BLACK ABOLITIONISTS AND MASCULINITY IN THE AGE OF AMERICAN EMANCIPATION, 1833-1863

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

Of History

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Ira Lee Berlet

May, 2014

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to fill a lacuna in the historiography of black abolitionists and gender studies, this dissertation examines black abolitionists' conceptions of masculinity and their efforts to grapple with manhood in a time of great change and transition. The focus of this work are three escaped slaves who became black abolitionists—Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass—they serve as "representative men" for this unique study at the intersection of race, power, masculinity, and intellectual engagement. These men constituted part of a select group that made dramatic attacks on society in order to emancipate millions of people from bondage. I argue that masculinity for black abolitionists, such as these men, was not limited to physical action but was a composite or compound masculinity that included protection of their families, success in their careers, and active intellectual engagement. Black intellectual abolitionists' composite masculinity formed as they progressed from the "resistant masculinity" within slavery through "protective masculinity" and "self-made masculinity" to a unique "intellectual masculinity" of their own construction. It was through this engagement as public intellectuals that these men demonstrated their manhood and performed an "intellectual masculinity" which garnered their place among America's "great men" of the nineteenth century.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1903 the sociologist, historian, and civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois published an essay entitled "The Talented Tenth," which called for black men to become leaders of their race through methods such as advanced education, writing books, or becoming directly involved in social change. He strongly believed that blacks needed a classical education to be able to reach their full potential, rather than the industrial education promoted by Booker T. Washington in his Atlanta Compromise. He saw such an education as the basis for what, in the twentieth century, would be known as public intellectuals. Later in his life, Du Bois believed that leadership could arise from many levels, and that grassroots efforts were also important to social change. In his 1903 essay Du Bois wrote that "[t]he Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."[1] It is evident from the historical record that nineteenth century examples of exceptional men, the "Talented Tenth," came not only from the ranks of those like Du Bois born free of the chains of slavery, but it also included former slaves. Du Bois himself directed us to begin our analysis with those former slaves who took up the antislavery cause and made clear that their participation was essential:

> Too little notice has been taken of the work which the Talented Tenth among Negroes took in the great abolition crusade. From the very day that a Philadelphia colored man became the first subscriber to Garrison's *Liberator*, to the day when Negro soldiers made the Emancipation Proclamation possible, black leaders worked shoulder to shoulder with white men in a movement, the success of which would have been impossible without them.[2]

This question of black men's manhood came about at a time when most Southern white men developed and extended a notion of manhood based on honor, and many Northern and Western white men were involved in the construction of the concept of masculinity

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[1] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth (September 1903)," Ashbrook Center at Ashland University, http://www.TeachingAmericanHistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=174 (accessed 9/28, 2012), 1.
[2] Ibid, 3.

known as the "self-made man."[3] So, then, how did African American men in the nineteenth century construct manhood and express masculinity? For most, enslavement and oppression shaped their construction of manhood. Within slavery, they sought to empower themselves through education, financial autonomy, physical escape from slavery, and, if possible, protection of their family. Free African American men demonstrated their masculinity in its most basic form by protecting their wives and families, through financial security in the market economy, and for some fighting against slavery. Thus, any study of black manhood in America must begin by looking at where most began to construct their masculine identity, within and against the institution of slavery. Recent scholarship has referred to this as "resistant masculinity."[4] Because most of our knowledge regarding this resistance has come from those who escaped slavery and thus had experience both inside and outside the slave system, the best subjects for examining nineteenth century black masculinity are those escaped slaves who became black abolitionists.

There is a hole in the scholarly literature concerning black manhood in the nineteenth century. Scholars have yet to address the importance of the "intellectual masculinity" of nineteenth century black men. It was this form of masculinity that made these men

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[3] For Southern white male honor see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). For "self-made" manhood see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) and Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

[4] Two collections of essays, *Southern Manhood* (2004) edited by Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover and *Black and White Masculinity in the American South* (2009) edited by Lydia Plath and Sergio Lussana, contain entries that examine "resistant masculinity." In particular the essay by Edward E. Baptist in *Southern Manhood* explains that for nineteenth century black men "'resistance' has often served as a code word for manhood" (139). See Rebecca Fraser, "Negotiating their Manhood: Masculinity Amongst the Enslaved in the Upper South, 1830-1861," in *Black and White Masculinity in the American South, 1800-2000*, eds. Lydia Plath and Sergio Lussana (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 76-94; Edward E. Baptist, "The Absent Subject: African American Masculinity and Forced Migration to the Antebellum Plantation Frontier," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, eds. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 136-173.

significant. Other nineteenth century African American men resisted slavery physically, some escaped and became free men in the North or Canada, while others who were born free joined the antislavery cause as speakers, and still other free blacks were part of the small black intellectual community. However, a select few participated in all of these activities. Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass constituted part of this select group that made dramatic attacks on society in order to emancipate millions of people from bondage. I argue that masculinity for black abolitionists, such as these men, was not limited to physical action but was a composite or compound masculinity that included protection of their families, success in their careers, and active intellectual engagement. It was through this engagement as public intellectuals that these men demonstrated their manhood and performed an "intellectual masculinity" which garnered their place among America's "great men" of the nineteenth century. Thus, this study will fill a lacuna in the scholarly literature of both black abolitionists and gender studies.

In an effort to fill this hole in the historiography, this study focuses on these three black abolitionists' conceptions of masculinity and their efforts to grapple with manhood in a time of great change. Other abolitionists, black and white, will be included, however, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass will play staring roles. While others have addressed black masculinity and the use of physical actions, such as violence, as a way for the enslaved and black abolitionists to demonstrate their manhood, the use of their intellectual activities as a form of masculinity has yet to be addressed. My argument is that some black abolitionists progressed from the "resistant masculinity" of slavery, through "protective" and "self-made" masculinities, to a unique "intellectual masculinity" of their own construction.

In 1850 Ralph Waldo Emerson published *Representative Men*, a collection of essays, which discussed the role played by "great men" in society. In the first essay, "Uses of Great Men," he wrote that "[t]he search after the great man is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood." For Emerson "great men" were representative of the best qualities of the human condition. Yet, while Emerson's representative men were "great," they "exist that there may be greater men."[5] Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass served as Emersonian "representative men" for this unique case study of the intersection of race, masculinity, and intellectual engagement. Thus, this study focuses on these men's roles as African American great men and produces a distinctive analysis of black abolitionists' conceptions of masculinity.

A brief examination of their backgrounds reveals that these men led similar lives. Henry Bibb was born in Kentucky, his mother a slave and father Kentucky state senator, James Bibb. In 1841 Henry made his final escape from slavery and eventually settled in Detroit and became an active abolitionist, lecturer, and newspaper publisher. William Wells Brown was also born in Kentucky, the son of Elizabeth, a slave, and a white relative of his owner. Brown escaped to freedom in January 1834. By 1847 he had moved to Boston, became an agent for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and was busy writing the *Narrative* of his life in slavery. Brown also published *Clotel* (1853), the first novel by an African American and a thinly disguised account of the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. The most famous escaped slave-cum-antislavery speaker and writer was Frederick Douglass. Born in 1818 in Maryland's Eastern Shore, Douglass was raised until the age of six by his grandparents. At the age of twenty he escaped from slavery

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[5] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men: Seven Lectures (1850)*, ed. Brenda Wineapple, Modern Library Paperback ed. (New York: Modern Library, 2004).

and initially settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. His 1845 memoir is possibly the most famous slave narrative written. Eventually he began to publish his own newspaper, the *North Star*, and was the leading black abolitionist figure of his era.

The focus of this study is on the transformation of Bibb's, Brown's, and Douglass' conceptions of manhood and their attempts to perform this manhood through engagement in the abolitionist movement as public intellectuals. In addition, it explores a number of complex and profound historiographical issues of the antebellum United States, including questions of race, the concept of paternalism, and the methods abolitionists employed to end the institution of slavery.

A contemporary of each of these men, Ralph Waldo Emerson, considered the meaning and function of the intellectual in his essay "The American Scholar." In this piece he put forward the idea of the "One Man," or the complete person, the person who represented all facets of human possibilities. Books did not bind Emerson's ideal intellectual; his most important activity was action. He considered inaction a mark of cowardice. Emerson's intellectual preserved great ideas of the past, communicated them and created new ideas. He was the "world's eye," because he communicated his ideas to the world, not just to his fellow intellectuals. Finally, Emerson's intellectual did all of these things not only as a way to improve his society but also out of obligation to himself. Public action was part of being the One Man, the whole person.[6]

Emerson's One Man was a precursor to the engaged public intellectual promoted by Jean-Paul Sartre in the twentieth century, or what he called the "intellectual engagée." Sartre conceived of the role of the public intellectual as a voice of enlightenment and emancipation.

