for white-looking slave children, rather than dissolving racial differences, only reaffirmed the viewers' sense of themselves as privileged and white.⁵⁰ And although it was the image of a raggedy, motherless, Topsy-like black child that viewers might have expected to see above the words "slave girl," it was the "innocent," "pure," and "well-loved" white child Rosa who appeared, a child who needed the protection of the northern white public.

Rosa's image, however, combined the unprotected child with the figure of the white female slave, inspiring the fears white audiences associated with both. Nineteenth-century viewers, North and South, were quite familiar with the figure of the white female slave in the form of American sculptor Hiram Powers's *The Greek Slave* (1844) (fig. 9), a work that attracted crowds of museum goers and spawned reams of commentary in the American press. Though Powers did not set out to make an abolitionist symbol, one historian has argued that the sculptor borrowed the image of the naked female in chains from American antislavery emblems.⁵¹ Yet public reception of the sculpture—which toured in the 1840s and 1850s from the Northeast to as far south as New Orleans—suggests that audiences read Powers's slave (meant to represent a Greek woman enslaved by Turks) as an emblem of ideal feminine purity, submissiveness, and Christian faith. Among abolitionists, feminists, even anti-abolitionists, however, the sculpture became a point of reference to the enslavement of African Americans in the South and to the enchained status of all women in American society. Indeed, many antislavery feminists were outraged by the depiction of the "ideal" woman as submissive and resigned to her terrible fate.⁵²

Although less popular than Powers's sculpture, Erastus Dow Palmer's *The White Captive* (1859) (fig. 10) also made the marble body of a white woman enslaved a point of public reflection. Palmer, also American, was responding to the popularity of Powers's earlier work but brought his sculpture closer to his audience by providing an American setting for his female figure. Instead of a Greek woman, Palmer sculpted a young white woman (indeed, almost girl-like in expression if not form) captured by Indians. Palmer himself described



Figure 9. Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave* (1851, after original of 1844). Marble. Yale University Art Gallery. Olive Louise Dann Fund.



Figure 10. Erastus Dow Palmer, *The White Captive* (1859). Marble. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Hamilton Fish, 1894.

her as “the young daughter of a pioneer,” suggesting that she was not yet mature and was still living with her parents when captured. As historian Joy Kasson has pointed out, the parallels between the *The Greek Slave* and *The White Captive* were deliberate and striking. The figures were similarly posed, each one bound by the hands to a post and gazing resignedly over her shoulder. They were victims in desperate need of saving, but beyond reach. Yet they also seemed, by their very powerlessness, to have a hold over the viewer. As an article in *Harper’s Weekly* observed of *The White Captive*, “No: it is not she, it is we who are captive.”⁵³

What makes these sculptures useful for interpreting the photographs at hand is not simply that they share with the girls' images the theme of the white (or white-looking) female enslaved. Rather, they are most instructive for what they prepared audiences to do. Nineteenth-century audiences, with clues from their creators, read in these marble sculptures a narrative about the impending violation of the white woman enslaved. Given the information that *The Greek Slave* was a young, white, Christian woman in a Turkish slave mart, stripped of her clothing and all her possessions but for her cross, viewers imagined for themselves the fate that awaited her at the hands of lecherous men.⁵⁴ Similarly, the white girl captured by "savage" Indians and tied tightly to a stake would soon lose her girlish innocence in the wilderness, where no white man could save her. Nineteenth-century writers mused in just this way about these sculptures, embellishing the stories with their own commentary about their posture and expressions betraying "the sudden thought of coming trial."⁵⁵

Although the material clues given in the photographs of Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny were quite different from those belonging to *The Greek Slave* and *The White Captive*, the invitation for a narrative of lust was common to both. If the sculpted women were poised at the threshold of a horrifying scene, the white-looking slave girls stood on the slim ground of girlhood—their young age, their skin, and the knowledge that they had been enslaved combined to suggest a harrowing future. Also, by their perceived powerlessness, both the sculptures and the white-looking girls seemed to hold viewers in sway. Yet, although audiences had no control over the fate of *The Greek Slave* or *The White Captive*, abolitionists made the point that for other little slave girls in the South, it was not too late. Where the sculptures could only inspire agony, the images, as propaganda, could inspire action. The endangered virtue of white and white-looking little girls, in turn, made appeals for their protection all the more urgent and made the thought of *not* helping them a scandalous one.

Within the context of white, middle-class Victorian culture, white little girls (perhaps even more so than white women) embodied the "Victorian ideal" of femininity—childlike, dependent, and sexually pure. Yet they nevertheless exuded (in the eyes of mostly male artists and photographers) a budding sexuality. Scholars have noted the irony implicit in nineteenth-century notions of white girls' sexual innocence and untouchability. White girls' association with innocence and purity



Figure 11. Engraving of John Everett Millais's *Cherry Ripe* (1879). Victoria and Albert Picture Library.

gave their images the allure of the forbidden, thus making them all the more enticing and seemingly sexually vulnerable.⁵⁶ The eroticism inherent in pictures of “innocent” white girls—pure yet alluring—seems to have contributed to the appeal of white girlhood as the subject of paintings and mass-reproduced prints that sold by the thousands in the mid- and late nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Renderings of little white girls such as John Everett Millais’s mass-reproduced *Cherry Ripe* (1879) captured at once little girls’ innocence, their sexual allure, and their popular appeal (fig. 11).⁵⁸ This theme is especially clear in Seymour Smith Guy’s *Making a Train* (1867) in which the young girl slips her dress from her shoulders, baring her just-developing breasts, in order to make the train of a grown woman’s gown (fig. 12). Lewis Carroll’s pictures of young Alice Liddell (fig. 13) also play on the idea of the “incipient woman” within the child. In his photograph of *Alice Liddell as “The Beggar Maid”* (c. 1859) for instance, Carroll cleverly made the suggestion of the fallen woman using the bared limbs and shabby dress of an unfallen upper-class child.⁵⁹



Figure 12. Seymour Smith Guy, *Making a Train* (1867). Philadelphia Museum of Art, George W. Elkins Collection.

