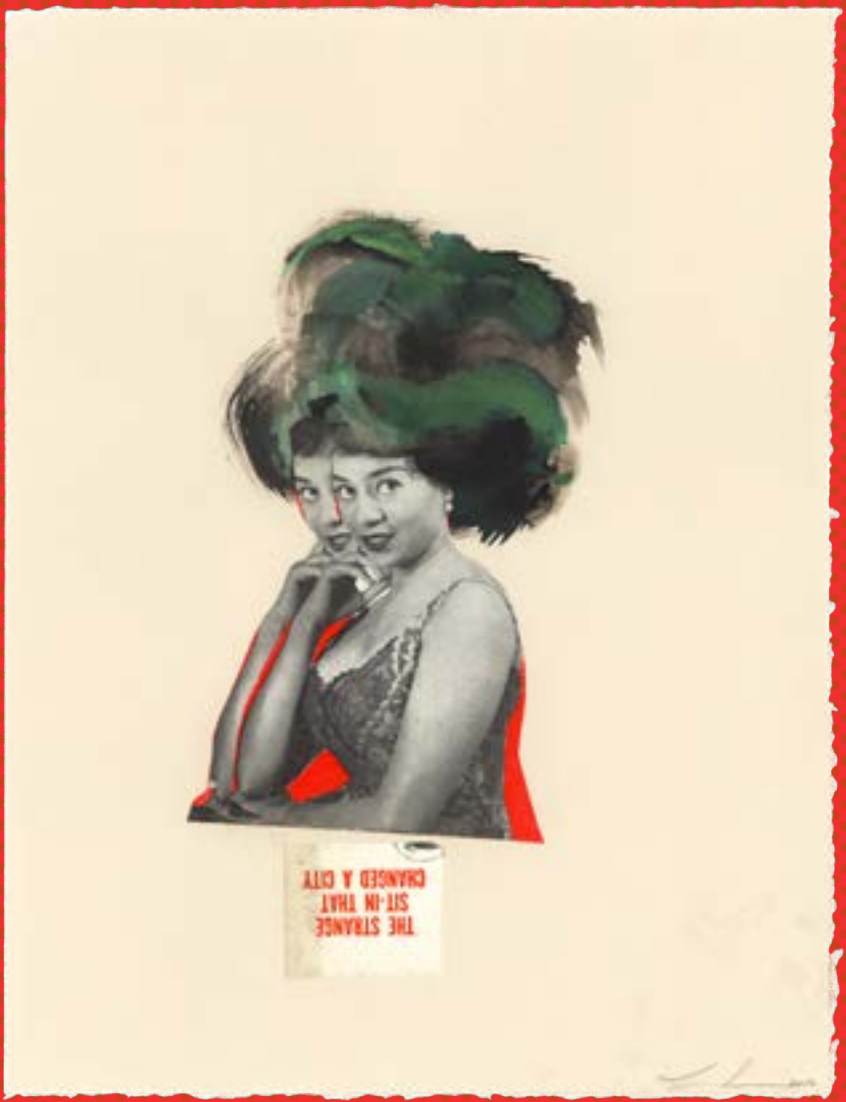
THE ART AND TEXTURE OF BLACK HAIR

NEW GROWTH



JASMINE NICHOLE COBB

NEW GROWTH

BUY

THE ART AND TEXTURE
OF BLACK HAIR

NEW GROWTH

JASMINE NICHOLE COBB

VISUAL ARTS OF AFRICA
AND ITS DIASPORAS
A series edited by Kellie Jones
and Steven Nelson

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Durham and London 2023

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Production editor: Lisa Lawley
Designed by Courtney Leigh Richardson
Typeset in Portrait, Gill Sans, and Trade Gothic
by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Cobb, Jasmine Nichole, author.
Title: New growth : the art and texture of black hair /
Jasmine Nichole Cobb.
Other titles: Visual arts of Africa and its diasporas.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2023. | Series:
The visual arts of Africa and its diasporas. | Includes
bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022020085 (print)
LCCN 2022020086 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478016434 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478019077 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478023708 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Hairdressing of Black people—Social aspects. |
Hairdressing of African Americans—Social aspects. | Hairdressing
of Black people—History. | Hairdressing of African Americans—History. |
Black people—Race identity. | African Americans—Race identity. | BISAC:
SOCIAL SCIENCE / Ethnic Studies / American / African American &
Black Studies | HISTORY / Social History
Classification: LCC GT2290.C633 2023 (print) | LCC GT2290 (ebook) |
DDC 391.5089/96—dc23/eng/20220701
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022020085
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022020086

Cover art: Lorna Simpson, *Jet Double Sit-in*, 2012. Collage
and ink on paper. Unframed: 11 3/16 × 8 11/16 in. (22.1 × 28.4 cm).
Framed: 12 × 9 1/2 × 1 1/2 in. (30.5 × 24.1 × 3.8 cm). © Lorna Simpson.
Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

FOR ALI AND ASA

CONTENTS

FIGURES

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

1
Rashid Johnson, *Self-Portrait with My Hair Parted like Frederick Douglass*, 2003

2
Andy Warhol, *Portrait of Jean-Michel Basquiat*, 1982

3
Kerry James Marshall, *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, 2012

4
Jean Baptiste Debret, *Esclaves nègres, de différentes nations*, 1834–39

5
Jean Baptiste Debret, *Les barbiers ambulants*, 1834–39

6
Jean Baptiste Debret, *Boutique de barbiers*, 1834–39

7
Peter Arrell Browne, *George Washington Hair Sample*, 1820s–30s

8
Peter Arrell Browne, *A Slave of Mr. Jm. H. Hundley*, 1820s–30s

9
Peter Arrell Browne, *Eccentrically Elliptical Pile*, 1820s–30s

10
Barkley L. Hendricks, *Lawdy Mama*, 1969

11
Wadsworth Jarrell, *Revolutionary (Angela Davis)*, 1971

12
David Llorens, "Natural Hair—New Symbol of Race Pride," December 1967

13
Ellen Gallagher, *Afrylic*, 2004

14
Ellen Gallagher, *DeLuxe*, 2004–5

15
Ellen Gallagher, *Wiglette*, 2004–5

16
Lorna Simpson, *Earth & Sky #24*, 2016

17
Lorna Simpson, *Phenomena*, 2016–17

18
Lorna Simpson, *Jet #21, '55*, 2012

19
Lorna Simpson, *Completing the Analogy*, 1987

20
Lorna Simpson, *1978–1988*, 1991

21
Lorna Simpson, *Coiffure*, 1991

22
Sonya Clark, *Mother's Wisdom or Cotton Candy*, 2011

23
Sonya Clark, *Hair Craft Project* (silk thread on canvas), 2015

24
Sonya Clark, *Hair Craft Project* (photographs), 2015

25
Alison Saar, *Nappy Head Blues*, 1997

26
Alison Saar, *Delta Doo*, 2002

27
Alison Saar, *Compton Nocturne* (sculpture), 1999

28
Alison Saar, *Compton Nocturne* (lithograph), 2012

29
Alison Saar, *High Cotton*, 2017

30
Alison Saar, *White Guise* (woodcut), 2019

31
Alison Saar, *White Guise* (sculpture), 2018

32
Alison Saar, *Topsy Turvy* (installation), 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this book has been a journey filled with numerous personal and professional transformations. I could not have completed this work without the generosity of friends and acquaintances who were willing to share hair stories with me. People have been forthcoming with private, anecdotal, and transformative experiences around the wearing or styling of Afro-textured hair; strangers opened their businesses to me for taking pictures and asking questions—from a Dominican salon in the Netherlands to cosmetic stores in Barbados. Early funding from the American Academy of University Women was pivotal, helping to signal the value of this work while also providing me with space to explore diverse topics, at Taliah Waajid's World Natural Hair, Health & Beauty Show in Atlanta, Georgia; the archives at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library; and at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Friends and colleagues helped me reimagine Black coiffure. Keyana Pompey, Lynette Lee, and Precious Daniels still share their growth journeys with me and I am thankful. Also, Robin Stevens, Tshepo Masango Chéry, GerShun Avilez, Khadijah White, and Aymar Christian shared products and personal experiences; Shawnika Hull accompanied me to hair salons and beauty supply stores throughout Philadelphia. John L. Jackson Jr., Robin Means Coleman, Maghan Keita, and Deborah Thomas, along with E. Patrick Johnson, D. Soyini Madison, Jacqueline Stewart, Joshua Chambers-Letson, Jasmine Johnson, and Miriam Petty, urged me to push forward in my intellectual curiosity about Black hair. Joycelyn K. Moody has been a guide and a mentor. Ellen Scott has consistently lent her wisdom, kindness, and cheer since graduate school. Likewise, C. Riley Snorton has remained a constant friend and inspiration, hearing these concepts in their crudest forms and encouraging me the entire way.

