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978-0-521-49779-4 - Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays

Edited by Deborah M. Garfield and Rafia Zafar

Excerpt

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*INTRODUCTION*  
*OVER-EXPOSED, UNDER-EXPOSED*

*HARRIET JACOBS AND INCIDENTS IN THE  
LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL*

RAFIA ZAFAR

—————  
—————  
*for Nellie Y. McKay*

As the coeditor of this volume, my tasks have been fairly specific and predictable: I have provided editorial feedback to the contributors, served as a liaison between scholars and press, and written this introductory essay. As a scholar of African American literature who happens also to be an African American female, however, the questions associated with my tasks have been less specific but perhaps more taxing: Where do I stand in relation to this undertaking? That is to say, has my role in putting together this collection, on the autobiography of a long-deceased, female, ex-slave, been overdetermined? Fellow scholar Ann duCille noted recently that the rapid increase of scholarship about black women has “led me to think of myself as a kind of sacred text. Not me personally, of course, but me black woman object, Other.” What does it mean, she inquired, for “black women academics to stand in the midst of . . . the traffic jam . . . that black feminist studies has become?”<sup>1</sup> For to introduce a collection of essays about Harriet Jacobs is not simply to present a body of scholarly works; it is also to comment upon the curious resurrection of one particular “black woman object” and her justly renowned autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Such comments may seem strange indeed, especially within the context of an essay that seeks to situate Harriet Jacobs and her contemporary critics for a heterogeneous leadership. But there exists a long history of black authorship midwived into national life via a circle of well-intentioned helpmeets – the youngest scholar of African American letters should be able to recognize an authenticating document when she sees one.<sup>2</sup> That past, like it or not, will necessarily be reiterated by this current undertaking. To air the quandaries introduced by the

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existence of our anthology brings us a step past the partnership of Harriet Jacobs and Lydia Maria Child, an alliance that could only sign at the fissures in the purported transracial sisterhood of American abolitionism.<sup>3</sup> It may appear odd to find two women editors, one black, one white, framing the criticism on a work whose existence long ago played out another association between black and white women, but it is not without precedent. The secret history of any number of black women's creative works would tell a similar tale.

Overexposed, underexposed – or not exposed at all: these days it seems that *Incidents* is on every undergraduate reading list, and that a half-dozen students in my classes on African American writers have read Jacobs for another class, often in Women's studies. At such times it looks as though Jacobs is in the process of achieving her "market share," and that the rest will be history written by lions, if not lionesses. As Jacobs once said in another context, "it is a vast improvement in *my* condition." If the voiced "dream of her life" was to live with her children in a home of her own, was there another, unuttered, dream – to have her autobiography placed beside other significant texts of the nineteenth century, to have her life story in its own, literary home? If one considers how public Jacobs's life and activism became following the appearance of *Incidents*, then believing that she did speculate on a textual home seems not so farfetched. That *Incidents* may now have such a permanent home can only recently be said to be the case – courtesy of us late-twentieth-century critics, with our own agendas, power, and career moves. The apparent suddenness of Jacobs's entry onto the scene of American literary history can be negated by an examination of the debate swirling around Jacobs's authenticity (a discussion still capable of generating heat): the argument has been going for some time. Still, for all intents and purposes, it appears that Harriet Jacobs and her autobiography are brand new and permanent members of United States literary history.

*Incidents* and its authors can be said to be enjoying a kind of overnight success, a vogue not unlike that which sprang up around Zora Neale Hurston and her works not long ago.<sup>4</sup> I do use the word "vogue" deliberately, for its connotation of academic fashion speaks to the downside of the university: Jacobs's recent appearances on campus reading lists reminds me of Genaro Padilla's remark about how mainstream scholars have discovered other new voices in literary studies – these writers are not new, he said, they've been "in the room" the entire time; they were not "silent," they just were "not heard."<sup>5</sup> The inclusion of Jacobs and *Incidents* within a syllabus on "Classic" American literature does not by itself indicate a rethinking of the list itself; merely to add Jacobs, without reimagining the context of that syllabus, exemplifies the Band-aid approach to literary studies.<sup>6</sup> Excited as I am to see Jacobs's renaissance, I must remind myself that it is just that: a re-birth, not a birth.<sup>7</sup>