The idea of the woman within the child, however, was even more easily projected onto the bodies of white-looking slave girls from the South, since their sexuality, or at the very least their anticipated fertility, would have been part of their purchase price. Allusion to the sexuality of Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny did not require pointed visual or verbal clues like those attached to Guy's *Making a Train*. Because they looked white but had been slaves and because they were female, their portraits no doubt summoned the familiar figure of the "tragic mulatta," a woman noted for her beauty, her near-whiteness, and her unspeakable violation by the white men of the South. From the mid-nineteenth century, in fact, abolitionist propaganda and rhetoric reflected an increasing preoccupation among middle-class white northerners with sexuality, and the unrestrained sexuality of southern slaveholders in particular.⁶⁰ Fictional portrayals of mulatta slaves became a familiar trope of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction, their popularity stemming from the notion that white, often female readers, would more readily identify with the plight of white-looking women.⁶¹



Figure 13. Charles Dodgson [Lewis Carroll], *Alice Liddell as “The Beggar Maid”* (c. 1859). Morris L. Parrish Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Whereas white northerners might have imagined the mournful life of a light-skinned woman from lines of fiction or the accounts of former slaves, however, it was the imperiled *future* of a white-looking girl that presented itself in the bodies of Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny. This becomes especially clear in the well-documented story of Fanny Lawrence. Although we have very little record of the appearances made by the children from Louisiana, we do have accounts of Fanny’s presentation and baptism in Brooklyn, New York before the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher’s Plymouth Church in 1863. Every account of

Fanny's appearance reads much like the following, penned in the dramatic tones of sentimental fiction:

When the audience supposed that the ceremony was ended, Mr. Beecher carried up into the pulpit a little girl about five years of age, of sweet face, large eyes, light hair, and fair as a lily. Pausing a moment to conquer his emotion, he sent a shiver of horror through the congregation by saying "This child was born a slave, and is just redeemed from slavery!" It is impossible to describe the effect of this announcement. The fact seemed so incredible and so atrocious that at first, the spectators held their breath in their amazement, and were then melted to tears.⁶²

Beecher then addressed his audience, explaining that the child, baptized Fanny Virginia Casseopia Lawrence, had been discovered "sore and tattered and unclean" by a nurse tending Union soldiers in Fairfax, Virginia, who adopted Fanny as her own. "Look upon this child," said Beecher, "tell me if you ever saw a fairer, sweeter face?" Beecher then made explicit the fate that awaited little girls like Fanny. "This is a sample of the slavery which clutches for itself everything fair and attractive," he explained. "The loveliness of this face, the beauty of this figure, would only make her so much more valuable for lust."⁶³ Like "Ellen," who had been saved from yellow-eyed Elder Matthewson, Fanny was presented as a white-looking female rescued from the grips of a lecherous slaveholder. Beecher's rhetoric (as it had with the otherwise anonymous "little slave girl" before her) also placed Fanny alongside the children of his own congregation, bemoaning slavery's trespasses not upon black children but on "fair and attractive" white ones. While their children were sheltered from the ravages of slavery, he intoned, Fanny (until "redeemed") had been left exposed.

Ironically, we cannot even be certain that Fanny was *not* a free white child. In the autobiography of Catherine Lawrence, Fanny's benefactor, the author consistently evaded the question of whether the child had, in fact, ever been enslaved or whether both of her parents may have been white.⁶⁴ Fanny's ambiguous past, however, makes it all the more clear that Beecher, and perhaps Lawrence herself, saw a profit in the presentation of a white-looking slave girl no matter what her true status. As long as children who looked so white were enslaved, he could argue, no white child was safe. "While your children are brought up to fear and serve the Lord," Beecher declared, "this little one, just as beautiful, would be made, through slavery, a child of damnation."⁶⁵ The lines of sentimentality and sexuality crossed at the point of sympathy,

thereby deepening the audience's response to each girl's possibly tragic end and spurring them to act in order to preserve her from it.⁶⁶ Winning the war, in turn, was the only way to protect the virtue of white-looking little girls like Fanny: "let your soul burn with fiery indignation against the horrible system which turns into chattels such fair children of God! May God strike for our armies and the right that this accursed thing may be utterly destroyed!"⁶⁷ Instead of a battle for black freedom, the war to end slavery, in Beecher's words, became a means to preserve the freedom and purity of the white race, both things that slavery seemed to threaten. The future of the Union—embodied in a young unspoiled "white" girl rather than a black one—was at stake.