Colleagues working on visual culture have magnified my thinking on this subject. Huey Copeland has been unendingly generous, and his insights trans-

formed my approach to the representation of Black hair. He, along with Krista Thompson, Deborah Willis, Kellie Jones, Steven Nelson, and especially Richard Powell, guided me toward diverse forms of illustration and inspired me to take chances. Some of this experimentation took place at the From Slavery to Freedom Lab at Duke's John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute, which I have codirected with Powell and Lamonte Aidoo, who has been a charitable collaborator. Our work together added much excitement to my life at Duke. Our lab is just one of many forms of institutional support that I have received from Valerie Ashby, Sally Kornbluth, Kevin Moore, and Ranjana Khanna. My departmental colleagues have also enlarged my thinking and teaching about blackness, the diaspora, and art history. Mark Anthony Neal has been a tireless advocate. Tsitsi Jaji, Joseph Winters, Anne-Maria Makhulu, Charlie Piot, Sam Fury Childs Daly, Wahneema Lubiano, Michaeline Crichlow, Tommy DeFrantz, Kerry Haynie, Lee Baker, Thavolia Glymph, Charmaine Royal, Karin Shapiro, Stephen Smith, Karen Jean Hunt, John Gartrell, and Heather Martin as well as Kenya Harris, Stacy Nicole Robinson, Tyra Dixon, and Wilhelmina Green have been a caring intellectual community. Likewise, Beverly McIver, Victoria Szabo, Mark Olson, Gennifer Weisenfeld, Kristine Stiles, Esther Gabara, Thomas Rankin, William Seaman, Neil McWilliam, Paul Jaskot, Sheila Dillon, Stanley Abe, and Trevor Schoonmaker have also been cheerful colleagues. At Duke University Press, my editor, Ken Wissoker, and Joshua Gutterman Tranen have been gentle guides and engaged readers from our first conversation about this project.

Much of the heavy lifting required to bring a book to fruition could not have been done without the generous support of graduate-student colleagues. Emily Mohr, Brandee Newkirk, Jessica Orzulak, and Fati Abubakar helped me complete this work; Serda Yalkin, Jacqueline Allain, Ayanna Legros, and Ashleigh Smith have been wonderful interlocutors. LaCharles Ward, Cecilio Cooper, Shoniqua Roach, Rhaisa Williams, and Jared Richardson have helped to keep questions about Black freedom at the forefront of my work.

As for the practical matter of writing, I could not have completed this book at this moment in my life without the support of writing groups. Before the pandemic, I found the most unlikely community in Duke's Faculty Write program, a group in which participants had no overlapping intellectual interests and came from different places in life. Yet, despite those differences, I found in this group a support that helped me keep at it. A special thank you to Jennifer Ahern-Dodson and Charlotte Sussman for fostering these spaces. Through the pandemic, however, I found a crew and a reinvigorated friendship with Kathryn Sophia Belle. Also from different phases and places in life, *our group* has deepened my commitment to my work and helped me embrace the fullness of life

that happens around it. Together, we wept about the murder of George Floyd while urging one another toward deeper self-love and self-care. For you all I am eternally grateful.

Family still cheers for me through life's changes, expanding and growing in ways I could not have imagined. On this particular journey toward completion, reclaiming time with my brother, Brandon Cobb, has bought so much joy to my life. I am thankful for his love, his enthusiasm, and his faith. I look forward to more time and more family. My sister, Danielle Walters, and my mother, Caryl Harris, as well as Monique Walker-Bryant, Jean Webster, Marilyn Johnson, Dana Abernethy, and Fay McCready, still teach me so much.

Finally, I have been blessed with a new squad since writing my last monograph. My partner, Kenyon, remains with me through more transitions than I can count and is still the first and last person with whom I share my ideas. Loie is still here, too. In the process of writing this book, however, Ali and Asa joined our lives. Some days I did not know how this work would get done, but I leaned into them and found the crux of concerns laid out in this book—liberation, amplified by tender and kind forms of contact in the everyday of Black life. You all love me and inspire me, always. Thank you.

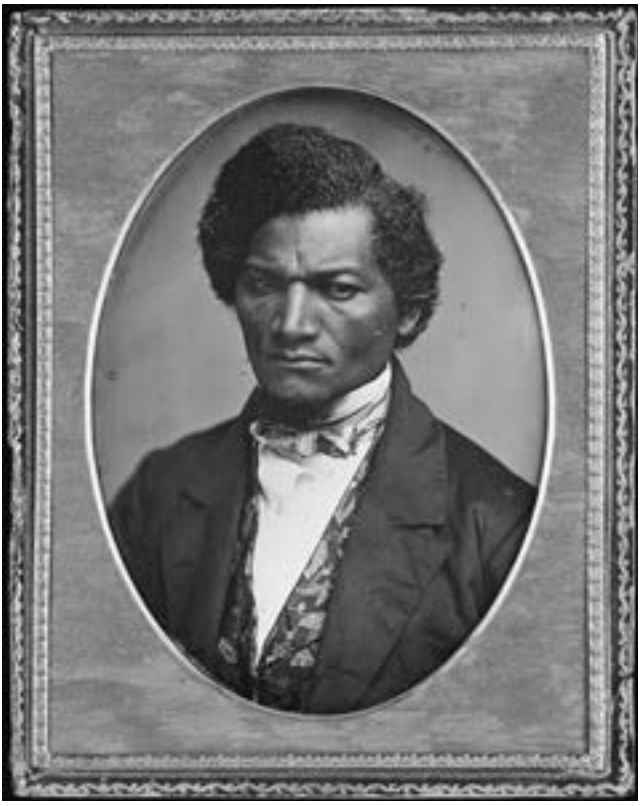
BLACK HAIR AND LIBERATION

NEW GROWTH

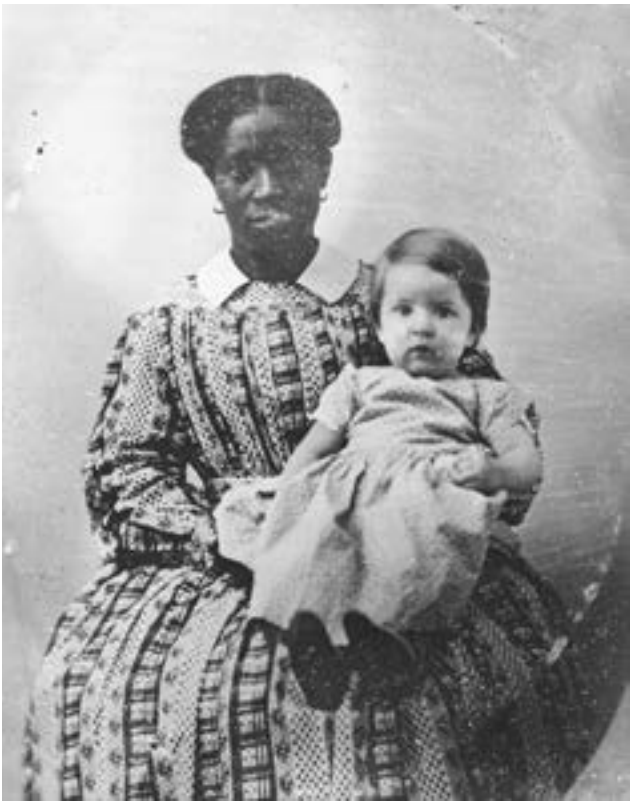
INTRODUCTION

A tentative freedom is tangled in Afro-textured hair. Post-black artist Rashid Johnson suggests as much in his *Self-Portrait with My Hair Parted like Frederick Douglass* (plate 1), in which the artist, dressed in a black suit, a white collared shirt, and a striped necktie, sits at a left-facing angle with his dreadlocks parted on the right side.[1] Like other images in his *New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club* series, Johnson's portrait is citational, referencing the fugitive–free abolitionist with words and image. The pronounced side-parted hair of Douglass's 1847 daguerreotype, taken by photographer Samuel Miller (figure I.1), is the inspiration for Johnson's illustration. In this reference, it is not simply the legacy of photographic practice that connects these two images, but also the hair: Douglass's crown of thick and textured coils and Johnson's once-fringe dreadlock style, now presented as thin, organized cords and paired with formal attire. Douglass's hair suggests care—implies that it was touched, perhaps by his hand or another's, and parted in a deliberate manner to create a style. This clue about

I.1
Samuel J. Miller, *Frederick Douglass*, 1847–52. Photographic plate, 5½ × 4⅛ in. (14 × 10.6 cm). Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



self-fashioning distinguishes Douglass's photograph from many midcentury images of unfree people. For instance, Joseph T. Zealy's photographs of Renty, Alfred, Delia, Drana, Fassena, Jack, and Jem, commissioned by Louis Aggasiz, show them "stripped" of clothing, and not simply naked, deprived of a chance at self-presentation.[2] Relatedly, when Dolly ran away from South Carolina planter Louis Manigault, he fashioned a runaway notice by cutting her image from a family portrait that shows Dolly dressed in work attire and her hair covered with a scarf.[3] Dolly's off-center pose, seated as she is in a wooden chair, is reminiscent of other "family" photographs of the period, wherein white children appear alongside the unfree Black women charged with their care, such as in this photograph of Lucy Cottrell (figure I.2).[4] These images portray limits on the Black subject's autonomy, indicated in strictures of undress, personal grooming, and posture. Conversely, Douglass's solitary portrait, formal attire, and impressive mass of parted textured hair mark his image with a personal touch so that self-styling distinguishes the abolitionist from other Black images of the period.