Harriet Jacobs was born in Edenton, North Carolina, in 1813, the daughter of the enslaved Delilah and Daniel Jacobs.<sup>8</sup> As the daughter of slaves, the young

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Harriet might have been expected to know hardship early. Instead, as she writes in the opening paragraph of *Incidents*, “I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise.” She does not know that her life is not her own – nor indeed her parents’ – until she is six years old (5). When Jacobs’s mother dies, she is sent to live in the household of Margaret Horniblow, the white woman who claimed Molly Horniblow, Jacobs’s maternal grandmother, and all of her lineal descendants. Apparently kind and religious, Mrs. Horniblow teaches young Jacobs to read and spell. And yet, while recognizing the girl’s intellect, the older woman “did not recognize [Jacobs] as her neighbor” (8), and on her death wills the child to her niece, Matilda Norcom. So the now eleven-year-old girl is given over to the antagonist of her life, her new owner’s father, Dr. James Norcom; shortly after that she begins her decades-long freedom struggle. The physician, who holds a number of men, women, and children in his power, desires more from Jacobs than mere physical possession; he wants her complicity in her own sexual degradation. Fortunately, her inner strength – formed in part by the sheer luck of having lived her early childhood in a relatively intact African American family – gives the young woman the courage and strength to resist Norcom’s “soul-destroying” concubinage. Her blighted love for a free black man, the torments that Norcom visits on the Horniblow–Jacobs family, the escape that was not an escape, her unceasing efforts on behalf of her children: all are detailed in *Incidents* by Jacobs under a “slave girl’s” pseudonym. Remaining anonymous as an author, Jacobs uses instead the character of “Linda Brent” to stand in for both her own self and those of the millions of her oppressed countrywomen.

When Jacobs writes “Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction,” she is well aware that she must begin, before even writing of her birth, by breaking down the walls of prejudice and disbelief between her and her white audience. Rather than embellish her own story, Jacobs says “my descriptions fall far short of the facts” (1). From the time of the first slave who dared tell the story of enslavement, African Americans have faced a hostile, disbelieving audience; but as Robert Stepto has remarked of African American narratives, “it is the reader – not the author or text and certainly not the storyteller in the text – who is unreliable.”<sup>9</sup> Jacobs, a woman with a woman’s story of sexual oppression and frustrated motherhood, had more reader resistance to overcome than her male counterparts, then and now. As Frances Smith Foster tells us, “Jacobs has more than once been accused of having omitted or distorted details of her own life in order to enhance her personal reputation or to achieve artistic effect”; she had to contend with notions as to how her “victories and values contrast with prevailing theories and opinions of slave life.” Jacobs also, at least at the time of the original publication, had to contend with shifting currents in the American political scene. Yellin notes that at the time of its first edition, *Incidents* was received politely, if not appreciatively, but that with the coming of the Civil War the appearance of “another” slave nar-

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rative may have “seemed of minor importance.”<sup>10</sup> The book, in other words, did not have the impact of Frederick Douglass’s first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), nor a good-sized fraction of that of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), a novel against which Jacobs implicitly framed her story. Jacobs’s scrutiny of the particular, sexualized oppression of black slave women may have played a part in its relatively quiet, if benign, reception: as Lydia Maria Child noted in her introduction to the volume, “delicate” ears (4) might have trouble listening to Jacobs’s harrowing tale.

Until well into the twentieth century, the reception of *Incidents* attested to the continuing difficulty of Jacobs’s, or any black woman writer’s, gaining an audience: faced with the “double negative” of black race and female gender, Jacobs, like Wheatley before her and Hurston after her, had to contend with a skeptical readership that said her work could not be “genuine” because of her emphasis on the domestic, her “melodramatic” style, and her unwillingness to depict herself as an avatar of self-reliance.<sup>11</sup> Deborah McDowell rightly identifies much of the problem as lying with “contemporary scholarship on [slave narratives] . . . making the slave a man, according to cultural norms of masculinity.”<sup>12</sup> For breaking from this recognized pattern of male slave narrators – Harriet Jacobs is alone among antebellum female writers of book-length secular autobiographies – Jacobs was either decried as inauthentic or dismissed as atypical. One hundred and twelve years were to elapse between the anonymous publication of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and the first modern reprint edited by Walter Teller.<sup>13</sup> A century and a quarter would pass before Jacobs’s autobiography received a comprehensive, scholarly treatment by Jean Fagan Yellin. The “changing sameness” (McDowell 193) would, at last, shift.