It is chilling to consider, however, how closely Beecher's description of Fanny follows that of an auctioneer in a slave market.⁶⁸ As with the antislavery story about Ellen, "Sold in Savannah" (recall the auctioneer's words: "it isn't every day such angeliferous loveliness comes to the hammer"), Beecher made his appeal by pointing to Fanny's "fair, sweet face," and thus to the price she could have commanded. White northern viewers, in turn, valued each girl's presentation for much the same qualities that would have brought her owner a considerable sum in the slave market: her gender and the whiteness of her skin.⁶⁹ The kind of looking encouraged by the public presentation of Fanny and the others, in turn, was unmistakably akin to the very acts of "reading" bodies that occurred in the slave market. Like white-looking girls and women on the auction block, Fanny, Rosa, and Rebecca were subject to scrutiny by northern audiences and viewers. With the help of the Union army and well-meaning missionaries, the girls once again had a price attached to them—with the words "slave girl" used as a point of sale—although this time it was only their image to be bought and not their bodies. If their resemblance to white girls made them more valuable in the market, in Beecher's view, it also made them even more worthy of rescue than a child who did not look white.

The photographic medium used for the presentation of white-looking slave girls had its own particular effects and their black and white images reached a far broader audience than did the children themselves. Though the sponsors of these photographs (abolitionists and the Union Army) hoped to spark northerners' outrage towards the institution of slavery, the effect these images had on their audiences may have been far more complicated. The power of photographs, as far as Victorian Americans were concerned, lay in their ability to "speak"



Figure 14. *Scourged Back*, photograph of Gordon, an escaped slave (c. 1863). Prints and Photographs Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

truths otherwise inaudible. Every photographic image was a testimonial with the capacity to turn “the narrative status of its subject from fiction to fact.”⁷⁰ Before the invention and spread of photography, the most compelling evidence of the cruelties of slavery was to be found in eyewitness accounts of slavery’s atrocities, both written and oral—accounts that carried even more weight when delivered to audiences aloud, by former slaves.⁷¹ Yet there was a vast difference between *reading* about slavery and *seeing* its effects for oneself. The surgeon who examined a fugitive slave named Gordon—the subject of the widely reproduced photograph “Scourged Back” (fig. 14)—observed that “few sensation writers ever depicted worse punishments than this man must have received.”⁷² Indeed, a photograph allowed northern viewers to see Gordon’s mutilated body for themselves, witnessing “firsthand” the evil effects of slavery. Images like the “Scourged Back” testified to slavery’s atrocities in a way that written ex-slave narratives could not, since the cruel effects of slavery had been inscribed on the

ex-slave's person *by the slaveholder himself*, rather than onto a page by a former slave. On seeing the "Scourged Back" in 1863, an editor at the New York *Independent* remarked that the photograph "tells the story in a way that even Mrs. Stowe cannot approach, because it tells the story to the eye."⁷³

The "reality" introduced by the photograph, in turn, opened up new avenues of sympathy and, further still, of imagined pain and suffering. The sight of Gordon's back, covered in hundreds of thickened scars, forced viewers not only to see the effects of slavery but to imagine the scene of the slave's punishment, the very laying on the lash. Indeed, the image even placed them in the position—behind Gordon's back—of the punisher. Photographs of these white-looking slave girls, no less than the picture of Gordon, exposed the evils of southern slavery. Yet the fantasy they inspired was a quite different one. In the images of Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny, the slaveholder's violence was read by viewers on the unmarked surfaces of their light-skinned bodies rather than, as with Gordon, stated in firm welts on the skin. The girls' portraits invited viewers—particularly male viewers—to imagine them as the light-skinned "fancy girls" for sale in the New Orleans slave market, young women highly valued for their service as concubines to the wealthy white men of New Orleans.

These photographs presented a female body that existed for the viewer somewhere between the real and the imagined, and in this respect were much like pornographic photography of the nineteenth century. With the invention of photography, pornographers let the direct gazes of *real* women return the stares of the male spectator rather than those of fictionalized or painted figures. Like pornographic photographs, images of white-looking slave girls did not replace fantasies of beautiful mulatto and octoroon women enslaved and violated but rather further encouraged them.⁷⁴ Seeing the portrait of Rebecca kneeling in prayer (fig. 15), a white northern audience could have read in her white skin a history of "miscegenation," generations of it, resulting from the sexual interaction of white masters with their female slaves.⁷⁵ And Rebecca's girlish form, as with Fanny's, raised the possibility of future violations (whereas the image of a woman might have represented virtue already lost) and further invited the exercise of viewers' imaginations as they looked at her photograph.

If viewers read a sexual future in the photographs of these girls, however, they were also doing their utmost to read their race. We can



Figure 15. Portrait of Rebecca Huger. *Carte de visite* (1863). Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

imagine that viewers studied the portraits carefully, searching each photograph for the curve of the nose or the shape of the head that might indicate the child's African ancestry. Nineteenth-century scholars and scientists valued the "mute testimony" that photography provided as a means to scrutinize human subjects for physical signs of intelligence, potential for criminality, or evidence of a deranged mind.⁷⁶ A physician writing in 1859 insisted that one could uncover the physical and psychological essences of a person with photography because only in photographs could one rely on the "silent but telling language of nature."⁷⁷ The medium of photography also developed in tandem with theories concerning the separate origins of the races and the biology of racial difference proffered by the "American School" of anthropology (Louis Agassiz and Samuel Morton the most prominent among them) in the 1850s and 1860s.⁷⁸ With the popularity of the easily reproducible *carte de visite*, photographic images had just begun to provide a new

way of gathering anthropological knowledge—a new way of presenting and seeing race—using the body as evidence.⁷⁹ Louis Agassiz himself had several daguerreotype portraits of slaves taken in South Carolina in 1850, presumably to provide visual “proof” of the written observations he made during his visit concerning the purported differences in limb size and muscle structure between African-born slaves and whites.⁸⁰ As a means of discovering an underlying “truth” not directly visible to the eye, in turn, photography in the nineteenth century enhanced the act of looking itself.⁸¹