1.2
Lucy, Holding Charlotte, ca. 1845. Kentucky Gateway Museum Center, Maysville, KY.

Despite the distinctions of Douglass's hair and attire, these features, like the photograph itself, do not clearly indicate the activist as a free man. Shawn Michelle Smith describes Miller's portrait of Douglass as "perplexing, as it represents a legal freedom defined both against and according to the terms of the institution from which he escaped."[5] This illustration of a nominally free Douglass shows him as "liberated" at the hands of white abolitionists who purchased the activist so that he could continue his work on the abolitionist circuit without capture. The freedom and aesthetic choices often read into Douglass's portrait imply autonomy, but in actuality it is the various signals of touch and feeling associated with the textured surface that is his hair that help stake such claims. Douglass's part marks care and separates the fugitive not just from other nineteenth-century photographs of unfree Black people but also from later portraits of Douglass in which his hair appears longer and the part is absent. Accordingly, it is through the photographic medium and through his hair that Johnson's image speaks to a concept of freedom. Choosing to have his

hair "parted like Frederick Douglass," Johnson's coiffure appears tamed. His locs are not separated like those of fellow artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, for example, whose polaroid portrait by Andy Warhol shows his hair, shirt collar, and tie organized in a less orderly fashion (plate 2). In directing our attention to the part, hair becomes central to the "aesthetic means" by which Johnson speaks to the past and to the present, to "the promised freedoms" and to the "productive constraints" that concern many post-black artists.[6] Johnson's hair signals a kind of liberation in the current moment but carries within it histories of repression and efforts to revise dictates on feeling and touch that have rendered dreadlocks unacceptable. Johnson's citation, then, presents hair and touch in two frames: radical in the context of Douglass's photograph and staid in the context of the artist's own twenty-first-century image. The result is an impermanent freedom, conveyed through hair as visual material to be read as anticapitalist, diasporic, and commodified.

New Growth: The Art and Texture of Black Hair explores issues of touch, texture, and feeling as they relate to the idea and the image of "natural hair." Throughout the book, I refer to "natural hair" and "Black hair" interchangeably to describe textured hair among people of African descent—the opposite of coifs presented in straight strands and loose curls and attributed to people not identified as "Black." Afro coiffure, or the character of hair associated with people of African descent, in the absence of chemical and mechanical straighteners includes a variety of curls, coils, and kinks, even on a single individual; various within itself, this human surface is best thought of as densely textured. Within this focus, I propose a haptic exploration of Afro coiffure, with the visual representation of textured hair providing a vehicle for reorganizing the sensual experience of blackness. Not just photography but also Black hair's textural distinction, such as is emphasized in the images of Douglass and Johnson, points to both the image surface and the human surface as central for rethinking engagements with a palpable Black raciality. Here, I explore how hair has been a site for the sedimentation of slavery's inscription of "black" as a feeling in multiple registers and worthy of particular kinds of touch or physical engagement. Alongside this reading of hair as a representation, I also ask, How do images bring viewers closer to a sensuous engagement with blackness? Likewise, How do images foster distance?

In this focus on Afro-textured hair, specifically, my aim is to avoid some of the dichotomous thinking that has ruled everyday conversations about blackness. This includes popular culture debates about "good" and "bad" hair texture and theories of self-hate as a consciousness underpinning the choice to straighten textured hair. In electing to focus on hair read as "natural," or "Black," I mean

to ignore the choice to straighten hair as I try to better understand the significations ascribed to the textured surface. This is not to say that commentary on the *quality* of Black hair textures or the appreciation of coiffure in the *absence* of chemical straightening products is irrelevant to the study, since wearers of textured hair are still subject to aesthetic and moral judgments about style in popular parlance. However, in my focus on natural hair explicitly, I mean to examine mythologies about blackness as a surface realized in the dual sensation of seeing and feeling. Along these lines, I am interested in the ways that image-cultures have helped to shore up or negate those mythologies without regard to a set of alternative options such as heat-straightened hair, for example.

Central to this book is the question of liberation. Over and again, in different time periods and geographic locales, Black coiffure is part of a conversation on the aesthetics of liberation. Frequently, hairstyles such as the Afro, dreadlocks, or simply "the natural" have been typified as "Black" for the way in which these styles embrace unique hair textures common among people of African descent. Black hair's characteristic coils and matting capability have been used to code wearers of textured hair as "pro-Black," suggesting a larger investment in "Black" aesthetics. Art historian Kobena Mercer's canonic essay "Black Hair/Style Politics" details Afros and dreadlocks in particular as "specifically diasporean" aesthetic practices that do not naturally occur but that are carefully crafted and may employ artifice as a way to enhance the "natural."[7] Similarly, art historian Judith Wilson extends this argument to explore the pairing of aesthetic and moral judgment of Black hair in various artistic projects, including film, photography, and installation works by creatives of African descent. *New Growth* is a project in Black visual culture that speaks to these concerns but that also draws upon "art, popular media, exhibitions, public and domestic environments, new media, politics, and commerce," as photography historian Deborah Willis describes, to limn a better understanding of hair within and through Black visual culture.[8]

Here, I read textured hair for "meaning-making" about the Black body. Black aesthetics are central to "creating and maintaining black life-worlds" and are indicative of Black humanity, as these notions are "symbiotic."[9] Thus, a diverse array of images about Black hair are central to the cultural production of Black hair. Afro-textured hair corresponds to Black aesthetics engaged with the hand and with the eyes; it has often figured in recalcitrance from racial capitalism, whether among fugitives from slavery in the nineteenth century or among Black professionals in the twenty-first century. Along these lines, slavery matters; the Middle Passage and chattel slavery are significant not merely for excavating the possibility of a Black aesthetics under duress but for marking a

significant point in time from which to explore the means by which racial capitalism's characteristic violence and accumulation helped shape conceptions of blackness.[10] Jennifer Morgan explains that physiognomy had no relevance before New World conquest; the "cultural deficiency" ascribed to the hair, skin, and facial features of African-descended women would be actively created.[11] Along these lines, hair has been a reccurring topic for Black cultural producers, coupled with issues of coloniality and bondage, as a means by which to reject theories of inferiority and create alternate systems of value for Black aesthetics on the terrain of the human surface.

The Struggle with Black Hair

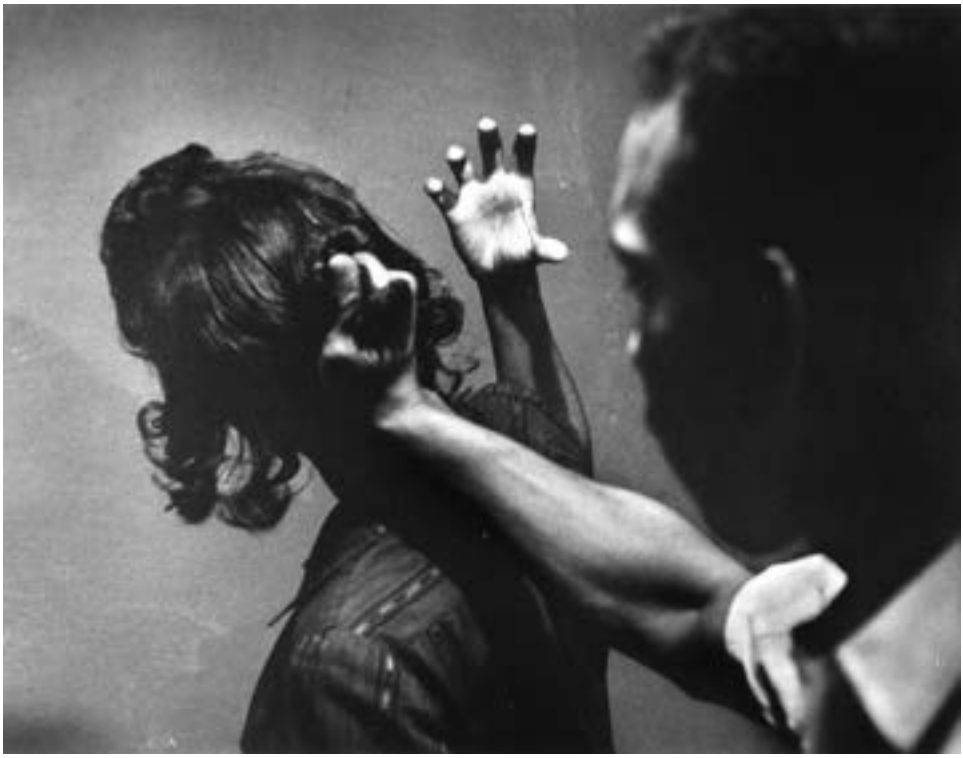
In the context of slavery, concomitant with the life of Frederick Douglass, Afro-textured hair served as a marker of status—Black or not, free or not—while its proper management in the twenty-first century, neatly parted such as in Johnson's self-portrait, determines social acceptance. Black hair was socially significant in the nineteenth century not only to people like Douglass, who wanted to illustrate personal upkeep, but also to white legislators, enslavers, and would-be scientists looking for other forms of corporeal evidence of racial variety. Even white abolitionists made meaning about hair and the presumption of blackness in the discussion of race mixture. In each instance, Black hair appears imbricated in a much longer arc of racial capitalism that extends back to slavery, even as Black coiffure was not a known, salable commodity. Thus, the ways of doing Black hair and its corollary significations have made and remade textured hair into a symbol and site of Black freedom in visual representation.

