

VISUALIZING BLACKNESS AND THE CREATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITION

Negative stereotypes of African Americans have long been disseminated through the visual arts. This original and incisive study examines how black writers use visual tropes as literary devices to challenge readers' conceptions of black identity. Lena Hill charts 200 years of African American literary history, from Phillis Wheatley to Ralph Ellison, and engages with a variety of canonical and lesser-known writers. Chapters interweave literary history, museum culture, and visual analysis of numerous illustrations with close readings of Booker T. Washington, Anne Spencer, Zora Neale Hurston, Melvin Tolson, and others. Together, these sections register the degree to which African American writers rely on vision – its modes, consequences, and insights – to demonstrate black intellectual and cultural sophistication. Hill's provocative study will interest scholars and students of African American literature and American literature more broadly.

LENA HILL is Assistant Professor of English and African American Studies at the University of Iowa. She is the coauthor of *Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man": A Reference Guide* (2008). Her work has been published in journals such as *American Literature* and *African American Review*. She received her PhD from Yale University.

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LENA HILL

University of Iowa



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For Michael

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Abbreviations

BSR	“Bathesda of Sinners Run,” by Maud Irwin Owens
CE	<i>The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison</i> , by Ralph Ellison
CW	<i>Complete Writings</i> , by Phillis Wheatley
FM	<i>Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings</i> , by Zora Neale Hurston
HG	<i>Harlem Gallery</i> , by Melvin Tolson
IM	<i>Invisible Man</i> , by Ralph Ellison
NS	<i>Zora Neale Hurston: Novels & Stories</i> , by Zora Neale Hurston
PB	<i>Plum Bun: A Novel without a Moral</i> , by Jessie Fauset
Q	<i>Quicksand</i> , by Nella Larson
REP	<i>Ralph Ellison Papers</i>
RWP	<i>Richard Wright Papers</i>
SBF	<i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , by W. E. B. Du Bois
TD	<i>Three Days Before the Shooting...</i> , by Ralph Ellison
US	<i>Up from Slavery</i> , by Booker T. Washington