The desire to see certain people’s “true” racial identity surfaces throughout northerners’ accounts of their visits to the South during the Civil War. What confounded them was that one could not always observe traces of “African blood” in a person. A Boston “traveler” who visited a New Orleans jail reported that among those people of color imprisoned for not having a pass were “several women that in New York or Boston would pass for white women, without the slightest difficulty or suspicion” and a young girl “with a beautiful face . . . whose complexion was that of a pretty Boston brunette.”⁸² And a correspondent for the *New York Times* encountered a “colored soldier” in the Louisiana Native Guards whom he took for a white man, only to be corrected by the commanding officer. “And do you really think him white?” the colonel asked. “Well you may, Sir: but that man is a ‘negro’—one who carries the so-called curse of African blood in his veins.” And yet the writer concluded after studying the “fine-looking young man, not unlike General McClellan in mould of features,” that he “would have defied the most consummate expert in Niggerology, by the aid of the most powerful microscope, to discover the one drop of African blood in the man’s veins.”⁸³

Similarly, the ways in which the children from Louisiana were described, photographed, and publicly presented as freed slaves suggests that although audiences were scandalized by the children’s whiteness, they may also have been troubled by the inability to see their blackness. If the end of slavery is what the children’s sponsors sought, their careful presentations of white-looking slave girls also must have had an unintended effect—that is, they hinted at the dangers of emancipation. Though slavery was inscribed in the lives and on the skins of the adults in the group—Wilson Chinn had the initials of his former master branded on his forehead, Mary Johnson bore on her left arm “scars of three cuts given her by her mistress with a rawhide” and

on her back “scars of more than fifty cuts given by her master,” and Robert Whitehead’s history was marked by the dollar amounts at which he had been bought and sold—the unscarred, racially ambiguous bodies of the children made it clear that the old ways of “reading” slavery and race were insufficient.⁸⁴ Images such as these, in fact, may have further endorsed the determination of a person’s blackness through blood and descent, since they rendered physical manifestations of race unreliable.⁸⁵ If the words “slave child” beneath the girls’ portraits kept them from walking out into the world as white, how else would one be able to discern non-whiteness when slavery no longer held such people in check?

Further still, what would this state of affairs mean for those who considered themselves white? If even photographs could not detect “African” blood, then was the race of every white person soon to be in question? Consider the story that accompanied the picture of “white and colored slaves” in *Harper’s Weekly*. With indignation, the writer recounted the ejection of the three whitest-looking children, Rebecca, Charles, and Rosa from the St. Lawrence Hotel in Philadelphia while on tour there. The hotel’s proprietor insisted that since the children had been slaves they “must therefore be colored persons” and that he kept a hotel for “white people.”⁸⁶ Beneath a photographic portrait of the three children taken in Philadelphia after the incident, this story served as part of the caption: “These children were turned out of the St. Lawrence Hotel, Chestnut St, Philadelphia, on account of Color.” The story was a critique of northern white supremacy and prejudice against “colored” people, but for viewers already unsettled by the appearances of the children, it also must have confirmed their fears. If white-looking children could be denied entrance to a public establishment on the suspicion that they had been (“colored”) slaves, then any white person’s race might be open to question.

It was to counter such fears, perhaps, that the children’s sponsors staged a few photographs that were far less subtle than the vignette portraits of Rosa and Rebecca, and which made explicit the threat slavery (and not emancipation) posed to the liberties of white people. In one, Rebecca is by herself, seated and gazing up at the American flag (fig. 16). The caption beneath her reads: “Oh! How I Love the Old Flag,” representing the Union as a refuge for white-looking children from the evils of slavery. Another portrait shows the three children, Rosa, Charles, and Rebecca, each wrapped in their own flag, with the



Figure 16. Portrait of Rebecca Huger, “*Oh! How I Love the Old Flag,*” *Rebecca, A Slave Girl from New Orleans.* Carte de visite (1863). Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

words “Our Protection” printed beneath them (fig. 17). One interpretation might be that these patriotic photographs critiqued the system of slavery, which denied white-looking children the protections enjoyed by free white children and threatened the safety of any who looked like them. But another reading of these images finds a young, white face on emancipation—rather than a young black one—and suggests that the postbellum United States, despite its millions of black inhabitants, would remain a white nation.⁸⁷

* * *

If appeals for slavery’s demise took the form of white-looking slave girls, the work of northern “civilization” in the South after emancipa-



Figure 17. Portrait of Rosina Downs, Charles Taylor, and Rebecca Huger. *“Our Protection. Rosa, Charley, Rebecca. Slave Children from New Orleans.” Carte de visite (1864).* Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

tion was embodied in a black child. The photographic portrait of a woman named Harriet Murray with two of her students, Elsie and Puss, taken in South Carolina in 1866 (fig. 18), would have been a familiar sort of picture to northern readers and reformers after the war. In the photograph, Murray, a white woman, occupies the role of the civilizer as she directs the attention of the two girls to the book in her lap. (As one writer has observed, Murray’s arm around the smallest child, Elsie, “compels her attention as much as it embraces.”⁸⁸) Instead of the sentimental poses and velvet-trimmed frocks in which Rosa, Rebecca, and Fanny had appeared, Elsie and Puss stand plainly before the viewer in boots without laces and hand-me-down dresses. Further still, the “setting” given to them was not a Victorian parlor but a cultivated field.