The economic stability attributed to the labor of Black hair is among the earliest illustrations of Black liberation associated with coiffure. Capitalist appeals to entrepreneurship and consumerism have been highlighted as key among Black hair's liberatory potential. Some of this signaling results from notable labor opportunities associated with Black hair care, where African Americans have found occasions for financial stability through barbering, for example.[12] No figure signifies the complicated freedom achieved through hair and accumulation like Madam C. J. Walker—businessperson, entrepreneur, and first woman millionaire born in the United States. Walker is often accused of suppressing textured hair with the hot comb (which she did not invent), but her birth in 1867 also renders Walker as symbol of the transition from enslavement to freedom, informing views of Walker as moving from the destitution of (post) slavery to redemption found in the lucrative embrace of white beauty norms. Noliwe Rooks locates Walker among a number of Black women, situated be-

tween complex values of beauty and enterprise, who connected "dark skin and slavery."[13] Rooks speculates that visual exemplars for beautiful hair would have been derived from styling habits of white women enslavers, thus framing "the merchandising of hair-care products" for African Americans in print culture up into the early twentieth century.[14] But Walker is among a long line of Black women entrepreneurs; historian Tiffany Gill argues that a number of Black women obtained financial freedom and participated in political activity through work in hair care, where "lines between producers and consumers" were blurred by a diverse cadre of people who expanded the definition of "entrepreneur" with forays into hair care as well as product manufacturing. The financial freedom attributed to Walker and others has helped to make the business of Black hair a pathway toward stability and autonomy.[15]

But more than financial freedom, violence is the chief imprint on textured hair's imbrication in struggles for Black liberation. The spectacular prevalence of natural hair in 1960s Black politics, worn by youth organizers resistant to integration who demanded a synergy between activism and personal style, has endured in pictures that connect natural hair to a radical Black consciousness. Among them, even those activists with straightened hair and formal attire faced attack. In preparation for harassment, activists of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) practiced having their hair pulled (figure I.3). Eventually, and for practical reasons, many of these same women let go of straightened styles after having food thrown at them during lunch counter sit-ins in the South. According to historian Tanisha Ford, women of SNCC rejected the aesthetics of the "respectable body" and "bourgeois beautification," since by 1963 the brutality faced by activists spurred the adoption of unprocessed hairstyles and denim as the preferred radical aesthetic. Thus, the "SNCC women served as early models" for Black radical women of the 1970s.[16] While personal style shaped the political significance of textured hair, these instances also reveal violence as a central story as whites perpetrated aggression against those wearing both straightened and natural hair.

Illustrations of Black protest in the mid-twentieth century also locate textured hair in the midst of state violence, making this period iconic for its representation of Black hair. But activist and scholar Angela Davis argues that the historic photos of the 1960s and 1970s served as sources of terror in their moment of circulation—when images of Davis with her Afro spurred persecution of other Black women wearing this hairstyle at the height of its popularity—before entering an "economy of journalistic images" that has since fueled the commodification of '60s style and radical aesthetics.[17] The embrace of the natural emerged in a politically fraught context captured in civil rights photog-



I.3

James Karales, *Passive Resistance Training, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, 1960. © Estate of James Karales. Reproduced by permission of the Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York.

raphy, and it went on to appear in both political and popular representations, whether in Black Power propaganda or in the consumer market for Soul Music, food, and fashion.

Finally, the imbrication of Black hair in a critical cultural consciousness also helped it to signify freedom. Black hair as explored in the visual works of Black creatives reflects various social values. For example, purveyors of a "New Black Aesthetic" produced images that lampooned "the black nationalist movement" or an "official, positivist black party line," often turning to hair as a way to give mass audiences a peek inside Black culture.[18] Most notably, director Spike Lee's film *School Daze* (1988), about life on the campus of a fictional historically Black university, Mission College, took up the mantle of a blackness as divided between those who are socially conscious and those who are not and recog-

nized in part by the appearance of dark skin and textured hair or light skin with straightened hair. The film's iconic "Good or Bad Hair" show tune pits its representative women against one another to reveal the emotional, social, and psychological significance of hair and aesthetic judgment. George C. Wolfe's *Colored Museum* skit "The Hairpiece" is similar, centering on a dispute between two wigs with differently textured hair about who has more fun. In these works, Black hair is framed not just as a sign of liberation but as a material in need of liberation—to be freed from self-hate among people of African descent. Hair becomes a vehicle through which individuals might reconcile the psychic ramifications of imperialism, colonialism, and chattel slavery. Learning to accept and appreciate features characterized as inherently Black, such as textured hair, became central to a visual culture interested in denouncing white supremacy. Historically rooted in images of Black businesspersons, combined with illustrations of textured hair on the heads of Black activists, the visual narrative of textured hair as an embrace of blackness is solidified and expanded upon by contemporary cultural productions.

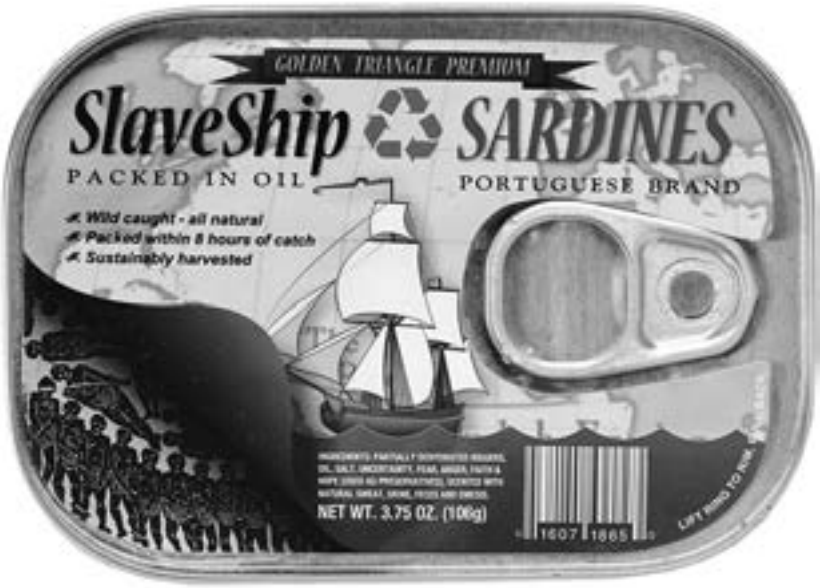
Blackness and Texture

Textured hair, and not just images of textured hair, functions as a visual material for reimagining sentiment and sensuousness in the cultural aftermath of slavery. To think of Black hair as visual material culture is to think through the ways in which its look and feel are mutually significant, and in this way, its style and care operate as "culture made material."[19] Dictates on how to comb or how to view the simple stuff of Black hair textures—the curls, kinks, and coils—help to mark it as racially distinct, while at the same time igniting particular acts of ritual and communal practice around its grooming that further grant it a distinct materiality. This visual materiality is commonly conveyed through dichotomous discursive formations—such as good or bad hair, straight or natural hair—and is buttressed by both practices (ways of touching) and opportunities (hiring) attributed to each designation. Such qualitative distinctions about texture fit among a larger constellation of beauty as dichotomous and tether together skin colors and hair textures into disparate polarities, as if these couplings represent singular phenotypes.[20] At the same time, acts of ritual, creativity, and productivity involved in the working of textured hair into unique styles render it a Black diasporic visual material, linking up people of African descent across time and space through practices of invention and craft.[21] Hair textures and common modes of handling textured hair help tether together dispersed peoples of African descent and approaches to care and styling that represent

a way of "practicing" diaspora.[22] Thus, as Afro-diasporic visual material, hair shows up on people and in illustrations, warranting a closer examination of how its significations traffic in legacies of power and cross-cultural contact. While hair texture has a communicative value—read as a racial signifier of genetic makeup when a tight curl is present or absent—it is presuppositions about the feel and character of a coiffure that shape the perception of racial identity. Judgments about upward mobility, sensibility, and raciality attributed to Black hair are based on the look, the feel, and the *look of the feel* of Black hair altogether. It is this dual significance of the visual and the material that undergirds David Hammons's installations made of discarded hair clippings and in which Afro-textured hair represents the Black body in the abstract, with a unique materiality that lends itself to building *Hair Pyramids* made from clippings or a *Nap Tapestry* from woven dreadlocks (figure I.4). While these works draw upon the visual capacity to feel hair texture, Hammons also acknowledges Black coiffure as a container for sentiment, describing hair as a "filter" and a "potent" material that retains spirit, making it difficult for him to acquire clippings of Black hair and compelling him to move on to other artistic materials out of self-protection.[23] Thus, as aesthetic material, Black hair represents both exterior and internal conceptions of feeling, complicating the sale of works from human hair and demanding caution from the artist handing material.