The Modern Language Association, the main organization of literary scholars in the United States academy, publishes an annual record of critical works – in earlier years this compilation appeared in one or more bound volumes; one can now use an electronic compilation. A browse through this online Modern Language Association *Bibliography* provides the outlines, if not the origins, of the sea change leading to Harriet Jacobs’s sudden visibility.<sup>14</sup> Despite the appearance of the Teller edition, which followed the late 1960s resurgence of interest in African American writers, the first reference to *Incidents* in the MLA Bibliography does not appear until 1981, or nearly a decade later. (Although a proliferation of references in the *Bibliography* hardly bespeaks canonical status for a work, it does reveal changing trends in scholarship. An examination of citations in a similar compendium for historians of the United States, *America: History and Life*, seemed to demonstrate a similar trajectory: that is, I could find no citations on Jacobs between 1964 and 1980, despite the reissue of Jacobs’s autobiography in 1969; between 1980 and 1992, however, the incidence of references rises steadily, from one or two every

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year in the early to mid-1980s, to a peak of ten citations in 1988 – the year after Yellin’s Harvard edition was published – and then four per year in the early 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Following the MLA’s initial notice of Jean Fagan Yellin’s first published essay on Jacobs (1981), its listings on Jacobs for the rest of the decade number only a dozen; in 1983 and 1984 no references to Jacobs can be found at all. Yet a number of recent book-length works on African American literature that treated Jacobs in some detail are not included: Joanne M. Braxton’s *Black Women Writing Autobiography* (1989), William Andrews’s *To Tell a Free Story* (1986), and Hazel Carby’s *Reconstructing Womanhood* (1987) are three; at least two essays treating Jacobs, published since September 1990, are also not noted in the bibliography. Sandra Gunning reminds us that this apparent rise to visibility – that is, the steadily increasing references to Jacobs in the *Bibliography* – does not demonstrate that Jacobs was previously “unread” or “unstudied”; black women scholars had been aware of, and discussing, the former slave for some time.<sup>16</sup> The justly influential anthology *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies* (1982) confirmed the work African American women scholars had been performing during the 1970s and earlier.<sup>17</sup> We should not depend on what materials the MLA *Bibliography* includes to estimate scholarly attention, nor should we confuse the so-called center of academic discourse with the sum of intellectual work.

As counterpoint to the unnoted yet published works discussing Jacobs, we should examine the MLA *Bibliography*’s listing of recent dissertations. Again, according to my surveys of the *Bibliography*, no dissertations on Jacobs appeared prior to the 1990s, although I know there were theses completed before then that treated *Incidents* in some detail.<sup>18</sup> Beginning with Harryette Mullen’s “Gender and the Subjugated Body” in 1990, dissertations appear to be catalogued in part due to their use of Jacobs as a subject – and thus in the 1990s we find at least ten dissertations reviewing Jacobs in more than a cursory fashion.<sup>19</sup> This increase in such “key words” as “Jacobs, Harriet” or “*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*” since the beginning of this decade merits our contemplation, for, as of 1993, no slowdown of research on Jacobs appears to have occurred; if anything, materials on *Incidents* are proliferating.<sup>20</sup> That the academic “mainstream” has taken up this particular ex-slave narrator as a new subject for analyses that seek to incorporate attention to “race, class, and gender” tells us as much about the “objective” production of knowledge as it does about shifts in academic tastes and agendas. As two critics – one black, one white – have remarked:

I am hardly alone in suspecting that the [current] overwhelming interest in black women may have at least as much to do with the pluralism and perhaps even the primitivism of this particular postmodern moment as with the stunning quality of black women’s accomplishments and the breadth of their contributions to American civilization. . . . In