Figure 18. “Miss Harriet W. Murray, Elsie, Puss,” *The Penn School, South Carolina, 1866.* From Penn School Collection. Permission granted by Penn Center, Inc., St. Helena, SC.

The disparities between Rosa’s portrait and the photograph of Elsie and Puss reflect both the passage of time—from the height of the Civil War to the years immediately following—and the importance of children, black and white, to the sectional politics of the nineteenth century. Onto the bodies of white-looking slave girls, abolitionists and generals had hoped that white northerners could project their hatred and fear of slavery, even their fascination with it. After emancipation, however, missionaries sought to quiet anxieties about the responses of millions of black freedpeople to freedom (that they would migrate to the North, kill their former masters, or refuse to work, letting cotton and sugarcane rot in the fields⁸⁹) with images of black freedgirls in a rural landscape under the civilizing influence of a white female teacher.

Although the picture of a white-looking slave child may have fueled northern indignation towards the South during the war, Rosa's image would not have been a welcome one once slavery (and the caption "slave child") no longer kept her from "passing" as the "white" child she appeared to be. Rather, what most white northerners wanted to imagine about the South after emancipation was just what they saw in the picture of Elsie and Puss with their teacher: dutiful black children (so "black" that they could not pass for "white") ready to receive the order and discipline of a victorious northern white "civilization."

The photograph was staged, of course: the white woman in broad skirts with her young black charges, the painted backdrop, the open book. Yet like the images of Rosa and Rebecca, this propaganda photograph placed ideas about black and white childhood at the political center of emancipation. If Rosa and Rebecca seemed to represent the endangered future of both the white race and the Union itself, then Elsie and Puss embodied the future of freedpeople under the careful guidance of white northern "civilization." Just as Rosa (a white-looking girl) made white children seem more vulnerable than a white-skinned boy might have, Elsie and Puss (black girls) may have represented freedpeople as more gentle and compliant than would their male counterparts. As little girls, they could be posed more closely to their white female guardian, thereby appearing to be tightly under her influence. (Though there were pictures of freed boys in the series that included Elsie and Puss's portrait, they never appeared in close contact with their teachers. They either stood stock-still behind her or were in group photographs unaccompanied by an adult.⁹⁰)

Yet by underscoring the freed girls' need for "civilization" (the white woman pointing towards the book), rather than their innocence or vulnerability (Rosa's doleful, pleading gaze), the creators of this image devised a distance between the white child and the black child, an imaginary space at once racial and geographical—orchestrating what was, in fact, an inversion of Rosa's image. In the eyes of northern viewers, children like Elsie and Puss once "civilized" would dutifully cook and clean in the rural, plantation setting into which they had been born and in which they appeared beside their teacher. Unlike Rosa's photograph, this image was not staged to bring the enslaved into the parlors of the white northern middle class, except perhaps as maids.⁹¹ Such an image assured viewers of the existence of a stable supply of industrious black workers in the South, labor that would continue to

support the nation's economy and undergird the privileged, labor-free existence of middle-class white children. The portrait of Harriet Murray, Elsie, and Puss, then, was an image to counter the fright that Rosa had inspired: a sign that the Union had been preserved, that black freedchildren were under the civilizing influence of white northern women, and that white children were protected at last from the "vile" enslavement that had threatened them.

NOTES

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1. Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (1938; New York: Dover Publications, 1964), ch. 8. For a technical index of *cartes de visite* and their uses, see William C. Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Gettysburg, Penn.: William C. Darrah, 1981).

2. General Order No. 64, Headquarters, Dept of the Gulf, New Orleans, Aug. 29, 1863, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, vol. 26, p. 704; Kathleen Collins, "Portraits of Slave Children," *History of Photography* 9 (July–Sept. 1985): 187–88.

3. Banks appointed a Board of Education in March of 1864 to direct the establishment of freedpeople's schools. But by then at least seven black schools already had been established and fourteen hundred students enrolled in what was, arguably, the first major effort at public education for freedpeople in the South. See Donald R. Devore and Joseph Logsdon, *Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans 1841–1991* (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1991), 57.

4. Collins, "Portraits of Slave Children," 187–210; and *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 30, 1864, p. 69 and 71.

5. *Ibid.*, 203.

6. Quoted in the *National Antislavery Standard*, Dec. 5, 1863.

7. Collins, "Portraits of Slave Children," 189.

8. *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 30, 1864, p. 71; curator Adrienne Berney at the Louisiana State Museum has traced Rebecca to a group of slaves belonging to an inhabitant of the

(now) historic Pontalba buildings in New Orleans's French Quarter. In 1860, she appears in the census rolls as the seven-year-old "mulatto" slave of John M. Huger. Huger also owned her mother and her grandmother.