Marked by both textural and etheric qualities, Black hair conjures multiple registers of feeling or appeals to the haptic. First, Black hair functions as absorbent, bearing what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten theorize as "hapticality" or "the interiority of sentiment." Constituted in the ship's hold through the Middle Passage, they describe this "feeling of the shipped," hapticality, as the set of feelings produced in the multiple displacements of diaspora; hapticality yields "the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you." This feeling, they argue, "is unmediated, immediately social," the result of "skin, against epidermalisation, senses touching."[24] These multiple vectors of feeling are produced under strained conditions and then birth other possibilities for feeling, such as through music and visual arts. Born under duress, hapticality becomes representational and presents the means by which the shipped remain legible to each other, culled together as a diasporic people through multiple sensualities rendered on multiple surfaces. The "haptic as an explicitly minoritarian aesthetic," according to Rizvana Bradley, or as "a specific set of material negotiations between bodies, spaces and objects," it is a chance to think about interpersonal and imagistic interactions, to consider "non-normative sensuality" on a variety of surfaces.[25] Thus, I take up hair as a human surface for thinking through alternate sensuous encounters with Black

I.4
David Hammons, *Nap Tapestry*, 1978. Photograph by Dawoud Bey.



I.5

Colin Quashie, *SlaveShip Brand Sardines*, 2012. Sardine can, 3 × 4½ × ⅞ in. (7.6 × 11.4 × 2.2 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC. Gift of Mark Sloan and Michelle Van Parys in honor of Trevor Schoonmaker, 2016.13.2. © Colin Quashie. Image courtesy of the Nasher Museum of Art.

raciality, and in its hapticality I find a continual reckoning with the legacies of the hold and the cultural consequences of transport.

The visual legacy of slavery often directs scholarly attention toward the flesh. Artists remark on this emblematic inheritance from the torment captured in Joseph Turner's *Slave Ship* to Colin Quashie's *SlaveShip Brand Sardines*, signifying on the antislavery image of bodies crammed in a cargo hold (figure I.5). These illustrations emphasize that it is what has happened to the flesh—tightly packed together or ripped apart by sea creatures—that endures in the conception of slavery and the reckoning with its reverberation. Flesh that "registered the wounding" of the Middle Passage, according to Hortense Spillers, is the entity acted upon and as a "primary narrative"; flesh documents through its "seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole."[26] Moreover, the suffering rendered in the flesh becomes "a pivotal arena for the politics emanating" from the oppressed.[27] Skin becomes the primary document of Black suffering, the ultimate qualifier of Black raciality, authenticity, and futurity. Indeed,

"flesh [operates] as Blackness in abstraction" according to C. Riley Snorton.[28] This significance of flesh to conceptualizations of blackness appears in a bevy of cultural representations, from crude illustrations to modern pictures. Skin has served as the primary mode for realizing Black raciality, where color and then colorism have been crucial to understanding the subjugation of the Black body under racial capitalism.

Accordingly, flesh has also operated as the dominant haptic regime in the realm of Black representation. Flesh is central to how we know blackness in the world, and with regard to matters of touch, it is the fleshly encounters that seem to matter most. Flesh is the predominant human surface for thinking through questions of touch. Operating as an unnatural physical order determining protocols of feeling, the appearance of the flesh has similarly been used to read histories of suffering as recorded on the Black body—the wounds imprinted on the fugitive from slavery. Even in illustration, flesh is held as central to claims of authenticity and to modes of depiction that reinstate or reinscribe discourses of power. Along these lines, Teju Cole reads the technological limitations of photography's penchant for light (skin) against work by photographers who make productive use of darkness and shadow when shooting Black flesh to examine biases built into the photographic apparatus.[29] The treatment of the flesh becomes paramount to judging a picture and central to critiquing encounters with the Black body. But whereas "touch is the first frontier of oppression, [as] violating forms of touch [are] at the introduction of slavery," there are other surfaces on which to touch and conceptualize blackness.[30] While flesh is central to how we know blackness, there is much revealed through the exploration of hair as another human surface. Just as the "absence of the object seen" in cinema is but one scopic regime, one way to organize the viewing experience, the primacy of the flesh is *a* means for structuring the haptic.[31] Martin Jay theorizes the "cultural variability of ocular experience" by describing various scopic regimes, and while he argues that the eye is "the most expressive of the sense organs," he claims "touch" as its only competitor.[32] Issues of touch, feeling, interiority, or the historical legacy of bondage can be realized in coiffure, which is similarly marked with violence, used as a basis for political organizing, and equally capable of rendering blackness in the abstract. The feel of Black hair, feelings about Black hair, and Black hair as a collection of feeling all point to a tangled register of sentiment to which I want to attend further.

A haptic reading of an alternate human surface is significant for taking seriously the role of slavery and race in the visual sense. A gendered and racialized conception of the flesh has been central to rendering touch as uniquely feminine, and contrary to a Western "phallogocularcentrism."[33] But this approach

ignores different relationships to touch and to the flesh. Indeed, the "ungendering" of the flesh, as slavery would have it, removes a pretense of feminine entitlement to the haptic; bondage asserts suffering and surfacism as part of the haptic and central to the production of blackness after slavery. Thus, I regard "the haptic as a feminist visual *strategy*," in keeping with Laura Marks's usage, quintessential to the representation of blackness by visual means, where the pictorial treatment of the flesh becomes the predominant point of entry for understanding issues of authenticity, realism, and the like.[34]

Such protocols of look and touch are entangled in Black hair. Most obviously, in its care and adornment, Afro-textured hair demands physical touch—to implement Douglass's part or to twist Johnson's locs, for example. These issues of style or the look of hair that has been manipulated into unique kinds of displays bring up issues of touch between Black people. More than this, though, Afro-textured hair has continually been subject to examination and circumspection, from slavery onward, in efforts to understand and manage its particularity: the curl and coil that make up its visual distinction. The unique way in which Afro-textured hair is said to feel, and is imagined to feel, in the hand becomes a part of understanding blackness with hair fiber serving as another surface for objectification. The sum of these sensuous engagements accentuates touch, and not just appearance, as a central means of engaging Black hair. Much like the photographs discussed by Tina Campt, hair involves "multiple forms of touch"; and just as photographs undergo "tactile bodily interactions like touching, wearing, handling, and manipulation, as well as the varied and elaborate forms of presentation, display, and circulation," Black hair is similarly haptic, known to viewers through various kinds of physical contact.[35] Haptic images, those that we touch physically or emotionally, those we view up close and from afar, exist in diverse formats and interpellate viewers to see with the body as well as with the eyes. Whether three-dimensional or two-dimensional, "haptic images" solicit bodily relation between the viewer and the image, moving on the image surface; these pictures demand close contact, dissolve the viewer's subjectivity, and forge an "erotic relationship" through the experience of distance and closeness.[36] Haptic images hail the viewer and invite contemplation of the image surface rather than the image narrative.

Haptic visual encounters with Black hair differently frame textural distinction. Thinking through texture, with no attention to qualitative distinctions about wave, curl, and kink—in *New Growth*, there is no good or bad hair—draws together the various ways of distinguishing hair into a larger position about blackness on the surface. Thus, whether describing so-called good hair in the twentieth century or utilizing the dubious "hair typing system" of the twenty-

first century, qualifiers about distinction point to ways of parsing blackness for its look and feel simultaneously. These references to texture more aptly underscore the multiple subjects involved in the determination of hair's feeling, that texture does not inherently signify raciality, and that hair is not objectively "good" or "bad." The question is always "good to whom and for what?" Thus, efforts to reimagine derogatory views of Black coiffure simultaneously read together image and texture and seek to rethink subject positions around the surface of Black hair. Vernacular distinctions about the quality of hair have rendered terms such as *nappy* as pejorative and then later transformed them with the popularization of textured styles.[37] Anthropologist Ingrid Banks shows how *nappy*, a once-derogatory word reappropriated to positively describe "tightly coiled or curled black hair," became newly popular in everyday discussions as Black women began to rethink "desirable and undesirable" as racialized beauty norms.[38] Across time, *nappy* has often been read as resistant, unrefined, and in need of further management by force. In these transformations, texture is realized as a commentary on the feel of hair in the hand, not just its appearance on the individual.

Accordingly, Black hair is useful for contending with issues of feeling and interiority in addition to notions of the sensuous surface. Hapticality for people of African descent traffics in the many kinds of surfacisms brought to bear upon the Black body as a textured site of racial distinction and also in the internal sentiments associated with the exterior. Representational surfaces demand the look, a correspondence with "what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible," rather than with what is hidden.[39] Yet, to think of Black raciality as sensual, as palpable, implores us to think about mythologies of how blackness feels in the hand of the other: histories of touching Black bodies that have been used to shore up those mythologies as well as the feeling Black subject. Black hair becomes a material, visual, and symbolic site of return for contending with hapticality, materializing theories of feeling that might be broken down into interiority, touch, and texture. While hair represents a human surface, Black hair in particular has often been regarded as a site for understanding interiority—as in the psychological interior of the Black mind riddled with the legacy of colonialism and manifested in a self-hate that results in alterations to the human surface (such as skin bleaching and hair straightening). Especially after the Black Arts Movement (BAM) and the Black Power movement, textured hairstyles have been regarded as signifiers of a Black interior, a whole/healthy Black self that seeks to cast off the "shackles of the mind" imposed through enslavement. Relatedly, however, the feeling of natural hair, as in the ways that Black people have treated Black hair, and its physical handling via hot combs, chemi-

cal and mechanical straighteners, or braiding and fluffing Afros have been sites not only for moral judgment but for an enduring practice of touch as culturally and historically informed. Thus, to think of hapticality on the hair surface is to evaluate the multiple constructions of an insensate blackness, and also to take seriously those refusals of touch, such as when singer Solange Knowles croons "Don't touch my hair / When it's the feelings I wear."[40] In all of these instances the question of touch is a vehicle for engaging sentimentality and hapticality.