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the midst of the present, multicultural moment, they [black women writers such as Jacobs] have become politically correct, intellectually popular, and commercially precious sites of literary and historical inquiry. (Ann duCille)

[Viewing literature as a] “talking cure” for social ills . . . often exacerbates the impasses it describes and frequently substitutes the critic’s own agency for the textual agency supposedly being restored. . . . [What does] it mean for us to recover or recuperate Jacobs’ agency when we, as readers, are problematically and unavoidably implicated in the process of its construction? . . . What forms of authority and power do we bring to this text?” (Carla Kaplan)<sup>21</sup>

A caveat then: as much as it is true to assert that *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* has been long overdue for placement within the canon of American literature, it may also be accurate to say that intrinsic worth alone has not brought it to this pinnacle of success. For lack of value could not account for the absence of citations on Jacobs in the pre-1980s MLA *Bibliography*.

Happily, Jacobs’s ascent demonstrates more than the slippery terrain of contemporary academia. Her rising fortunes mirror the establishment in the academy of an ever-increasing cohort of scholars, senior and junior, who are themselves black and female. How much coincidence is there, after all, in the rise of articles and books on Phillis Wheatley, Pauline Hopkins, Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston, and others, and the appearance of a cohort of African American women in Ivy League and other historically white institutions? How different, and fortunate for the academy, that the career history of a Marion Wilson Starling – whose groundbreaking dissertation, “The Slave’s Narrative” (New York University, 1946), did not appear as a book until more than three decades had passed – has been superseded by that of our contributor Frances Smith Foster, whose first book, *Witnessing Slavery* (1979) and most recent, *Written by Herself* (1993), bracket years of productive, *public* scholarship. That black women such as Barbara Christian, Nellie Y. McKay, Hortense Spillers, Mary Helen Washington, and others named herein and elsewhere have reached tenured positions in historically white institutions has much to do with the ever-increasing visibility, if not importance, of Harriet Jacobs and her literary descendants.

Jacobs, a missing person in African American, women’s, and nineteenth-century studies for so long, now appears ubiquitous; her autobiography crops up on syllabi in American history, Feminist studies, Africana studies, literature of the United States, and other departmental affiliations. The disappearance and materialization of *Incidents* underscores the arguments against and for African American and Women’s studies: if one segregates the study of blacks and females, “mainstream” disciplines will not feel required to include such subjects in their curricula and the status quo will indeed remain the

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same; if one simply adds such material within the context of a standard course on American literature or history, their specific qualities will dissipate into the utopian American melting pot. Does the apparent pervasiveness of Harriet Jacobs represent the triumph of the “minority” or “underrepresented” studies, the deserved success of a rediscovered classic? Can we fairly say Jacobs is overexposed, or is this current efflorescence confirmation of her long-running underexposure?

As the reader will shortly discover, the new scholarship on Harriet Jacobs answers – and raises – many more questions than I possibly can. From the reverential to the revelatory, the readings of her work collected here span the realm of scholarly thought. This collection proffers a portrait of critical thinking about Harriet Jacobs in the 1990s. Our contributors range from those with established reputations to those on the brink of confirming their place in the academy. The essays seek to contextualize both the historical figure of Harriet Jacobs and her autobiography as a created work of art; all endeavor to be accessible to a heterogeneous readership. Because early scholars often doubted Jacobs’s authenticity, citing her autobiography’s inability to fit within the parameters of the slave narrative, many of our writers seek to understand and explore that long-running suspicion; because Jacobs’s evident emphasis on family and collective action, when opposed to more individualistic conceptions of liberty, can be viewed as anachronistic, a number of our essayists try to examine what effects that perspective had on the gendering of American scholarship. We are fortunate to be able to present such a collectivity of insights as we have gathered: female and male, tenured faculty and doctoral student, African American and European American.