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[6] See "The American Scholar" in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 43-63.

For Sartre, the intellectual should be engaged in dramatic attacks on society in order to transform it profoundly.[7] According to him, engagement refers to the process of accepting responsibility for the political consequences of one's actions. Sartre, more than any other philosopher of his period, defended the notion of socially responsible writing (*littérature engagée*). He also argued that intellectuals are responsible for taking a stand on the major political conflicts of their era. I will use the model of the "One Man" and the "intellectual engagée" to analyze Bibb, Brown, and Douglass. Through several phases of their lives, these men progressed from displaying resistant masculinity to what I will call an intellectual masculinity, performing as Jean-Paul Sartre's intellectual engagée.

Some might question the inclusion of former slaves-cum-abolitionists as intellectuals. The Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci gave much thought to the question of the role of intellectuals in society. Famously, he stated that "all men are intellectuals," in that all have intellectual and rational faculties, but not all men have the social function of intellectuals.[8] He did not see intellectuals as simply talkers. Rather, they were practical minded organizers who challenged hegemony by means of ideological apparatuses such as education and the media.[9] They used these ideological apparatuses to confront the superstructure of society, which helped to preserve hegemonic power.[10] Gramsci distinguished between "traditional" intellectuals, who he believed inaccurately saw themselves as a class apart from society and "organic" intellectuals who instead articulated, through the language of culture, the feelings

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[7] Jean Paul Sartre, *"What is Literature?" and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 38.
[8] Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935,* ed. David Forgacs (1988 rprt; New York: New York University Press, 2000), 304.
[9] The basic definition of hegemony in this case is "the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group." See Merriam-Webster Dictionary online, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hegemony (accessed 7/23, 2013).
[10] Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 189-199. In Marxist theory, on which Gramsci's ideas are based, the superstructure of a society includes things such as its culture, institutions, and political power organization. These are the items that help to maintain hegemony for the dominant group.

and experiences that the masses could not express for themselves. In that vein, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass as newspaper men, abolitionist lecturers, and all around critics of the Southern slave system were "organic" intellectuals speaking for the masses, for the millions enslaved people in the South.

Two other modern scholars whose theoretical works significantly inform this study are the French philosopher Michel Foucault and the American feminist scholar Judith Butler. In particular, Foucault's concept of "subjectification" and Butler's concept of "performativity" help to explain the process by which Bibb, Brown, and Douglass developed their individual masculine identities and eventually performed as masculine public intellectuals. According to Foucault, subjectification is a philosophical concept that refers to the construction of the individual subject. He considered the process of subjectification to have an ontological pre-eminence on the subject as an individual.[11] Within this concept Foucault "looks at those processes of self-formation in which the person is active."[12] This self-formation took place through a variety of "operations on [people's] own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct."[13] These operations entailed a process of self-understanding, but one that was mediated by an external authority. In this case that authority was the hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity of the nineteenth century self-made man.

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[11] In its most basic form ontology deals with questions concerning what entities exist or can be said to exist, and how such entities can be grouped, related within a hierarchy, and subdivided according to similarities and differences.

[12] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 11; See also Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, ed. Robert Hurley (New York: Vitage Books, 1990); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

[13] Quotation taken from the "Howison Lectures," Berkley, 20 October 1980, quoted in Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 11.

Judith Butler introduced the concept of "performativity," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.[14] The heart of Butler's argument is that the coherence of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality—the natural-seeming coherence, for example, of masculine gender—is culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts. These stylized bodily acts, in their repetition, establish the appearance of an essential, "core," gender. In this way Butler theorized gender, along with sex and sexuality, as performative. She located the construction of the gendered subject within what she called "regulative discourses." Regulative discourse includes within it disciplinary techniques, which by coercing subjects to perform specific stylized actions, maintain the appearance in those subjects of the "core" gender the discourse itself produces.

For purposes of this study, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass were active in their own self-formation of masculinity and engaged in several stylized acts, or performances, to establish their masculinity. Namely, physical acts of violence (resistant masculinity), protection of their families and the establishment of homes (protective masculinity), and their work as antislavery activists by which they became self-made men (self-made masculinity). In this way each man was composed of more than one essential core masculine component, they included various "masculinities" which resulted in a compound manhood.[15] For black abolitionists such as Bibb, Brown, and Douglass these forms of masculinity did little to challenge the patriarchal, hegemonic manhood dominant in nineteenth century middle class society. They actually sought to establish black men within the dominant patriarchal model of white society. While these were important aspects of nineteenth century black masculinity they were not the most meaningful performances of masculinity by Bibb, Brown, and

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[14] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
[15] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 17, 68-69.

Douglass. In the final analysis the greatest aspect of these men's masculinity was their intellectual masculinity performed in their role as antislavery activists, and this activism truly established their manhood.

The organization of this study centers on the ways in which Bibb, Brown, and Douglass performed masculinity. Chapter one examines the issue of violence or resistant masculinity. The topic of violence is central to many studies on black masculinity and black abolitionism. However, I believe that while this issue cannot be ignored, the prevailing emphasis on violence or the use of the body as the foremost way in which black men could preform masculinity is limited and fails to fully account for the intellectual contributions of men like Bibb, Brown, and Douglass.[16] Frederick Douglass serves as that central figure for this chapter. And although all three of these black abolitionists appear in every chapter, each plays a central role and is the focus of that chapter. For Douglass, violence shaped his thoughts and actions as an abolitionist. Although it took him some time to break from the non-political, passive form of resistance put forward by William Lloyd Garrison; by the end of the 1850s he accepted that violence would be needed to end slavery. Each of the actors in this study had personal experiences with violence as slaves and as abolitionists, and also put forth their views on slave revolts such as that in Haiti as well.

The second chapter assesses these representative black men's struggles to form, protect, and maintain a family, as well as their efforts at purchasing property. This chapter on

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[16] See Kathleen M. Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...Arms Like Polished Iron': Embodying Black Masculinity in an Age of Slavery and Propertied Manhood," in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 172; A. Kristen Foster, "'We are Men!": Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 2 (2011), 143; Sarah N. Roth, "'How a Slave was made a Man": Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives," *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 2 (August, 2007), 255-275; Richard Yarborough, "Race, Violence, and Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave'," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ronald T. Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

protective masculinity targets the essence of what contemporaries saw as the most visible way in which enslaved men could not display manhood. While enslaved they could not own property and most often were unable to protect their family. However, once they achieved freedom they all embraced marriage as a way to show they were men and did it in a very traditional fashion. For many years protection and rescue of his family was the dominant focus of Henry Bibb's efforts. Even after multiple escapes from slavery he returned to the South in an attempt to rescue his wife and child. This explains why his time in slavery was so varied, working for masters in the deep South, on the western frontier, and in the border states. After his eventual immigration to Canada, Bibb remarried and, with the help of his new wife, started a newspaper and led the efforts to petition the Canadian government for parcels of land for escaped ex-slaves. William Wells Brown's efforts to deal with a messy divorce from his first wife allowed him to perform protective masculinity through his ability to provide for his daughters and shield them from harm. He later remarried and purchased a home in Massachusetts. While the relationship of Frederick Douglass and his wife Anna was more traditional in nature, his understanding of manhood clearly manifested itself in his marriage and in his role as father. Each of these men made efforts to perform protective masculinity by protecting and providing for their families.

Chapter three investigates these men's work as antislavery speakers and writers. The focus will be on their performance of self-made masculinity, as each man worked to establish himself in the profession of an abolitionist. Each of these men wrote popular slave narratives, gave public speeches, wrote newspaper articles, and wrote other books. Following the expectations of the time they made themselves into men through their hard work after they found their own freedom. William Wells Brown, as the more traditional example of an

intellectual, serves as this chapter's main character. Because many considered Brown the first African American to publish a novel, and he wrote poetry, short stories, and plays, as well as popular histories, his role as an intellectual remains undisputed. Nevertheless, Frederick Douglass' writings, speeches, and activities as a newspaper publisher qualify him as a leading intellectual as well, and any study of this nature must include his work. Possibly the most "organic intellectual" of the group was Henry Bibb. Unlike Brown or Douglass, he did not have the advantage of exposure to reading while he was enslaved. However, once given an opportunity to read and write, he found he was a natural. As the first African-Canadian to start a daily paper and his establishment of a society to help settle black refugees in Ontario, Bibb helps to make this study more North American in nature.