Afro-textured hair is an invitation to consider the ways in which Black raciality has been organized through vectors of feeling—rendered as a palpable condition, devoid of sentiment and curiously defined by the exterior. Natural hair presents fodder for thinking about the consistency of Black racial distinction in the hands—even how Black hands have been rendered with a distinct hapticity capable of wrangling Black tresses. In this way, returning to Black hair is an opportunity to sit with broader conceptions about the handling of the Black body on the long arc of racial capitalism in the United States, and in the face of persistent efforts at liberation. This interrogation of hair as an alternate human surface opens up understanding of the sensuousness of blackness by thinking beyond the flesh, and to think alongside image makers who have used the visual to shift perspectives on the sensual nature of blackness. Hair in Black visual culture forges a connection with liberation, but it is textured hair, specifically, as a haptic image that enables people of African descent to continually reengage the cultural aftermath of slavery. On the terrain of Black hair that legacy is played out not in the socio-political importance of hairstyles, but on the various hapticities embedded in Afro hair texture. Black hair is an archive of haptic encounters, calling to viewers on multiple registers of the sensory experience.

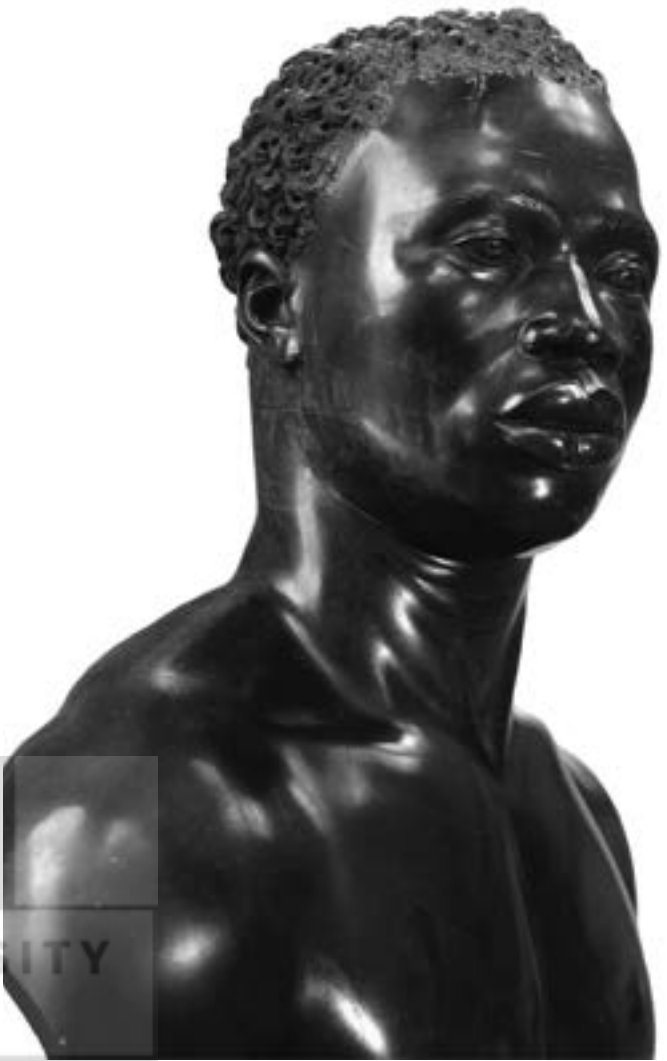
The chapters of this book explore what I describe as "haptic blackness" in an effort to better understand the physical, textural, visual, sentimental, and archival modes of constructing blackness on human and pictorial surfaces. Haptic blackness has to do with the ways in which the racial distinctions ascribed to people of African descent are rendered simultaneously visible and tactile, received with the eyes but also within the body. I read the organization of haptic blackness in the postslavery practices of race-making that were meant to maintain distinctions. Equally revealing are the resistant modes of representation that people of African descent have used to convey complex notions of feeling or to explore an interior blackness. In these, haptic blackness corresponds to the means by which Black raciality becomes simultaneously visual and palpable across surfaces and through transformations in culture and Black representation. Haptic blackness transitions conceptions of exteriority—moving the hu-

man surface from a cohesive object for embodied viewing to a textured surface constituted in habits of feeling and touch as historically informed experiences.

Iconic pictures also rely on a haptic blackness, demonstrating the manner in which the image surface produces a tangible raciality that is experienced through the eyes and within the body. Francis Harwood's eighteenth-century sculpture *Bust of a Man* employs a "haptic blackness" in textural features, which are highlighted in this *Digital Composition of* "*Bust of a Man*"; seen from two angles, the color and gloss of the stone are revealed as part of the sensual experience of the object (figure I.6).[41] Harwood carves definition in the lips and nose with careful detail to portray the curl of the subject's hair, creating a portrait sculpture conversant with theories of racial difference in the eighteenth century. This treatment of hair texture recurred in other three-dimensional works, as carving hair to mark the textural distinction of Black raciality in the sculpted figure helped to fashion a Black image, regardless of the stone's color. Working in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, artists paid careful attention to crafting tight curls on Black figures conscripted to various projects of empire. Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier produced his *Vénus africaine* (1852), covering her breasts but deeply engaging her hair as coiled, possibly loc'd, and laid densely back and around her face (figure I.7). Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux followed with *Why Born Enslaved!* (1852), choosing to both expose her breast and reveal her hair, while Edmonia Lewis, in her *Forever Free* (1867), depicts an emancipated man in white stone, with tightly coiled curls to assert his raciality against the contrast of white marble. These works yield some of the earliest depictions of Afro-textured hair in Western art, where off-canvas artists exercised dexterity and care in trying to recreate Black coiffures. Through sculpture, these artists were explicit in their livening of the pictorial surface as reference for the human exterior.

While three-dimensional representations carry with them the opportunity to move around the object in order to take in the image, when represented on canvas by artists of European descent, Afro-textured coiffures have often received less detailed attention than white hairstyles. Whereas illustrations emphasizing hair among white subjects have used this attribute for claims about gender, sexuality, and citizenship, there has been less lore or guiding rationales for the meaning of Black hair texture in Western art. For example, Sandro Botticelli's late-fifteenth-century painting *Birth of Venus*, with her cascading locks that seem to catch wind, flowing and covering her genitals, presents an iconic treatment of hair as part of femininity and virginity for white women. Conversely, Marie-Guillemine Benoist's *Portrait d'une negresse* (1800), with her exposed breast and covered head, masks the Black subject's hair from viewers. Her nudity is an op-