9. In images, according to W.J.T. Mitchell, "what expression amounts to is the artful planting of certain clues in a picture that allow us to form an act of ventriloquism, an act which endows the picture with eloquence, and particularly with a nonvisual and verbal eloquence." W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 41. See also Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning" in Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: MacMillan Education Press, 1982.)

10. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), 26.

11. Thanks to Martha Hodes for this point.

12. The figure of the child often becomes a metaphor for adult desires and political aims. See Carolyn Steedman, *Past Tenses: Essays on Writing, Autobiography, and History* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992), 194. Steedman makes a theoretical distinction between this figure and children as a group: "'the child' is an historical construct," the product of adult imagination and projection, whereas "children" are individuals experiencing childhood. For further explorations of this idea see Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1986); and Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority 1780–1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995).

13. The notion of the United States as a "white nation" was not new. Historian Joanne Pope Melish has noted that in the eighteenth century, many residents of the New England states imagined that gradual emancipation in the North would somehow "restore" the region's homogeneity, that "a free New England would be a white New England." Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998), 164. On race and emancipation, see Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 117–18.

Visual images (as well as print media like newspapers, maps, and census rolls) are a vital part of the production of a nation, both as an idea—an "imagined community"—and a political entity. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), *passim*; on visual images, race, and nationhood see Shawn Michelle Smith, "Photographing the 'American Negro': Nation, Race, and Photography at the Paris Exposition of 1900" in Lisa Bloom, ed., *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999.)

14. Elsa Barkley Brown makes this point about the "relational nature of difference" in the lives of black women and white women. See Barkley Brown, "Polyrhythms and Improvisation: Lessons for Women's History," *History Workshop* 31 (spring 1991): 86, 88.

15. Thomas Holt poses the question of how race and racism are "reproduced" in "Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History," *American Historical Review* 100 (Feb. 1995): 1–20.

16. Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990). Most abolitionists came from the middle class, although there were substantial

numbers of “skilled” workers and artisans and a very small percentage of “unskilled” workers involved in the movement as well. See Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1998), ch. 11, esp. 145–47; Edward Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File: A Social Profile of the Abolitionist Constituency* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), ch. 6.

17. The “displacement” of class issues with the language of race and gender was characteristic of antebellum sentimental fiction. See Amy Schrager Lang, “Class and the Strategies of Sympathy” in Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992). Ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass believed that the defeat of slavery could only come with the support of the working class. “It is not to the rich that we are to look,” he said in 1852, “but to the poor, to the hardhanded working men of the country; these are to come to the rescue of the slave.” Quoted in Herbert Aptheker, *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 36.

18. Carol Wilson and Calvin D. Wilson, “White Slavery: An American Paradox,” *Slavery and Abolition* 19 (Apr. 1998): 1–23. I have chosen to use the term “white slaves” instead of “white slavery” in the interest of clarity and historical accuracy. Most accounts I have seen pertaining to the subject at hand discuss “white slaves” rather than “white slavery.” The latter term also has a trickier history. White northern workers and labor advocates used “white slavery” (as well as “wage slavery”) in the 1830s and 1840s as a critique of the labor system. As historian David Roediger has noted, “white slavery” was a complicated term that seemed to identify white workers with slaves (problematic since many laborers did not favor any association with black Americans), while it also suggested that the enslavement of whites was more objectionable than that of blacks. By the 1850s, labor advocates dropped the term in favor of “free labor.” See David E. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), ch. 4. “White slavery” was also a term associated with female prostitution but did not come into common usage until Progressive-era anti-prostitution campaigns in the early twentieth century, a time when “formal” networks of prostitution had become regional and even international in scope. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, prostitution was referred to simply as a “social evil.” See Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 141–45; and Margit Stange, *Personal Property: Wives, White Slaves, and the Market in Women* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

19. “A White Woman Sold Into Slavery,” correspondence of the *Tribune*, repr. in *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Jan. 3, 1863.

20. “A White Slave,” Correspondence of the *Tribune*, repr. in *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Apr. 4, 1863.

21. Another fictional account of white slavery was William Wells Brown’s *Clotel; or The President’s Daughter* (1853). See Joanne Pope Melish’s discussion of *Clotel* in Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 272–77.

22. “Sold at Savannah, in Two Chapters,” repr. from *Chamber’s Journal* in the *National Antislavery Standard*, Sept. 12 and 19, 1863.

23. “The White Slaves of the South,” correspondence of *The Grand Rapids Eagle*, repr. in *The National Antislavery Standard*, Sept. 5, 1863. Another story involved a white soldier in the 78th Ohio, who had been sold into slavery “out of some charitable institute [in Kentucky] to which he had been committed as a vagrant.” “Peculiarities of the Peculiar Institution,” Correspondence of the Cincinnati *Commercial* repr. in *The National Antislavery Standard*, Apr. 11, 1863.

24. Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 48. *Mary Chestnut's Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), 29.

25. The life of Alexina Morrison illustrates well the furor that racially ambiguous people could create in the antebellum South. See Walter Johnson, "The Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s," *The Journal of American History* 87 (June 2000): 13–38.

26. Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985).

27. Leslie Williams, "The Look of Little Girls: John Everett Millais and the Victorian Art Market" and Carol Mavor, "Dream Rushes: Lewis Carroll's Photographs of the Little Girl," both in Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone, eds., *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830–1915* (Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1994); Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998), ch. 3; Karin Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600–1900* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1992).

28. Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 140. Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch, *The Photographic Experience 1839–1914: Images and Attitudes* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1994), ch. 2. Nell Irvin Painter has noted the importance of dress and "props" in *cartes de visite* portraits "self-fashioned" by antislavery activist and former slave Sojourner Truth. Truth used knitting yarn, reading glasses, and books to convey motherliness and wisdom. Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 196.

29. Sojourner Truth was also one of the first antislavery activists to employ the camera's potential for representation (through portraiture) and the *carte de visite* as a means of fundraising. See Painter, "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's Knowing and Becoming Known," *The Journal of American History* 81 (Sept. 1994): 461–92; and Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, ch. 20. Fundraising through the sale of photographs became especially popular during the Civil War. Kathleen Collins, "Photographic Fundraising: Civil War Philanthropy," *History of Photography* 11 (July–Sept. 1987): 173–87; and Collins, "Living Skeletons: *Carte de visite* Propaganda in the American Civil War," *History of Photography* 12 (Apr.–June 1988): 103–20. On the invention of the photograph album to display *cartes de visite* see Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 140 and ch. 8.

30. Gillian Brown, "Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Quarterly* 36 (Fall 1984): 505; Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, ed. L. Maria Child (Boston, 1861), repr. and re-edited by Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987). What made Jacobs's narrative so effective was her description of the household in the slaveholding South as "the ground of the institution's most terrifying intimacies." See Hortense J. Spillers, "Changing the Letter: the Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed," in Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad, eds., *Slavery and the Literary Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), 28. See also Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), ch. 2.

31. Laura Wexler, "Seeing Sentiment: Photography, Race, and the Innocent Eye" in Marianne Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1999), 256. On the "geographical distance" (more felt than real) between the North and South in this period, see Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), 59.

32. Elizabeth B. Clark, "Sacred Rights of the Weak: Pain and Sympathy in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (Sept. 1995), 476. Similar expressions of empathy arose in the writings of antislavery feminists, who paralleled their plight as women with that of the enslaved population at the South. See Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women & Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), 50; and "Introduction: Familial Looking" in Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze*.

33. Bernard Wisby, *The Child and the Republic* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1968); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: the Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981); Mary Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830–1860* (New York: Institute for Research in History and the Hawthorn Press, 1982); Richard Broadhead, "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America," *Representations* 21 (winter 1988): 67–96.

34. Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Temperance in the Bed of a Child: Incest and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly* 47 (Mar. 1995): 4. The figure of the "daughter-as-redeemer" displayed both moral purity and strength of character. See Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press), 42.

35. Although her concern is not race, Deborah Gorham notes that the image of the good girl in Victorian culture was often contrasted with her opposite. Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, 49.

36. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852; New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 247. See also "The Meaning of Little Eva," the introduction to Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).

37. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 249.

38. *Freedmen's Journal*, quoted in the *American Missionary*, Nov. 1864, p. 276.

39. *American Missionary*, June 1865, p. 126.

40. *American Missionary*, Mar. 1859, p. 68.

41. *American Missionary*, Oct. 1860, p. 234.

42. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 5.

43. *American Missionary*, Mar. 1859, p. 67.

44. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 43, 496.

45. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 242.

46. "White and Colored Slaves," *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 30, 1864, p. 71.

47. Ex-slave narrators throughout the nineteenth century had to concern themselves with the authentication of their narratives. This involved using specific names and places in their accounts and providing a written introduction by a white sponsor in order to prove their autobiographies were true and not simply the creation of abolitionists. William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986), 26. See also Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985); John Sekora, "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," *Callaloo* 32 (summer 1987): 482–515; Marion Wilson Starling, *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Howard Univ. Press, 1988), ch. 4.

48. *American Missionary*, Mar. 1860, p. 68–69.

49. *American Missionary*, Mar. 1860, 69.

50. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, esp. 19–21. On the imaginings of abolitionists, see Clark "Sacred Rights of the Weak," 479.

51. Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women & Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), 100.

52. Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), ch. 3; Yellin, *Women & Sisters*, ch. 5.

53. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 75, 82. The quote from *Harper's Weekly* is also from *ibid.*, 82.

54. *Ibid.*, 55.

55. The quotes from Palmer and a nineteenth-century viewer (responding to *The White Captive*) are taken from *ibid.*, 75–76.

56. Sánchez-Eppler, "Temperance in the Bed of a Child," 15. James Kincaid, *Child Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 13; Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, 36–39, 122–32. These views of girl children as sexually alluring dispute Deborah Gorham's idea that little girls somehow resolved the "tensions inherent in the Victorian view of female sexuality" and that idealized womanhood (in which women were seen as "pure" or "innocent") could "more appropriately be applied to daughters than to wives." I think there is truth in both interpretations of white little girls in the nineteenth century. Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, 6–7.

57. Leslie Williams, "The Look of Little Girls: John Everett Millais and the Victorian Art Market," in *The Girls' Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830–1915* (Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1994), 124.

58. Millais's *Cherry Ripe* sold six hundred thousand copies in England when it was reproduced as a color centerfold in a Christmas annual. Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, 51. See also Pamela Tamarkin Reis and Laurel Bradley, "Victorian Centerfold: Another Look at Millais's *Cherry Ripe*," *Victorian Studies* 35 (winter 1992): 201–6; Robert M. Polhemus, "John Millais's Children: Faith, Erotics, and *The Woodsman's Daughter*," *Victorian Studies* 7 (spring 1994): 433–50.