The fourth and final chapter brings together these various performed masculinities, along with their intellectual engagement to demonstrate that Bibb, Brown, and Douglass performed an intellectual masculinity of their own creation. Using the ideas and language of the Romantic poet Lord Byron, they reminded black men that those "Who would be free themselves must strike the first blow."[17] Through their intellectual masculinity they demonstrated to others that the first step towards manhood was through their resistant masculinity. After the start of the Civil War Douglass became one of the leading figures calling for the formation of black army units. After the Emancipation Proclamation both Douglass and Brown actively recruited soldiers to serve. (Henry Bibb died before the start of the war and thus has a limited role in this chapter.) These men saw the work of abolitionists as a manly endeavor, and it was their performance as public intellectuals that established them on the world stage. All three were engaged public intellectuals and were occupied in

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[17] Frederick Douglass, "Men of Color, To Arms!," in Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner, (5 vols.; New York: International Publishers, 1950-1971), 3: 318.

dramatic attacks on society in order to transform it profoundly.[18] They performed a unique form of masculinity, an intellectual masculinity that set them apart as early examples of WEB Du Bois' talented tenth, fulfilling the role set forth by Du Bois, as well as Emerson and Sartre.[19]

This study has roots in a number of historiographical and scholarly traditions. Studies in slavery, race, abolitionism, feminist and gender studies, neo-Marxism, critical theory, post-structuralist discourse analysis, and literary criticism all contribute to the intellectual framework applied within this study. While not all of these traditions can or should be fully addressed here, those that will help place this study in the larger body of academic scholarship.

The historiographies of abolitionism and antebellum reform are vast.[20] Yet the majority of these works present movements that appeared predominantly white and middle-

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[18] Jean Paul Sartre, *"What is Literature?" and Other Essays,* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 38.

[19] For a discussion of black troops in the Civil War by Du Bois, see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction; an Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935), 91-99. For a discussion of black troops in World War I, see W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Black Man and the Revolution of 1914-1918," *Crisis* 17 (Mar., 1919), 218-223.

[20] For some of major works on white abolitionism see the following: Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York, London: D. Appleton-Century company, incorporated, 1933); William Henry Pease and Jane H. Pease, *The Antislavery Argument* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965); Martin B. Duberman, ed., *The Antislavery Vanguard; New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965); Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism; Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors : The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976); Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); James D. Essig, *The Bonds of Wickedness: American Evangelicals Against Slavery, 1770-1808* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Merton Lynn Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); Jonathan Halperin Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). For leading works addressing antebellum reform movements in the North and their relationship with the market revolution and evangelical Protestantism see Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Paul E. Johnson, *A*

class. Thus, the body of scholarship regarding black abolitionism is more limited in scope. Prior to 1960s, there were very few works on black abolitionists and the most significant being *Black Abolitionists* by Benjamin Quarles. Published in 1969, it remains the leading monograph for the study of the impact of African Americans within the abolitionist movement. Quarles made significant use of the large number of black-run antislavery newspapers present in the nineteenth century, which other scholars had failed to use in a significant way. The study examined many topics including: black protest against expatriation and colonization, the role of black abolitionists in successful organizations of black self-improvement, the connection of these abolitionists to other antebellum reforms, their relationship with William Lloyd Garrison, and their eventual split with Garrison over use of political methods to end slavery. Quarles clearly demonstrated that the goal of blacks was integration and equality, along with pride in their race and identification with their African origins. *Black Abolitionists* opened the door to shed light on the significant role that blacks played in the efforts toward emancipation.[21]

Not until the late twentieth and early twenty-first century do we see increased scholarship focused on the role of African Americans in the antislavery movement. In the collection titled *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (2006) Manisha Sinha set the scene for works within black abolitionism with her essay "Coming of Age: The Historiography of Black Abolitionism." Sinha delineated the larger historiographical arguments within the abolitionist movement and then placed those works concentrating on black abolitionists within that tradition. She drew careful attention to the

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Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

[21] Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

works of Benjamin Quarles as the "dean of black abolitionist historiography."[22] Sinha also pointed out that successors to Quarles tended to stress racism within the movement. These historians included works by Jane and William Pease and Leon Litwack. In general the Peases asserted that African American abolitionists were ineffective, while Litwack presented a more positive analysis focused on an autonomous black radical tradition.[23] Other studies have examined black abolitionist leaders through biography, have dealt with issues of race in the movement, surveyed a burgeoning black nationalism, have investigated the Northern free black communities, and some addressed in new ways the black intellectual community.[24] Few, however, examine black abolitionists and gender from the masculine perspective.

Masculinity Studies is a relative newcomer to the field of gender inquiry. Beginning in the 1990s the field began to pose questions about men and their relationship with patriarchal power. One area of investigation examines the complex relationship between

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[22] Manisha Sinha, "Coming of Age: The Historiography of Black Abolitionism," in Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer eds., *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York, 2006), 23-28. For an in-depth historiographical analysis this is essay is the best place to begin. Sinha wrote that black abolitionism "is perhaps the most vital subfield in abolitionist studies today" and that her entry is the first "full-length essay" on the subject; see quotations on page 23.

[23] Jane H. Pease and William Henry Pease, *They Who Would be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery; the Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), chapter 7; "The Emancipation of the Negro Abolitionist," in Duberman, ed., *The Antislavery Vanguard*, 137-155.

[24] Solid biographies include William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991); Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996); Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). Studies on race include George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind; the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For works examining free black communities see Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 175; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

hegemonic masculinities ("real men" at a given time and place) and subordinate masculinities (those who fell short of social ideals). Usually, hegemonic masculinities have power and meet with social approval, while subordinate ones do not. A prime example of how historical scholarship has demonstrated this came from historian Stacey Robertson. She accurately established in her essay "'Aunt Nancy Men': Parker Pillsbury, Masculinity, and Women's Rights Activism in the Nineteenth-Century United States" that abolitionist reformers, particularly pro-feminist men, failed to meet the approval of hegemonic masculinity and often were "represented as weak, impotent, and lacking in virility by opponents."[25] Needless to say, former slaves, like Bibb, Brown, and Douglass, who had faced the ultimate form of subordination within slavery would face similar scorn and ridicule in their roles as abolitionists.

For the purposes of this study the two most significant works on masculinity are R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* (2nd edition, 2005), and E. Anthony Rotundo's *American Manhood* (1993).[26] From Connell's *Masculinities*, the final section may be the best part of the book. Connell described three main forms of modern masculinity, those of "hegemonic", "complicit", and "protest" masculinity. Each had a corresponding process, dominance, acquiescence, and subordination respectively. For this study the main theory established in *Masculinities*, which Connell used to dissect the differences between and within groups of middle-class and working-class men of different sexual orientations, was the concept of

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[25] Stacey M. Robertson, "'Aunt Nancy Men': Parker Pillsbury, Masculinity, and Women's Rights Activism in the Nineteenth-Century United States," *American Studies* 37, no. 2 (Fall, 1996), 33. See also Stacey M. Robertson, *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000).

[26] See Connell, *Masculinities* and Rotundo, *American Manhood*. However, other important studies include Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 307; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*.

hegemonic masculinity—men who proved themselves economically successful, racially superior, and visibly heterosexual.

Using the work of Antonio Gramsci, Connell identified this as the norm, something to which men were expected to aspire. He defined hegemonic masculinity "as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." This was an expectation of what a man should act and look like, but in reality no one can successfully achieve this goal. Along with hegemonic masculinity, Connell introduced some other concepts that informed the analysis in my study. These include complicit masculinity, the categorization of men who connect with hegemony but do not fully represent hegemonic masculinity. Here masculinity became "constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the risk or tensions of being in the frontline troops of patriarchy."[27] In some ways this form of masculinity held true for both white and black abolitionists during the nineteenth century, as would protest masculinity, opposing other men but maintaining male power over women. According to Connell those that choose to participate in protest masculinity did so because of the practice of marginalized masculinity. For him, marginalized masculinity was the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity. Men who fell into this category benefited less from the hegemonic ideal because of traits other than their gender behavior. "Race relations may also become an integral part of the dynamic between masculinities. In a white-supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic roles for white gender construction."[28] In other words, the

[27] Connell, *Masculinities*, 77, 79.
[28] Ibid., 79.

hegemonic masculinity among whites maintained oppression against the masculinity among blacks.