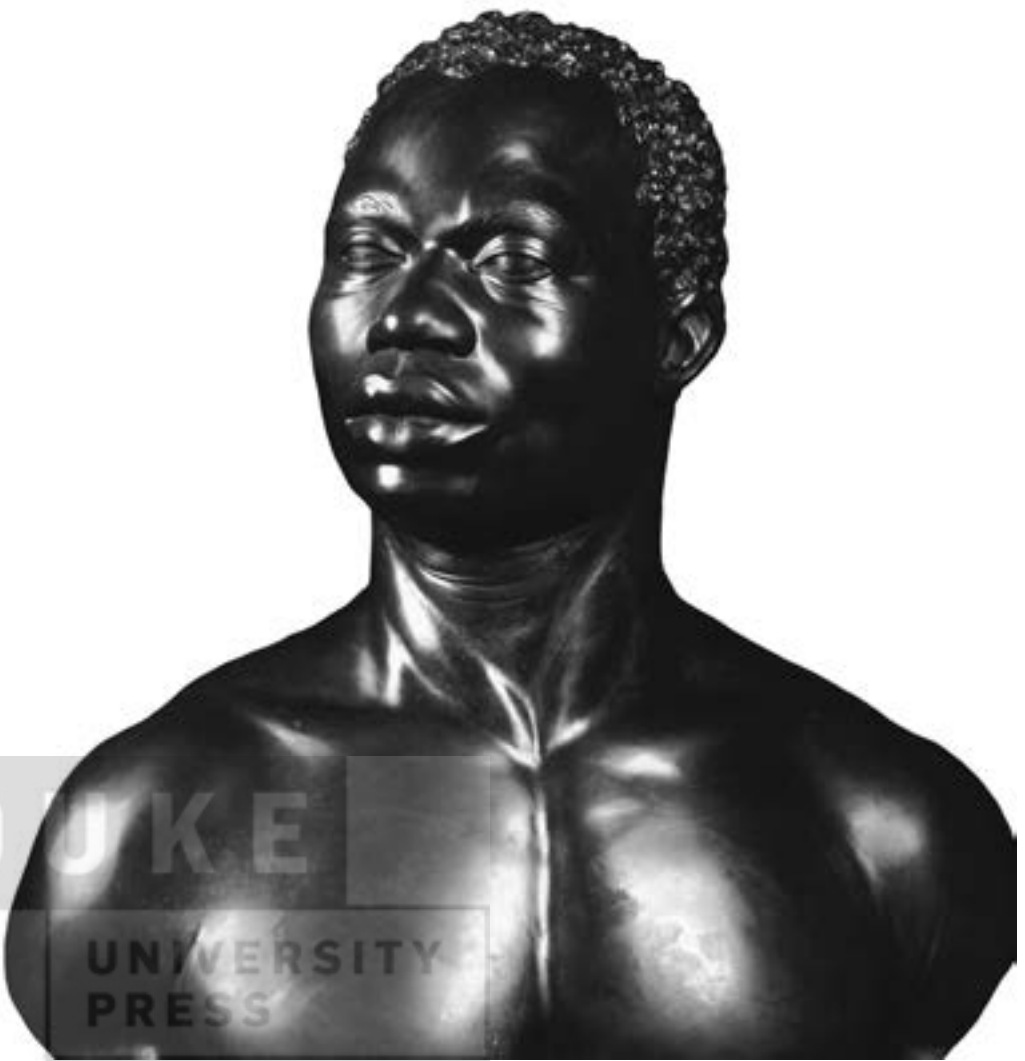
portunity to question liberty and slavery. According to historian Robin Mitchell, the Black female body offered a vessel for reconciling the devastation of the Haitian Revolution in 1802 and the repression of a Black presence in French national identity thereafter; images of blackness supported "the development of different notions of French citizenship and subjectivity."[42] For these paintings of Black women, head coverings help to signify status; curator Denise Murrell argues, "The head scarf is particularly characteristic of typing the Black female servant: by showing it piled high on her head, and tied to the side." The headscarf references the "foulards worn in the French Antilles," and it is a reccurring sign in paintings and photographs of the late nineteenth century that illustrate Black women alongside the whites whom they serve.[43] Thus, Black hair and its covering are curiously part of the chiaroscuro described by Lorraine O'Grady, the visual implement that brings whiteness into sharper relief, whether in Édouard



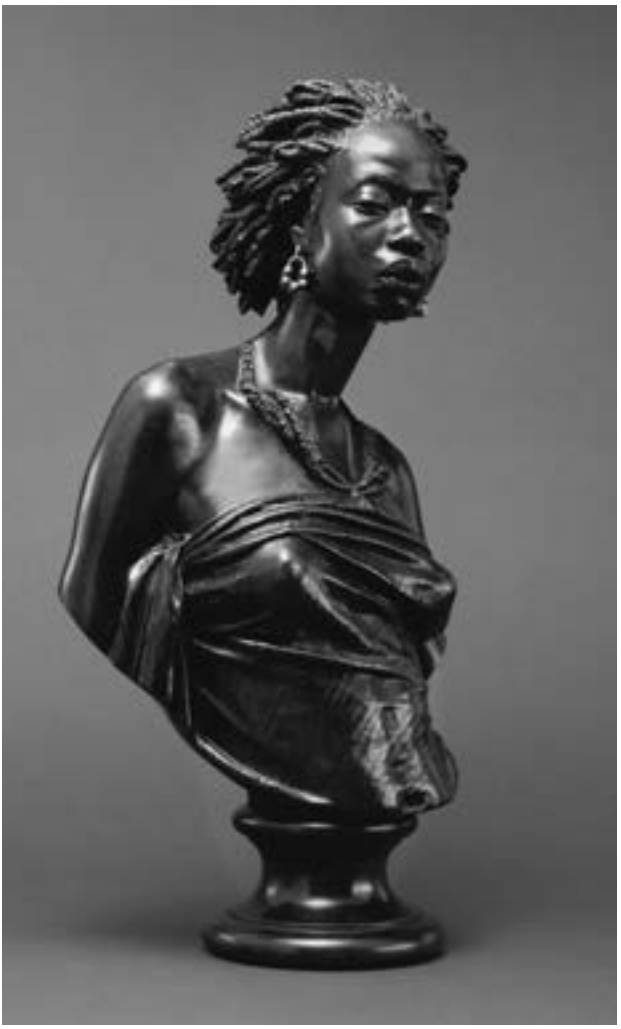
1.6
Ken Gonzales-Day, *Digital Composition of "Bust of a Man,"* 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Luis de Jesus, Los Angeles. *Left*, image of Francis Harwood's *Bust of a Man*, 1758, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, 2015. *Right*, image of Francis Harwood's *Bust of a Man*, 1758, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2009.

Manet's *Olympia* (1863) or in other works that construe Black hair as another marker of caste to define the Black subject as a foil for whiteness.[44]

The representation of textured hair in two dimensions largely waited for contemporary artists of African descent. Curator Kim Curry-Evans describes recurring themes around communal space, individuality, political symbolism, and "the syndrome of 'good hair/bad hair'" in the *HairStories* told by Black visual artists.[45] These include not only the modernist photographs of James VanDerZee, for example, who depicted hair among Black Americans as both part of a stylish appearance and a culture of upward mobility, but also the works by Kerry James Marshall, who has attended to Black hair in culturally specific locations. Hair is central to the private interior of Black culture, and not just its recognition in public, as portrayed in Marshall's *De Style* (1993), which locates the barbershop as a destination and not just a place used to prepare for pub-



I.7
Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier, *Vénus africaine,* 1852. Bronze and gold, 15⁹⁄₁₆ × 8 in. (39.5 × 20.3 cm). Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, by CC01.0.



lic encounters (figure I.8). Marshall's combination of acrylic and collage puts textural variety onto the canvas in a scene that shows the care of Black hair as constitutive of community within Black life. His title offers a nod to *De Stijl* (neoplasticism), Dutch depictions emphasizing vertical and horizontal composition, while Marshall's characters reference Jacob Lawrence's *Barber Shop* (1975), riffing on Lawrence's signature angles and Black figures through Marshall's offering of a frontal view of six occupants and his play on what constitutes the subject. The climbing plant on the left side of the image duplicates the height and stature of the tall locs on the seated figure, while the mirror provides a double and a rear view for the man standing to the right, his locs pinned up into

1.8

Kerry James Marshall, *De Style*, 1993. Acrylic and collage on canvas, 109 × 120 in. © Kerry James Marshall. Courtesy of the artist and the Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

a crown. Marshall extends the private/public convening around Black hair as a destination in his *School of Beauty, School of Culture* (plate 3), portraying Afro puffs, box braids, and locs on his signature Black subjects. Here, whiteness infiltrates the space, revealed in the specter of dominant beauty norms as a lurking reality; whiteness and blondness hold center space in the salon, present in the anamorphic figure of a "Goldilocks" to mimic Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533). Such inclusions demand a nuanced reading of the larger image according to Krista Thompson, where surfacism promotes a recognition of other ways of seeing or nonnormative approaches to vision.[46] Exploring these textured inclusions, whether via paint, glitter, or found objects, *New Growth* reads such en-

gagements with visual representations for a deeper understanding of Black hair and of race as a human exterior.

Chapter Summaries

This book focuses on textured Black hair as represented in several visual medias, and it regards Black hair itself as a visual medium. In this exploration of Black visual culture, I situate hair among those practices of looking, presenting, representing, or rendering visible that are popular among people of African descent. I explore Black hair in slave narratives, abolitionist portraiture, scrapbooks, photojournalism, popular magazines, television advertisements, fiction, and documentary film, as well as in sculpture, painting, and craft and collage. By beginning with hair in the context of slavery, this book resists and rewrites conceptions of Black hair as a particularly Black preoccupation—as the source of internal ire for people of African descent exclusively. Instead, it reveals that the look, feel, and potential of Black hair has been just as relevant to public culture as other renderings of the Black body.

The first two chapters explore haptic blackness on the human surface, considering the treatment of hair fiber in slavery and in the memory of slavery. Chapter 1 begins in the nineteenth century, analyzing Black hair as an archive. Circulating throughout the Atlantic, Afro coiffure and its representation variously appear as a register of racial distinction, a chronicle of racial violence, and a record of care. This examination includes an exploration of the physical handling of Black hair, such as the cutting of Black hair to signal "slave" status, to initiate sexual violence, and to bolster academic inquiry. In this last instance, hair clippings from unfree Black people were used by early race scientists to reveal yet another site where Black bodies were consumed for the purposes of knowledge production and the generation of celebrity among nineteenth-century researchers. At the same time, however, people of African descent maintained diasporic aesthetic practices through hair. Illustrations of African peoples in the US state of Maryland and in Brazil, in lithographs and in photographs, help reveal hair grooming and styling as valuable. Together, these factors render Black hair as an archive, not simply for how it reveals information about people of African descent but also for how it records notions of feeling and practices of touch that have (otherwise) gone unexamined. Chapter 2 turns toward the issue of hair texture, where through the construction and promotion of "natural hair," people of African descent variously used texture to reorganize haptic blackness in relation to the memory of slavery. In visual and textual works, Black people intertwined the legacy of bondage and Black interiority as

phenomena that revealed themselves on the human surface through hairstyles. In the twentieth century, Afro-textured hair moved into a new relationship to racial capitalism via the commodification of natural hair. A diverse collection of images, taken from Johnson Publishing Company and the marketing of cosmetics like Afro Sheen, as well as from photojournalists' portrayals of dreadlocks, underscore legibility and approachability as key frameworks for engaging the issue of texture. In these instances, hair functions like flesh in offering a material history about the production of blackness under racial capitalism.