If we find Harriet Jacobs’s life story unique in any number of ways, we can also find it so for its being truly a twice-told tale: recounted by Jacobs herself and again by her sibling, who was, like her, an escaped slave and abolitionist speaker. Two of our contributors find this especially pertinent to their analyses: Jacqueline D. Goldsby tackles the ticklish questions of verisimilitude in life writing, especially as they pertain to the study of African American autobiography, and Jacobs’s biographer and contemporary editor, Jean Fagan Yellin, re-views Jacobs’s “real life” by a close reading of the Jacobs siblings’ varying accounts of the sister’s bondage, self-imprisonment, and freedom.<sup>22</sup>

Issues of legitimacy and prerogative draw the attention of several of our scholars. In her essay, Frances Smith Foster turns her scrutiny on Jacobs’s critics, much as they have interrogated their subject; as nay-sayers from 1861 to the present have questioned the author, so Foster looks for unexamined agendas. The conjunction of the words “sex” and “the black woman” generally predicts another minefield of authenticity, and several scholars attempt to rehabilitate the critical discussion of the African American female and sexuality. P. Gabrielle Foreman uncovers a veritable minefield of quarrels over

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authenticity, most specifically received critical notions on the black woman's sexuality and oppression. Deborah Garfield analyzes the complex system of signs under which a black woman can be enslaved, by white slaveowners and abolitionists alike. Sandra Gunning's essay breaks down the prurient and judgmental readings of the black woman's body that Jacobs's white audience, past and present, does not want to acknowledge.

No comprehensive examination of *Incidents* can avoid the entwined issues of motherhood, "the domestic sphere," and the folk, especially as those matters bear on the black community. Donald Gibson looks therefore at the competing yet finally complementary ideals of the African American family as limned by Jacobs and Frederick Douglass, her much anthologized antecedent. John Ernest examines the collision between ideologies of patriotic motherhood and the realities of slave parenthood, while Mary Titus demonstrates that to be a slave was not only to be in bondage but, quite literally, to be sickened.

To be a slave was also to engage in oppositional acts, as the last group of our contributors attest. Anne Bradford Warner's essay discusses the African Jonkannau festival, presenting Jacobs as a trickster in a world of bitter humor. Anita Goldman shrewdly perceives Harriet Jacobs as part of a long and prominent line of American civil disobedients. Stephanie Smith's essay demonstrates how Jacobs takes on the masculinist language of American patriarchy to construct her own declaration of independence.

There is no better illustration of the rapidly changing critical landscape in American literary studies than the study, and seemingly instant canonization, of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; the essays of our contributors underscore the complexity and breadth of Jacobs scholarship and the larger society it reflects. Harriet Jacobs may have sought and welcomed the editorial aid of Lydia Maria Child, but she also struggled to ensure that she would tell her own story. So do the contributors, from each of their complementary perspectives, seek to honor and situate this nineteenth-century black woman's pioneering autobiography within a critical, historical, and cultural continuum.

"Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction."

#### Notes

My thanks go to the following individuals: my friend and contributor, Sandra Gunning, who helped me refine this essay and its title, too; Jean Fagan Yellin, for encouraging words at the right time; the project's first Cambridge editor, Julie Greenblatt, and its current one, the inestimable Susan Chang; guiding spirit Eric Sundquist; my coeditor, Deborah Garfield; P. A. Skantze; and Drs. Joseph P. Lynch, III and Teresa M. Hunt. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the 1993 American Studies Association panel, "Nineteenth Century Activist Women of Letters": our impending meeting lent wings to my fingers, if not my thoughts.