American Manhood provided perhaps the best overall analysis of the origins of modern American masculinity. Rotundo began with a discussion of gender, aligning himself with scholars who believed that sex referred to the biological division between male and female, whereas gender referred to the cultural meanings attached to sexual difference.[29] Rotundo argued that manhood was a social invention that changes over time. He defined his approach under the rubric of "cultural construction," in the tradition of Michel Foucault's well-known *History of Sexuality*.[30] Rotundo skillfully developed his subject through several culturally determined phases. Early in the study we move from the "Communal Manhood" of Colonial New England, when a man's identity centered on his duties to the community and on to the "Self-Made Manhood" of the early nineteenth century, when the essence of a man's identity centered on his role at work. Rotundo clearly established the Northern middle-class views on masculinity, which impacted Bibb, Brown, and Douglass after their escapes to freedom.

Several works that impact this study, but are not generally seen as gender histories, are those focused on Southern honor and its impact on manhood. The leading work on honor is Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South* (1982), which ties the pervasive code of honor to Southern culture and to nearly all aspects of human interactions. An important work on culture is Grady McWhiney's study *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (1988), which is a comparative study of the cultural differences between the North and South in the nineteenth-century focusing the practices of average

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[29] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, x. See also Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
[30] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* [Histoire de la sexualité.], ed. Robert Hurley (New York: Vitage Books, 1990).

whites. Adding to this literature, Kenneth Greenburg's collection of essays *Honor and Slavery* (1996) looked at honor and its connections to many of the unique cultural practices within elite male Southern society and particularly its role in the institution of slavery.[31]

In Wyatt-Brown's sweeping work, *Southern Honor*, he tackled an intensive investigation of the role of honor within the public and private spheres of white Anglo-American Southerners in the antebellum era and discovered a South obsessed with honor and the ideas of rank and deference. The exact manifestations of white Southern honor depended on whether the topic at hand existed in the public or the private sphere. Wyatt-Brown contended that, in the public sphere, honor dictated that Southern men attempted to aid their community as much as possible and that this resulted in an intense localism that fostered ideas of state's rights. Privately, Southern honor dictated much of the childrearing and gender relations in the Old South. Children were pushed to accomplish as much as they could, even if the methods of success bordered on the unconscionable. Concurrently, Southern honor exalted women to such a high standard that they were alienated from men least they be tainted by the course behavior of the rougher sex. One topic that is lacking in Wyatt-Brown's book was the relationship between Southern honor and slavery, but his subsequent work, *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners*, corrected that exclusion.[32]

Greenberg's *Honor & Slavery* extends *Southern Honor* and addresses the interactions between honor and slavery. He explained that he sought to recover the "'dead' language" of honor and proposed that the ritualize discourse accompanying the oratory and actions of

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[31] Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*; Grady McWhiney, *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1988); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery*; see also Eric H. Walther, "Southerners' Honors," *Southern Studies* 12, no. 3-4 (Fall/Winter, 2005), 129-153; Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (Feb., 1985), 18-43..

[32] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

gentlemen in the Old South vary greatly with modern sensibilities. In the subsequent chapters, Greenberg covered the unique popularity of the duel in antebellum Southern life (excluding Hamilton and Burr); as well as the significance of gifts and hospitality, along with the meaning of their absence; the role of honor in hunting; the rational as to why baseball did not catch on with the honorable men of the South; and the more honorable forms of death within this Southern code. The author presented interesting and informative accounts that help readers understand how different the world of slavery and honor was from our own. Possibly the most interesting chapter examined the dangers and excitements of cross-dressing, and Greenberg shows how the relationship of power and authority for Southern whites affected their relationship with slaves. Sometimes masters resorted to rites of public humiliation as punishment, and a common sign of masterly control was the forced undressing of slaves for prospective buyers. Shame and honor, Greenberg argued, were the polarities between power and authority for the masters and impotency and mockery for the slaves. One thing *Honor & Slavery* lacked was an extended discussion of these same issues and how they made an impact on their gendered notions of masculinity and femininity.

Before proceeding, we must understand the gendered environment in which Bibb, Brown, and Douglass found themselves after their escape to freedom. This was not the stereotypical Northern environment of the working-class or middle-class, but the unique environment of white abolitionists. This environment not only promoted racial equality, but gender equality as well. However, for the most part the actions of Bibb, Brown, and Douglass in their performances of masculinity represented more traditionally gendered behavior and did not directly correspond to the gender equality promoted by their white

abolitionist colleagues. They followed what has come to be known as the ideology of Separate Spheres in relation to gender expectations.

Separate Spheres ideology emerged in the early nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution and all its technological innovations resulted in a major economic transition. The workplace and the home, which had previously been the same, now began to separate. As the workplace moved outside the home, male and female spheres of activity also separated. Thus women, still the primary caretakers of the children, found themselves assigned to the private, or domestic sphere, while men tended to follow their jobs into the public sphere. The ideology of Separate Spheres developed in order to explain why this separation became necessary, by defining the "inherent" characteristics of women. These traits supposedly made women incapable of functioning in the public realm. Men classified women as physically weaker, yet morally superior to men. The religious views of the mid-nineteenth century reinforced this concept. It was women's moral superiority which best suited them to the domestic sphere. Men also expected women to teach the next generation the necessary moral virtues to ensure the survival of the society.[33]

The historian most associated with explaining this concept is Barbara Welter. In her 1966 article "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," she uncovered numerous articles and ladies magazines that identified a middle-class ideal that stressed piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity as the most natural and desirable nineteenth-century female characteristics. This concept defined white, Protestant, middle-class, American gender

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[33] See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1966), 151-174; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Mary P. Ryan, *Mysteries of Sex: Tracing Women and Men through American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

arrangements as the "normal" and "ideal" arrangements for all humans. Thus, the middle-class defined values as American values. The implication was that society was divided into two "natural" classes: men, who would create the American economic empire through individual achievement, and women, who would insure social order and moral stability through their domestic activities.[34] In other words, private life would provide the moral foundation for public activity. For black abolitionists such as Bibb, Brown, and Douglass this concept represented the ideal that they strove to achieve. It signaled a clear departure from the many white abolitionists who they worked with, worked for, and associated with for much of their careers as abolitionists.

The white abolitionist men and women of the North held unique conceptions of manhood. By examining the views of both white male and female abolitionists regarding masculinity or manhood, one can better understand the antebellum period and the changes that took place in American society and the setting in which Bibb, Brown, and Douglass found themselves after they gained their freedom. The Australian historian Chris Dixon in his article "'A Truly Manly Life': Abolitionism and the Masculine Ideal" (1995) and his monograph *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997), presented a unique and complex conception of both gender and marriage for white abolitionists. In the transformation from an agrarian to an industrializing society, nineteenth century America experienced tensions that divided North from South, blacks from whites, and men from women. Abolitionists were concerned with all of these divisions. As deeply committed opponents of slavery, their intimate involvement in the contest between free and slave societies ensured them a lasting place in the American historical consciousness. Some abolitionists also engaged in another, more subtle contest, concerning the precise meaning of

[34] Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 151.

freedom within Northern society. These radical abolitionists also concerned themselves with gender relations and became active in the drive for women's rights.[35] In contradiction to Rotundo's early nineteenth century "Self-Made Man," most abolitionists' attitudes concerning masculinity diverged from that standard regarding their views on work, marriage, and women's rights. Boston's Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote about William Lloyd Garrison, praised him for what he called his "manly life," reflecting a sentiment shared by most nineteenth century antislavery supporters.[36] They believed their endeavor was "manly" or masculine, one that upheld the basic principles of democracy and did so respectfully, yet sometimes forcefully. At the same time as the radical abolitionists celebrated traditional masculinity, however, the movement's close association with other reform movements, including the women's rights and temperance movement, ensured an alignment with the feminine that often complicated their approach to gender. It was this complicated environment of gendered transformation that free blacks as well as black abolitionists found themselves in the nineteenth century.