The final two chapters of *New Growth* offer a pivot past Black hair's historical and haptic rendering alongside flesh. In chapters 3 and 4, I turn to the pictorial surface and consider cultural productions about Black hair as recuperative: as sites that reorganize notions of touching and feeling blackness, thereby complicating linear constructions of time recorded on the body. Chapter 3 attends to film and photography, analyzing the prevalence of documentary aesthetics among cultural producers who take up the camera in ways that reimagine touch and blackness. Reading the works of J. D. Ojeikere and Bill Gaskins together, I explore black-and-white photographs for how they bring the viewer closer to Black hair, fostering touch through the image surface. Similarly, I look to the body of independent documentary films on natural hair to examine how these works offer viewers new ways of touching Black hair by filming hair care. These images, I argue, laid the groundwork for new practices of touch now evolving in the twenty-first century, in our emergent visual economy. Finally, chapter 4 argues for reading blackness as a haptic inheritance conveyed through ways of creating the surface. I consider the work of Black women artists who have transformed legacies of a palpable Black raciality through contemporary artworks that reveal the surface as worked upon, hewn in ways that reference the past but link together people of African descent through what is visible and cultivated.

In this approach, I mean to take seriously Black hair as a cultural practice and as visual material, where its common rituals and representations present an opportunity to reconsider the histories of touch and feeling that have informed conceptions of texture. In veering into the haptic, I offer another mode of engaging Afro-textured hair, outside the valuations of textural quality and Black authenticity that scholars have warned against. Questioning the appearance and visual meanings attributed to textured hair offers another valence for perceiving the characteristic distinctions of blackness that have historically been viewed as biologically determined or as having a macro-level of social import. Haptic blackness, as realized in hair and images of hair, reveals touch and feeling as racialized and historically informed, and thus mutable, with a propensity for expanded conceptions of autonomy.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION. NEW GROWTH

1 Through the book I use *dreadlocks* and *locs* interchangeably to describe the style of twisting Afro-textured hair to mat and tangle. Locs have a complicated history that also frames the terminology used to describe this hairstyle. In *Hair Story*, Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps offer the term *dredlocs* to avoid the "dreadful" characterization of Black hair in bondage, a designation from slavery "when Africans emerged from the slave ships after months spent in conditions adverse to any personal hygiene." The authors go on to discuss the commoditization of dredlocs among US Americans, buttressed by popular culture, where fashion separated the style from its radical roots. Along these lines, however, *dread* as a term maintains significance even if its use emerged in the context of slavery, which I have not uncovered in the following research. *Dread* offers an important distinction from *combsome* among Rastafarians, marking loc'd hair as counter to grooming with combs. Barry Chevannes argues that the "institutionalization of the locks" began in 1930s Jamaica, with growing beards and with early debates about combing hair, which was controversial "because society simply did not accept unkempt hair. Not to comb one's hair was to declare oneself not merely antisocial but extra social, like mad derelicts and outcasts." Accordingly, "One who earned that name inspired dread in other brethren by the forthrightness and frankness of his critical remarks and the defense of the principles essential to the Youth Black Faith. 'Dreadful' or 'Dread' was therefore synonymous with 'upright.'" I maintain the use of *dreadlocks* to mark this counterhegemonic significance, even where some wearers of loc'd hair refute these politics. Byrd and Tharps, *Hair Story*, 121; Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, 156.

2 See the image by Joseph T. Zealy, *Daguerreotype, Renty, frontal*, 1850. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. For more on the posing of Zealy's subjects, see Lewis, "Insistent Reveal," 299.

3 Hall, "Missing Dolly, Mourning Slavery."

4 Lucy Cottrell was held in bondage by George Blaetterman, a professor at the University of Virginia, and had been sold to him by the estate of Thomas Jefferson after his death in 1826. For more on such images see Fox-Amato, *Exposing Slavery*.

5 S. M. Smith, *Photographic Returns*, 27.
6 Copeland, "Rashid Johnson," 303.
7 Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," 44.
8 Wilson, "Beauty Rites"; Willis, "Black is Beautiful: Then and Now," 139.
9 P. C. Taylor, *Black Is Beautiful*, 12; Gordon, "Black Aesthetics, Black Value," 26.
10 Artists who survived slavery, such as painters Bill Traylor (1854–1949) and Joshua Johnson (1763–1862), or ceramicist David Drake (1801–65), are often treated as exceptional individuals and their artworks are treated archivally.
11 Morgan, *Laboring Women,* 12.
12 Bristol, *Knights of the Razor*; Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*.
13 Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 30.
14 Rooks goes on to say that "because female slaves probably looked to the values and materials of the white mistress with regard to clothing, they may have done the same with hair, although their practices would have differed," presuming that "house slaves whom the master held in particularly high esteem were held in high regard" and might have set a tone for the values of hair culture in these communities. Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 25.
15 Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics,* 122.
16 Ford, "SNCC Women," 657.
17 Davis, "Afro Images."
18 Ellis, "New Black Aesthetic," 236.
19 Sheumaker and Wajda, *Material Culture in America*, xii. The study of material culture, especially with regard to people of African descent, is typified by a focus on objects or things, such as the search for personal possessions among enslaved Blacks or for utilitarian artifacts excavated on the continent of Africa. Moving between "'form'-based and 'context'-based analyses" scholars use material culture to piece together life worlds. Arnoldi and Hardin, *African Material Culture*, 1. See also Katz-Hyman and Rice, *World of a Slave*.
20 Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety*. "Light skin, straight noses, and long, straight hair" signify "civility, rationality, and beauty," in contrast to "dark skin, broad noses, and kinky hair, [which] represent savagery, irrationality, and ugliness." Hunter, *Race, Gender,* 3.
21 Powell, *Black Art,* 16.
22 B. H. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*.
23 K. Jones, *Eyeminded,* 250.
24 Harney and Moten, *Undercommons,* 98.
25 Bradley, "Introduction," 130.
26 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.
27 Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 2.
28 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 34.
29 Cole, "True Picture of Black Skin."
30 Spillers, "Shades of Intimacy."
31 Metz, *Imaginary Signifier*, 61.
32 Jay, *Downcast Eyes,* 9.

33 Martin Jay points to Luce Irigaray's critique of touch as feminine, rooted in the sex organ that "keeps woman in touch with herself." Jay, *Downcast Eyes,* 292; Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 26.

34 Marks, *Touch*, 7.

35 Campt, *Listening to Images*, 72; Campt, *Image Matters*, 32.

36 Marks, *Touch,* 13.

37 Jacobs-Huey, *From the Kitchen*, 122. With the explosion of new entrepreneurs, Lanita Jacobs-Huey explored language in everyday conversation, including online communities at the turn of the twentieth century, to find "nappy as a controversial and complex signifier," 128.

38 Banks, *Hair Matters*, 172. Banks discusses slavery, as do her interview participants; she explains that "slavery has ended, but the psychological scars remain, as do more subtle forms of devaluing Black physical characteristics" (76). Banks also clarifies that "black women still have to deal with the mental chains of slavery and Jim Crow that are exacerbated by mainstream standards of beauty that black women in general cannot meet" (46).

39 Best and Marcus, "Surface Readings," 9.

40 On insensate blackness, see Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*; Solange, "Don't Touch My Hair."

41 Levenson, Yang, and Gonzales-Day, "Haptic Blackness."

42 Mitchell, *Vénus Noire,* 9.

43 Murrell, *Posing Modernity*, 20.

44 O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid."

45 Curry-Evans et al., *HairStories*, 13.

46 K. Thompson, *Shine*, 229.

CHAPTER 1. ARCHIVE

1 Ruth Cox took the name Harriet Bailey to avoid recapture when she escaped from slavery, likely fleeing to avoid a liquidation sale upon the death of John Leeds Kerr. Born between 1818 and 1822 in Talbot County, Maryland, Adams absconded to Pennsylvania where she met Douglass, and the two believed they were siblings. Bailey would join the Douglass household in Lynn, Massachusetts, to support Anna Douglass, especially with reading and writing, so that she could communicate with Douglass during his tour of Great Britain. In November 1847, Bailey married Perry Frank Adams, and although still a fugitive, she returned to using her given name and became Ruth Cox Adams. Fought, *Women in the World*, 67; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 163–66.

2 Adams's collection of hair mementos includes a clipping from her daughter, labeled with extensive identifying details: "Ebby B. Adams 9 months old born in Springfield Mass"; she lists her date of birth as February 22, 1852, and she uses the initials of her "Mother & Father" to refer to Ruth Cox Adams and Perry Francis Adams. Likewise, Adams kept a clipping from her mother, Ebby Cox Bruce, taken at the time of her death on December 20, 1883, and sent from Louisiana by