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1. Ann duCille, "The Occult of True Black Womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies," *SIGNS* 19:3 (Spring 1994): 591, 593.
2. Such "documents written by slaveholders and abolitionists alike" are intended to "authenticate the former slave's account"; see Robert B. Stepto, *From Behind the Veil. A Study of African American Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 3.
3. See Deborah Garfield's epilogue to this volume, "Vexed Alliances: Race and Female Collaboration in the Life of Harriet Jacobs," for an exploration of this dilemma.
4. In 1985 I gave a paper at the New England American Studies Association conference on Hurston's similar "fall and rise." Hurston enjoyed a certain amount of fame, if not notoriety, in her heyday; nevertheless the former Guggenheim fellow died penniless, with her works out of print.
5. Genaro Padilla, Introduction to "Marginality" session, "Autobiography and Self-Representation" Conference, University of California, Irvine, March 3, 1990.
6. My Cambridge colleague Susie Chang reminds me of the "and-Alice-Walker" school of canon-expansion.
7. My friend and colleague P. A. Skantze sketched parallels between Jacobs's sudden "centrality" and recent critical shifts around the seventeenth-century English dramatist Aphra Behn. She noted that scholars tend to underemphasize the significance of *teaching* such writers as Jacobs and Behn, worrying instead about "overexposure" in the critical sense (that is, in the production of scholarly articles). Do classicists worry that their students have read Aristophanes "already"?
8. For biographical information I rely not only on Jacobs's autobiography but also on the research of my esteemed colleague Jean Fagan Yellin. See, for example, her "Chronology," in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 223. All further citations to the text refer to this edition.  
It can be safely said that this anthology could not exist as such without Jean Yellin's literary and historical detective work. By her previous scholarship and current contribution to this project, and by her generous encouragement and support, she has enriched us immeasurably.
9. Robert Stepto, "Distrust of the Reader in Afro-American Narratives," *Reconstructing American Literary History*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 309.
10. Frances Smith Foster, "Resisting *Incidents*," in this volume. In the best sense I hope Professor Foster's essay on this issue will be the last word; my apologies to the reader for having to cover some of the same ground. See also Jean Fagan Yellin's "Introduction" to *Incidents*, xxiii–xxviii.
11. John Blassingame may have been one prominent male scholar who found Jacobs's story unbelievable, but he was not alone in this conviction. Hazel Carby's discussion of Blassingame's initial assessment delivers a solid, convincing counter-argument. See John Blassingame, "Critical Essay on Sources," *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 367–82, and Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. 45–6. Despite the work of senior feminist scholars like Carby,

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- Frances Smith Foster, and Yellin, scholars continue to dispute Jacobs's sole authorship.
12. See Deborah McDowell's "In the First Place: Making Frederick Douglass and the Afro-American Narrative Tradition," for a superb analysis of the "gendering" of African American literary scholarship. In *Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass*, ed. William L. Andrews (Boston: G. K. Hall & Company, 1991), 195.
  13. "Linda Brent" [Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Walter Teller (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973).
  14. Many thanks to Judy Avery of the Michigan Graduate Library for her assistance with the on-line version of the Modern Language Association Bibliography, which has now become the standard (according to the MLA, the on-line and CD-ROM versions are the most accurate listings available).
  15. See the indexes for *America: History and Life* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Press) for 1964–92.
  16. Sandra Gunning, personal communication, October 15, 1993.
  17. Various courses on black women's literature were offered prior to the 1980s, including, for example, those of Alice Walker (1972), Gloria Hull (1976), and Fahamisha Shariat (1977). See *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1982), 360–78.
  18. The last electronic survey of the MLA Bibliography for this essay took place in September 1994. See, for example, Rafia Zafar, "White Call, Black Response: Adoption, Subversion, and Transformation in American Literature from the Colonial Era to the Age of Abolition," Harvard University, 1989, 157–202. However, apparent absences in the MLA record are doubtless due in part to the vagaries of subject headings: If "Harriet Jacobs" is not listed as a "key word," works discussing *Incidents* will not be easily found.
  19. Professor Mullen's book will appear in 1996.
  20. A friend at the University of Wisconsin sent me the following information: her current research assistant had found more recent citations on Jacobs than on "Gaskell, Bronte, Eliot, Hardy"; in her course on "Nineteenth Century British and American Social Fiction" (Fall 1993), she found "from a show of hands, Jacobs was more familiar to students than any of the other texts (which happen to be novels) . . . one woman said she's read Jacobs in two other classes." Susan David Bernstein, personal communication, October 29, 1993.
  21. duCille, "The Occult," 592, 594; Carla Kaplan, "Narrative Contracts and Emancipatory Readers: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6:1 (1993): 104. See also Michael Awkward, "Negotiations of Power: White Critics, Black Texts, and the Self-Referential Impulse," *American Literary History* 2:4 (Winter 1990): 581–4, for an earlier, related exploration of the critical issues surrounding the new interest in black literature.
  22. John S. Jacobs, "A True Tale of Slavery," was published in installments in *The Leisure Hour. A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation* (London), February 7, 14, 21, and 28, 1861.