In 1979 the scholarly team of James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton published *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, which along with works by Gary B. Nash and others created a substantial collection of works on the free black communities of the North and even the South.[37] The Hortons continued to work on the topic of free northern blacks and in 1993 published two essays that touched on the topic of black manhood. One, "Violence, Protest, and Identity: Black Manhood in Antebellum America",

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[35] See Chris Dixon, "'A True Manly Life:' Abolitionism and the Masculine Ideal," *Mid America: An Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (Fall 1995), 213; Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).
[36] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (1899, rprt; New York: Arno Press, 1968), 97.
[37] Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*, 175; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 354; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: the Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

included in a collection of essays titled *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community*, proved provocative.[38] Horton questioned whether it was possible for a black man to "act like a man." Should he have used physical force, or proved his moral superiority by passive resistance? The Hortons used the gender studies works of Charles Rosenberg and Anthony Rotundo to delineate three possible choices for free black men.[39] They could follow the Masculine Achiever ideal, "associated with the rapid economic growth of the nineteenth century", or the Christian Gentleman ideal which eschewed "self-seeking behavior and heatless competition" for an ideal that "stressed communal values, religious principles and more humanitarian action."[40] Or they could follow a third ideal, examined by Rotundo, the Masculine Primitive, which "harnessed the energy of primitive male instincts and savagery lurking beneath the thin veneer of civilization."[41] By examining the experiences and writings of Frederick Douglass, David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, Sojourner Truth, and other northern free blacks, with particular attention to their views on the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, the *Dred Scott* decision, the actions of John Brown, and the call for black soldiers in the Civil War, Horton came to two basic conclusions: manhood could only be maintained through violence (or the threat of violence) and the subjugation of black women. I contest these conclusions.

Along with their essay in *Free People of Color*, the Hortons contributed a piece to Donald Jacobs' *Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston* (1993)

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[38] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, "Violence, Protest, and Identity: Black Manhood in Antebellum America" in Horton, ed., *Free People of Color*, 80-97.
[39] Charles Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role in Nineteenth Century America," in *The American Man*, ed. Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 219-257; E. Anthony Rotundo, "Learning about Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America*, ed. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 36-47.
[40] Horton and Horton, "Violence, Protest, and Identity," 80-81. Both of these ideas are concepts from the Rosenberg article cited above.
[41] Horton and Horton, "Violence, Protest, and Identity," 80-81.

titled "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston."[42] With particular attention to black abolitionists in Boston, such as Charles Lenox Remond, Peter Paul Simons, James G. Barbadoes, William Cooper Nell and others, the Hortons examined the relationship of these men with William Lloyd Garrison and their various methods to end slavery. Much like "Violence, Protest, and Identity," "The Affirmation of Manhood" also used the experiences of Frederick Douglass with the slave breaker Edward Covey and David Walker's *Appeal* to spotlight violence as a method for achieving manhood. However, the later article also explored politics and citizenship as paths to manhood. As the nineteenth century progressed, many of Boston's black abolitionists begin to break with Garrison's anti-political stance, as well as that of nonviolent resistance. Again, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, John Brown's Raid, and the formation of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment played important roles in the Hortons' analysis. However, on the whole these two articles' generally conclusioned the same, "[f]ighting the war was a test and assertion of a soldier's manhood; for African Americans in Boston, in Massachusetts, and all across the North, fighting for the abolition of slavery was a clear assertion of the manhood of the race."[43]

The issues of politics and citizenship added significant barriers for free blacks in the North and yielded a topic touched on by various scholars dealing with black abolitionists. The American tendency to define independence as a key prerequisite for the full privileges of citizenship put African American men in a particularly difficult position. As a consequence of the recent history of bondage in the northern states, the expansion of slavery in the southern states, the limited forms of labor proscribed to free blacks, and the pseudoscientific

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[42] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," in *Courage and Conscience: Black & White Abolitionists in Boston*, ed. Donald M. Jacobs (Bloomington, IN: Published for the Boston Athenaeum by Indiana University Press, 1993), 127-153.
[43] Ibid., 128.

arguments of proslavery theorists, many white northerners had difficulty imagining African Americans in any position other than dependent on whites. In this view, blackness, much like womanhood, naturally signified a dependent or subordinate state and served as reason enough to exclude African Americans from full citizenship rights.[44]

On the heals of the works by the Hortons, the African American Studies scholar Daniel Black published *Dismantling Black Manhood* in 1997. His strived to understand the difficulty of being a black man in the United States due to the vestiges of slavery. Starting with accounts from men in pre-colonial West Africa, the few accounts by Africans from the middle passage, and on through both slave and free black men in the nineteenth century, Black painted a dire picture of the situation for all black men. In many ways the men in Black's study appeared to have had none of the agency found in the works of the Hortons, Gary B. Nash, or others. In fact, Black clearly failed to fully account for the scholarship of both free blacks and slaves. He ignored the strength, determination, and perseverance of the actual people of the eighteenth and nineteenth he attempted to analyze. The subtitle of the work (*An Historical and Literary Analysis of the Legacy of Slavery*) misleads the reader. Black might have more aptly eliminated the "historical" and maintained the "literary" analysis aspect of this study, because clearly only one portion of that goal was adequately achieved.[45]

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[44] See Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, esp. chapters 1-3; Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, 38-50; Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 8-9; Paul Gilmore, *The Genuine Article: Race, Mass Culture, and American Literary Manhood* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 56-59; Kristin Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Dec., 1993), 558-595; Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 98-99; Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 95-118.

[45] Daniel P. Black, *Dismantling Black Manhood: An Historical and Literary Analysis of the Legacy of Slavery* (New York: Garland Pub., 1997).

In a collection of essays with the promising title *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity, Vol. 1 "Manhood Rights": The Construction of Black Male History and Manhood, 1750-1870* (1999), Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins attempted to produce a pioneering anthology to fill a gap in gender studies.[46] Unfortunately, only a few of the twenty-three articles in the volume dealt directly with issues of black manhood and masculinity. Articles on blacks in the military and uses of violence dominated both volumes, and thus perpetuated the predominance of resistant masculinity as the sole avenue for blacks to demonstrate their manhood.

In more recent years historians have been increasingly active in the field of masculinity studies and have produced several important works, which include essays examining both slave and free black men's notions of manhood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[47] In *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, Edward E. Baptist's essay "The Absent Subject: African American Masculinity and Forced Migration to the Antebellum Plantation Frontier" the author argued that whites and Northern blacks looked at slaves as fools and eunuchs for not running away or committing suicide. In response Baptist gave precise details regarding how male slaves often created their sense of manhood by caring for women and children or doing shoddy work on the plantation. They also embraced Christianity, hoping the afterlife would be the promised paradise the Bible suggests.[48] Yet, most importantly Baptist recognized a form of masculinity that even enslaved men could perform, resistant masculinity. Also, he showed other manly traits by

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[46] Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins, *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity*, 2 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
[47]See Friend and Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood*; Plath and Lussana, eds., *Black and White Masculinity in the American South*; Thomas A. Foster, ed., *New Men: Manliness in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).
[48] For spiritualism among the slaves, see Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll; the World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

"living out the ordinary virtues of dignity and caring," by building and rebuilding families, and by passing on lessons for survival. Thus, not everyone could perform resistance masculinity. Individual enslaved men, like other subordinated men, exhibited multiple masculinities.[49] Much like the work of the Hortons, Baptist drew on the writings and speeches of David Walker, Frederick Douglass, and other slave narratives. Much of the focus of the essay focused on slaves and ex-slaves on the frontier, however, Baptist's provided far-reaching conclusions. He demonstrated that while "we simply cannot see their way of being as masculinity, given our cultural blinders," that they had found "another path to a different definition of manhood."[50]

In 2007, Sarah Roth published "'How a Slave was made a Man': Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives." This essay examined the manner in which slave narratives portrayed black masculinity. Roth found that fugitive slave narratives published in the 1840s represented a break from black abolitionist narratives produced during the previous decade. The key difference to Roth was that slave narrators of the 1840s deliberately renounced any connection between black manhood and a willingness to commit violence against whites. She also argued that at the same time fugitive slave authors insisted on the admirable manliness of the African American men they depicted, including themselves. Later, the return that radical abolitionist authors made to a veneration of black violence in the 1850s marked the publication of slave narratives in the 1840s as an exceptional moment in the history of antislavery literature. Roth asserted that the popular success of the 1840s narratives contrasted with the unpopularity of the more violent antislavery texts of the 1830s and the 1850s. Like many of the other works examined here

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[49] See Connell, *Masculinities* and R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (Dec., 2005), 829-859.
[50] Edward E. Baptist, "The Absent Subject," 156.

so far, Roth used David Walker's *Appeal* and Frederick Douglass' writings, but she also looked at several works by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Like many of the other essays, violence lay at the heart of Roth's analysis.