59. Nina Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), ch. 9. See also David M. Lubin's discussion of Guy and Carroll in Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), ch. 5.

60. Ronald J. Walters, "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," in John R. McKivigan, ed., *History of the American Abolitionist Movement*, vol. 1, *Abolitionism and American Reform* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

61. On the literature of the "tragic mulatto," see Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women & Sisters*, 71–76; Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1993), ch. 1; and Susan Gillman, "The Mulatto, Tragic or Triumphant? The Nineteenth-Century American Race Melodrama," in Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*.

62. *American Missionary*, June 1863, p. 131.

63. *Ibid.*, 131.

64. Catherine S. Lawrence, *Autobiography or Sketch of Life and Labors of Miss Catherine S. Lawrence who in Early Life Distinguished Herself as a Bitter Opponent of Slavery and Intemperance, and Later in Life as a Nurse in the Late War; and for Other Patriotic and Philanthropic Services*, rev. ed. (Albany, N.Y.: James B. Lyon Printer, 1896), 140. Thanks to Mary L. White, a participant at the 1999 Berkshire Conference for the History of Women & Gender, for bringing Lawrence's memoir to my attention.

65. *American Missionary*, June 1863, p. 132.

66. Sentimental fiction was intended to have similar effects on readers. See Samuels, ed., *Culture of Sentiment*; and Fisher, *Hard Facts*, ch. 2.

67. *American Missionary*, June 1863, p. 132.
68. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), *passim*.
69. *Ibid.*, ch. 5.
70. Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 100, 3–4.
71. Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak,’” 467–68.
72. S.K. Towle, Surgeon, 30th Massachusetts Volunteers, to W.J. Dale, Surgeon-General of the State of Massachusetts, Apr. 16, 1863, cited in Kathleen Collins, “The Scourged Back,” *History of Photography* 9 (Jan.–Mar. 1985), 44. Towle’s comments were printed on the verso of the *carte de visite* made of Gordon, printed in Philadelphia. The photographic printers titled the image “Scourged Back.”
73. Quoted in the *National Antislavery Standard*, June 20, 1863 beneath the heading: “The ‘Peculiar Institution’ Illustrated.” Like the group portrait of “Emancipated Slaves White and Colored,” this photograph was made into an illustration and printed in *Harper’s Weekly*, appearing on July 4, 1863. See Kathleen Collins “The Scourged Back, 43–45.
74. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Legs of the Countess,” *October* 39 (winter 1996), 98.
75. Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*, 18, 23. On southerners’ readings of a “white” woman enslaved see Johnson, “The Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s”; and of slaves in the market see Johnson, *Soul by Soul*.
76. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst, Mass.: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 78. The phrase “mute testimony” comes from Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (winter 1986), 6. The invention and proliferation of photography in the nineteenth century was part of a developing system of surveillance and subjection of particular groups of society, most especially children, workers, the insane, and criminals. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 170–94.
77. H.W. Diamond, *Lancet*, Jan. 22, 1859. p. 89, quoted in Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 79.
78. For a history of the “American School,” see William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815–1859* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960). Agassiz is quoted in Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981; New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 77. See also Gould’s analysis of Agassiz, Morton, and their “evidence” in ch. 2.
79. See Brian Street, “British Popular Anthropology: Exhibiting and Photographing the Other” in Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 130.
80. These images, found in a cabinet in 1976, were never published by Agassiz. See Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989), 53–56; Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 196–97.
81. Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians*, 3–4; Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 23–24.
82. *National Antislavery Standard*, Feb. 21, 1863. New Orleans was particularly well-known for its light-skinned slave women and free women of color, glamorized by stories of “quadroon balls” where white men chose mistresses from among fair-skinned

young women of color. Monique Guillory, "Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: the Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls" (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 1999); Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718–1868* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1997), 112–14.

83. Quoted in *Harper's Weekly*, Feb. 28, 1863.

84. *Harper's Weekly*, "White and Colored Slaves," p. 71.

85. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

86. *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 30, 1864, p. 71.

87. On white nationalism and "free soil" ideology in the antebellum and Civil War years, see George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817–1914* (1971; Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1987), ch. 5. See also Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, ch. 6.

88. Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*, 7. One can find similar images of white women and black slaves in antislavery literature. For example, the frontispiece to an almanac printed in London in 1853 in honor of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depicts Liberty as a white woman reading from the Bible to a group of black children with chains around their feet, repr. in Clare Midley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 147.

89. The Freedmen's Bureau tried to counter these and other rumors (i.e. that "[the freedpeople] are dying off," or "they are killing their children") with published reports from military officials in the field. *Letters from the South, relating to the condition of freedmen, addressed to Major General O.O. Howard, commissioner Bureau R., F., and A.L. by J.W. Alford, gen. sup't education, Bureau R., F., & A.L.* (Washington, D.C.: Howard Univ. Press, 1870), found in the collection of the Library of Congress, "From Slavery to Freedom: The African American Pamphlet Collection, 1824–1909."

90. For a fuller discussion of these photographs see Mary Niall Mitchell, "Raising Freedom's Child: Race, Nation, and the Lives of Black Children in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana" (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 2001), ch. 3.

91. On some missionaries' attempts to fill white northerners' requests for young black workers after emancipation, see Mitchell, "Raising Freedom's Child," ch. 3.