Lydia Plath and Sergio Lussana edited an anthology titled *Black and White Masculinity in the American South, 1800-2000*. Several essays in that collection inform this study, but most significantly Rebecca Fraser's "Negotiating their Manhood: Masculinity amongst the Enslaved in the Upper South, 1830-1861." Fraser's essay focused attention on the masculinity of the enslaved.[51] Moving north and east from the focus of Edward Baptist's study, Fraser focused on the Upper South in the later part of the antebellum period. Like Baptist, she found that even with slavery, enslaved men found ways to define and perform masculinity. This could include undertakings such as hunting and performing extra work for their master in return for goods or cash. In this fashion they might demonstrate that they could provide for the family. Also, they might act as a masculine protector by taking a whipping for a family member. And in various ways she argued they also formed a manly group solidarity with other enslaved men. In her conclusion she briefly examined the use of violence as a form of masculinity, however, the great contribution of this essay was that Fraser provided a more nuanced analysis of enslaved men's masculinity, going beyond the vital but limited focus on violence seen in earlier works.

Since that point other studies have also taken a more nuanced look at both enslaved and free black manhood during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One, a collection of essays on masculinity in eighteenth century America, *New Men: Manliness in Early*

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[51] Sarah N. Roth, "'How a Slave was made a Man': Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives," *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 2 (08, 2007), 255-275; Rebecca Fraser, "Negotiating their Manhood: Masculinity Amongst the Enslaved in the Upper South, 1830-1861," in *Black and White Masculinity in the American South*, Plath and Lussana eds., 76. Larger studies such as Greenberg's, *Honor & Slavery* contained portions examining the enslaved.

America edited by Thomas A. Foster, contained an essay by Kathleen Brown, "'Strength of the Lion…Arms Like Polished Iron': Embodying Black Masculinity in an Age of Slavery and Propertied Manhood." The second Kristen Foster's essay "'We Are Men!': Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship" mirrored Brown's study in that both demonstrated a more learned and more complex analysis of African American masculinity.[52] This is in part due to their adept use of gender and feminist analysis focusing on the body (Brown) and citizenship (Foster).

Kathleen Brown moved the analysis of enslaved men from the early nineteenth century into the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, a much more challenging task as few had time or the skills to write a narrative of their experience. Nevertheless, Brown took on this challenge and argued "that the bodies of enslaved men—or, more precisely, the social persons rooted in those bodies—were more crucial to the meaning and experience of their manhood than was the case for other men."[53] She skillfully addressed the importance of property in understanding white manhood and outlined the ways in which African Americans (and many working class white men) were barred from this form of manliness. Like many of the feminist scholars who focus on the body as both model to understand patriarchal oppression as well as a means to challenge that oppression, Brown's essay revolved around black men's bodies as a way, or for her the only way, in which they could have expressed masculinity.[54] In her final assessment she wrote:

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[52] Kathleen M. Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...Arms Like Polished Iron': Embodying Black Masculinity in an Age of Slavery and Propertied Manhood,' in *New Men*, Foster, ed., 172; A. Kristen Foster, "'We are Men!': Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 2 (2011), 143.
[53] Brown, "Strength of the Lion…", 173.
[54] For use of the body in feminist scholarship see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Annette Kolodny, "Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism," *Feminist Studies* 6,

> Ultimately, for black men, manhood was not something one could merely think one's way to or accumulate like property. Rather, achieving it was a matter of constant performance aimed at bodily aesthetic that defied subordination and stirred the admiration, the fear, and the mindfulness of observers, black and white, of the potential for male self-assertion.[55]

Brown's assertion here failed to fully and satisfactorily take into account the organic intellectual abilities that were possible of enslaved men such as Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass, even though she did address a few of Douglass' works at the end of her essay.

Kristen Foster's essay "'We Are Men!': Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship" (2011) surveyed the concept of manhood through Douglass' push for equal citizenship of formerly enslaved men, along with his involvement in women's rights. In this essay Foster saw that while Douglass "began articulating the connections that he saw among masculinity, violence, and American rights; he found himself captivated by a new women's rights movement that articulated a vision of American citizenship which required no gendered litmus test."[56] The most important contribution of Foster's study was her connection of Douglass' reform activities to the larger efforts to achieve equal citizenship for all; black and white, men and women. While "We Are Men!" did add to the multifaceted ways in which black men in the nineteenth century conceptualized masculinity, the central focus remained violence in either legal or extra-legal ways as the most important method for demonstrating manhood. Once again I believe that this conclusion failed to fully analyze the contribution of Douglass' and other black abolitionists' intellectual contributions to nineteenth century African American masculinity.

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no. 1 (Spring, 1980), 1; Robyn Warhol-Down and Diane Price Herndl, eds., *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and* Criticism, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

[55] Brown, "Strength of the Lion…", 189.

[56] Foster, "We are Men!", 143.

Many of the reformers and abolitionists of the antebellum era held unique conceptions of manhood. They saw the work of abolitionists as a very manly endeavor, and for many, including Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass; they performed what many understood to be the work of public intellectuals. Through further analysis of these men's family lives, writings, speeches, their intellectual activities, and their overall efforts to combat slavery, this study will demonstrate that they performed a unique form of masculinity, an intellectual masculinity that set them apart as part of DuBois' "Talented Tenth."

CHAPTER 1: Resistant Masculinity—1834-1861

In 1834 Thomas Auld, Frederick Douglass's master, hired him out to the slave breaker Edward Covey. One morning Covey decided that he would whip Douglass. Douglass, however, refused to be whipped. Douglass recounted this story in his *Narrative* and his various autobiographies. He wrote that Covey attacked him while he descended from a stable loft. "I resolved to fight; and suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him." He wrote that they struggled for nearly two hours, with Douglass drawing blood and Covey drawing none. For the remainder of his time at Covey's farm, Covey did not lay a hand upon him. Douglass then explained that:

> [t]he battle with Covey was my turning point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own *manhood*…. I felt as I never had felt before…. My long-crushed spirit rose, [and]…. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping me, must also succeed in killing me.[1]

Nearly every scholar who has examined Frederick Douglass has told this story or examined it to explain some aspect of his life. Many focused on masculinity, such as Richard Yarborough's "Race, Violence, and Manhood," Sarah Roth's "How a Slave was made a Man," Kristen Foster's "We are Men!," and Kathleen Brown's "Strength of the Lion… Arms Like Polished Iron". All connected this act of violence with Douglass's understanding of manhood.[2] Each seemed to imply that Douglass, and black men in general, could only attain

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[1] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (New York: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2000), 68, 69, emphasis mine. Hereafter *Narrative*.

[2] Sarah N. Roth, "'How a Slave was made a Man': Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives,' *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 2 (August, 2007), 255-275; Kathleen M. Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...Arms Like Polished Iron': Embodying Black Masculinity in an Age of Slavery and Propertied Manhood," in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 172-192; A. Kristen Foster, "'We are Men!': Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 2 (2011), 143; Richard Yarborough, "Race, Violence, and

manhood through the use of their body, namely through violent action. Kathleen Brown wrote:

> Black manhood remained a matter of the body throughout the antebellum period. A black man ultimately deflected violence and humiliation and rejected subjugation with the only resource he could count on, his body…. Ultimately, for black men, manhood was not something one could merely think one's way to…it was a matter of constant performance aimed at a bodily aesthetic that defied subordination….[3]

Although the fight with Edward Covey was important to Douglass's understanding of manhood, to limit his and other black men's understanding of manhood to only physical terms is incomplete and fails to take into account other forms of masculinity. Black manhood, or manhood in general, during the nineteenth century was much more complex. In many ways it did require a physical component, but also was made up of much more. For Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Douglass, manhood was performed through various masculinities in their roles as protectors of their families, their work as antislavery activists, and at times physical action. Yet, as black men they had to temper their physical nature to blunt the stereotypes drawn by proslavery advocates that blacks were bestial and savage.[4] Thus for Bibb, Brown, and Douglass it was not their physical prowess alone that brought them renown as great men or established their manhood. It was through their intellectual masculinity, shown in their efforts as engaged public intellectuals, that Bibb, Brown, and Douglass truly demonstrated their manhood.

Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave'," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); see also Ronald T. Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination: Essays and Documents*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[3] Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...'", 189.

[4] For the southern slaveholders views on blacks see Paul Finkelman, *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003). Also, for northern whites' fears of arming slaves due to their supposed savage nature see Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1990).

Nevertheless, the issue of violence, or resistant masculinity, must be addressed. For some black abolitionists, clearly, it was evident that force would prove necessary to end slavery. Yet it was a topic that they had to approach with care so as to not alienate their predominantly white audiences or even white abolitionists. Douglass's views on physical action evolved over time, from his fight with Covey to the non-violent position of the Garrisonians to an acceptance of the need for violent action, and culminated in his call to arm black soldiers in the Civil War. While Frederick Douglass himself turned down the opportunity to take up arms in the fight against slavery, he and William Wells Brown both used their positions as public intellectuals to promote resistance, threaten revolt, and eventually push for black Union regiments. In no way was this public intellectual engagement similar to what Kathleen Brown referred to as "something one could merely think one's way to…."[5] Their masculinity required a physical component, but that physicality was only one aspect of their composite masculinity.

Those familiar with the very large body of scholarship on nineteenth century American slavery know that much has been written about the ways in which slaves resisted the South's peculiar institution. Enslaved African Americans resisted slavery in a variety of active and passive ways. Day-to-day resistance was the most common form of opposition to slavery. Breaking tools, feigning illness, staging slowdowns, and committing acts of arson and sabotage—all were forms of resistance and expression of slaves' alienation from their masters.[6] For black abolitionists their resistance, or resistant masculinity, took on many

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[5] Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...'", 189.

[6] More on the varied forms of slave resistance could be found in Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community; Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery; A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll; the World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Larry E. Hudson, *To Have and to Hold: Slave*

forms and expressions. Examples of resistant masculinity included black abolitionists' determination to defend themselves, their resolve to bring freedom to the unfree, as well as encouraging slave revolts. In addition, language itself became a weapon, a form of resistant masculinity. These black abolitionists' speeches and their printed words produced fury and panic among supporters of slavery. However, they all began their abolitionist careers as practitioners of nonviolence and moral suasion.

In the 1830s, the white antislavery movement began with a mission to abolish slavery through nonviolent means. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison popularized pacifism and the practice of nonviolent, nonpolitical resistance, a practice known as moral suasion. White abolitionists tended to rely upon moral suasion to end slavery, because these abolitionists believed that thinking people who had basically good character in America would respond to the argument that slavery was wrong. They considered it wrong for moral and religious reasons. Therefore, the institution of slavery perverted American society in general and also perverted the ideals of liberty upon which the nation was founded. Garrisonian abolitionists expected that their forces would turn the other cheek in the face of angry mobs, arson attacks, and other acts of brutality. Many abolitionists, both black and white, believed they could persuade people of the evils of slavery.

Twenty years into their movement, however, American slavery had expanded from over 1.5 million to nearly 4 million and the enslaved were no closer to freedom. In fact, many slaveholders had behaved more cruelly, especially in the Deep South. Undeniably, slavery was a system of forced labor and oppression that rested on violence. Historians John McKivigan and Stanley Harold posed a fundamental question: "If slavery was an

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Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 1972).

institutionalized war against African Americans, as some abolitionists claimed, could the friends of freedom morally restrict themselves to nonviolent means?" Long before their accurate conclusion, the English Enlightenment philosopher, John Locke, had written that slavery was a state of war.[7] Violence not only brought an end to slavery, but protest-violence—resistant masculinity—gave black abolitionists an opportunity to present themselves as the equals of white men with an equal cause: liberty.

In the decade before the Civil War, black abolitionists began to approach the antislavery campaign with bold, unapologetically forceful rhetoric. Just a month before Abraham Lincoln's election, Frederick Douglass declared in his newspaper:

> If speech alone could have abolished slavery, the work would have been done long ago. What we want is anti-slavery government, in harmony with our anti-slavery speech, one which will give effect to our words, and translate them into acts. For this, the ballot is needed, and if this will not be heard or heeded, then the bullet. We have had enough, and are sick of it.[8]

Douglass's frustration reflected the growing belief, especially among black abolitionists, that talking alone failed as a tactic.

The failings of moral suasion and the success of eighteenth century revolutions, such as those in the United States, France, and Haiti, convinced black abolitionists that the abolition of slavery would entail a revolution, and that revolutions required violence. While the principles fought for during the American Revolution resulted in some states enacting laws for immediate or gradual abolition, and still others encouraged manumission, for the majority of the enslaved or free African Americans living in the United States the Revolution

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[7] John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 3-4; John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (1690, rprt.: Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), 17.
[8] *Douglass's Monthly*, January 1861.

was incomplete. Rather than renounce the American Revolution, however, black abolitionists sought to revive and complete its promises.[9]

Many Americans tend to view American abolitionism as comprised of largely nonviolent white men with a mission of moral suasion. This outdated notion presents a inadequate view of history that erases the struggle of black men and women in their quest for freedom. Black abolitionists warrant special attention because their ideas have connected to broader traditions of black resistance. Yet, paradoxically, as the subjects and founders of their movement, other than the most famous black abolitionists including the three under consideration here, most have nearly vanished from public memory. Historian Manisha Sinha argued, "Despite some prominent exceptions, the dominant picture of abolitionists in American history is that of a bourgeois reformer burdened by racial paternalism and economic conservatism." Sinha contended that while this view remains problematic, more recent scholarship has begun to change with stronger emphasis placed on less famous African Americans and women.[10] Timothy McCarthy and John Stauffer agreed that until the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1960s and 1970s, black abolitionists as a group had been largely ignored by historians.[11] They also acknowledged that one of the greatest frustrations of older abolitionist historiography was the presumption that the movement consisted of "a white man's struggle to end slavery."[12] On the contrary, black abolitionists ranked among the primary catalysts for recruiting white people to abolitionism,

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[9] Jane H. Pease and William Henry Pease, *They Who Would be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 245; Robert P. Smith, "William Cooper Nell: Crusading Black Abolitionist," *The Journal of Negro History* 55, no. 3 (July, 1970), 182; William C. Nell to William L. Garrison, February 22, 1859, Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library.
[10] Manisha Sinha, "Coming of Age: The Historiography of Abolitionism," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2006), 23.
[11] Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, eds., *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2006), xiv.
[12] Ibid., xix-xx.

and certainly for investing the movement with its dual commitment to ending slavery and ending racism. In sum, black abolitionists and the enslaved supplied the first abolitionists.[13]

Often scholars analyze black Americans collectively or solely in the context of their relationship to slavery in the South or segregation in the North.[14] While this method has added greatly to historical scholarship, it does not go far enough to examine black people as individuals, as whole and complex persons, which by definition can prevent readers from appreciating human distinctiveness.[15] Examining black abolitionists' masculinity in general, and resistant masculinity specifically, helps expand our understanding of black men's uniqueness.

If slavery were to be abolished, what would freedom entail? Might it include voting, education, equal opportunity, and redistribution of land and power? In 1837 the black abolitionist and minister Joshua Easton spoke at a Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and he declared, "Abolitionists may attack slaveholding, but there is a danger still that the spirit of slavery will survive, in the form of prejudice, after the system is overturned. Our *warfare* ought not to be against slavery alone, but against the spirit which makes color a mark of

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[13] Ibid; see also C. Peter Ripley et al., ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* (5 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), hereafter *BAP*; George E. Carter and C. Peter Ripley, ed., *Black Abolitionist Papers, 1830-1865*, (17 vols.; Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1993), microfilm, hereafter *BAPC*.

[14] For a small sample see Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London; New York: Verso, 1997); Blassingame, *The Slave Community*; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966); William Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Elkins, *Slavery;* Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; Hudson, *To Have and to Hold;* Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: the Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup;* Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956).

[15] Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination*, 9-10; see also Litwack, *North of Slavery*.

degradation."[16] Unlike many of their white counterparts, abolition for many African Africans represented a beginning.

In 1857, the Quaker Abby Kelley also contended in the abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator* that slavery was warfare, arguing, "Since slavery was maintained by force, it might justly be opposed in the same way." She added, "The question is not whether we shall counsel the slaves to forsake peace, and commence war; the *war exists already,* and has been waged unremittingly ever since the slave has been in bondage."[17] The rhetoric and the specter of violence was a way of communicating social tensions, frustrations, injustices, and even fears. At the root of violence lay the contested issue of equality for all. White masters and southern politicians rightly saw abolitionists' and African Americans' aggression as a threat to their own power. Black leaders attempted to strike for their own freedom with their words, pens, and sometimes, their lives.

Toward the end of his life, in 1893, Frederick Douglass, who after the Civil War was U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, declared when the "black sons of Haiti" had "struck for freedom," they had "struck for the freedom of every black man in the world."[18] Images of armed black men conjured fear, not respect among virtually all whites. Thus, black abolitionists did not have to attack slavery physically; their speeches alone could be deemed as fighting words, strong language meant to provoke violence. The author of an article in the *Liberator* titled "Causes of Slave Insurrections" stated that such rebellions were inevitable wherever men

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[16] *Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Fifth Annual Report* (Boston: The Society, 1837), xxxix. See also Merton Lynn Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), 106-107, emphasis mine.
[17] *Liberator*, February 13, 1857. See also Dillon, *The Abolitionists,* 223.
[18] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 305.

were held in bondage. He asserted that it was basically a matter of human nature: "Negroes, like other *men*, have a spirit which rebels against tyranny and oppression."[19]

As the contest over slavery escalated during the antebellum period, slave rebellions in the U.S. and Haiti became examples and inspiration for black abolitionists. For the enslaved and black leadership, Haiti was more than a place; it was a symbol, its memory served as a constant reminder to threaten the institution of slavery. Black abolitionists such as David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet and Martin Delany all understood how the power of rhetoric could conjure fear and stimulate direct action.[20] The Haitian Revolution, as well as other plotted rebellions, made it clear that no threat was an empty threat.

Born free, David Walker became a prominent abolitionist in Boston who defended slave rebellions and called for black pride. Walker saw violence as a concept that white men taught to the enslaved by their example of oppressive action. Historian Alfred Hunt concluded, "Walker was one of the first protesters against slavery to make the point that had become the sine qua non of twentieth-century anticolonial leaders such as Franz Fanon: Taking one's own destiny into one's hands was an act of *manhood* that created self-respect as well as freedom."[21] Walker understood violence as a form of self-defense, a forceful attempt to establish justice and equality, and thus a way to perform resistant masculinity.

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[19] *Liberator*, September 17, 1831, emphasis mine.

[20] Henry Highland Garnet was an African-American abolitionist born circa December 23, 1815, in Kent County, Maryland. Born as a slave, Garnet and his family escaped to New York when he was about 9 years old. In the 1840s and decades afterward, he became an abolitionist. His "Call to Rebellion" speech in 1843 encouraged slaves to free themselves by rising up against owners. Martin R. Delany was an African American abolitionist, writer, editor, doctor, and politician. Born in Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia), he was the first black field officer in the United States Army, serving as a major during and after the American Civil War (1861–1865), and was among the first black nationalists. A fiercely independent thinker and wide-ranging writer, he coedited with Frederick Douglass the abolitionist newspaper *North Star* and later he also authored *Blake; or, The Huts of America*, a serial publication about a fugitive slave who, in the tradition of Nat Turner, organized insurrection.

[21] Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 148, emphasis mine. Franz Fanon was a French Creole

Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) referred to Haiti and encouraged enslaved people everywhere to rebel against their masters. Walker, aware of the injustice and hypocrisy slavery created, wrote in his *Appeal:*

> Therefore, if there is an *attempt* made by us, kill or be killed. Now, I ask you, had you not rather be killed than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife, and dear little children? Look upon your mother, wife and children, and answer God Almighty; and believe this, that it is no more harm for you to kill a man, who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty.

Walker posed the question to the enslaved, "Are we MEN!!--I ask you, O my brethren! are we MEN?" He assured them that the Lord would provide them a leader the likes of Hannibal and of Toussaint in Haiti and advised them to read the history of Haiti. He added that he did not need to refer to antiquity for a story of freedom; he needed only reference the "Glory of the blacks and terror of tyrants" in Haiti. This threat would be enough to convince the most "avaricious and stupid of wretches." [22] Walker never minced words.

Perhaps the most notorious threat appeard in Henry Highland Garnet's speech *Address to the Slaves,* given in 1843 at the National Convention of Colored Men, held in Albany, New York. Garnet, along with his family, escaped from slavery in Maryland and arrived in New York City at the age of nine. He went on to become a prominent minister, orator, and abolitionist. His speech, like Walker's pamphlet, proved highly controversial. Garnet declared that it was no longer "a debatable question, whether it is better to choose *Liberty* or *death."* He mentioned the names of heroes such as Tousaaint Louverture, Denmark Vesey, the purported leader of a slave uprising in Charleston in 1822, the

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philosopher from Martinique and a writer whose works were influential in the fields of post-colonial studies and the cultural consequences of decolonization.

[22] David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles: Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and very Expressly, to those of the United States of America: Third and Last Edition, Revised and Published by David Walker,* ed. James Turner (1830; rprt., Baltimore, Md.: Black Classic Press, 1993), 29-30.

Virginian, Nat Turner, who led a slave rebellion in 1831, and Joseph Cinque, who led a successful mutiny of the slave ship *Amistad* in 1839, to list a few. Garnet called them noble men who had fallen in the pursuit of freedom and would be cherished in the hearts and memory of future generations. He added, "their names are surrounded by a halo of glory." Garnet not only saw fit to remind his audience of their potential, but also immediately charged his brethren to arise, to "strike for your lives and liberties." To live up to the standards of such heroes required a sense of urgency, fearlessness, and a belief that justice was on one's side, and the willingness to kill and to die for one's rights.[23]

It is important to note that even Frederick Douglass, who staunchly supported moral suasion and adamantly opposed Garnet's *Address to the Slaves,* expressed a desire to witness violent repercussions to slavery. By 1849, Douglass claimed in his speech "On Mexico" that, in light of the American Revolution and "how they [American patriots] bared their bosoms to the storms of British artillery, in order to resist simply a three-penny tea tax, and to assert their independence of the mother country," he would "welcome the news" that the enslaved had revolted and were causing "death and devastation" throughout the American South. He then amplified his statement by noting that the enslaved had as much—if not more—of a right to revolt than did white American forefathers and the thousands of black soldiers of the American Revolution.[24] While Douglass did not mention the Haitian Revolution, he did recall the French Revolution of 1848, which occurred a year before his speech:

There is a state of war at the South at this moment. The slaveholder is waging

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[23] Henry Highland Garnet, "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America, 1843," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, ed. Colin A. Palmer, 2nd ed. ed., (6 vols.; Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006), 6: 2339-2403.

[24] *Liberator*, June 8, 1849. See also Leslie Friedman Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change: The Views of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)," *The Journal of Negro History* 61, no. 1 (Jan., 1976), 61, and Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

> war of aggression on the oppressed. The slaves are now under his feet. Why, you welcomed the intelligence from France, Louis Philippe had been barricaded in Paris—you threw up your caps in honor of the victory achieved by Republicanism over Royalty—you shouted aloud—"Long live the republic!"—and joined heartily in the watchword of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"—and should you not hail, with equal pleasure, the tidings from the South that the slaves had risen, and achieved for himself, against the iron-hearted slaveholder, what the republicans of France achieved against the royalists of France?[25]

If the founding fathers could commence a revolution against Great Britain for what appeared to abolitionists' superficial reasons, surely the enslaved could rise up against real oppression and the tyranny of American slavery. And by rising up they could, like Louverture, demonstrate their manhood. Historian Matthew Clavin argued that the public memory of the Haitian Revolution surged as sectional conflict accelerated to the point where war seemed unavoidable during the 1850s: "Louverture was for [black abolitionists] a symbol of the efficacy of violence in both ending slavery and redeeming *black manhood*."[26]

The writings of two black abolitionists, perhaps provides the most complete nineteenth century scholarship on Haiti and Louverture, William Wells Brown and James Theodore Holly.[27] Brown, author of *St. Domingo: Its Revolution and its Patriots*, a history of the Haitian Revolution, wrote in 1854, "The advantage of numbers and physical strength was on the side of the oppressed. Right is the most dangerous of weapons, woe to him who leaves it to his enemies!"[28] Brown asserted that violence committed by the oppressed was not only justifiable, but a necessary force to combat immoral behavior. While the enslaved

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[25] *Liberator*, June 8, 1849.
[26] Matthew J. Clavin, "A Second Haitian Revolution: John Brown, Toussaint Louverture, and the Making of the American Civil War," *Civil War History* 54, no. 2 (2008), 145, emphasis mine.
[27] Holly was born free in Washington, D.C. in 1829, he eventually became a Protestant Episcopal priest and later bishop in Haiti. He was an active abolitionist and worked with Henry Bibb as Associate Editor of the *Voice of the Fugitive* from 1852 to 1853.
[28] William Wells Brown, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and its Patriots: A Lecture Delivered before the Metropolitan Athenaeum, London, may 16, and at St. Thomas' Church, Philadelphia, December 20, 1854* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1855). Practically all of the Caribbean islands had a slave majority within their island population, many as high as ninety percent enslaved populations.

proportion of the population of the U.S. was somewhat less than that of the Caribbean, Brown's claims helped to add legitimacy to violent resistance. He noted:

> And, should such a contest take place, the God of Justice will be on the side of the oppressed blacks...war against the tyrants would be the rallying cry ... and the revolution that was commenced in 1776 would then be finished, and the glorious sentiments of the Declaration of Independence, "That all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," would be realized, and our government ...would really be the LAND OF THE FREE AND HOME OF THE BRAVE.[29]

Brown was confident that, if given the opportunity, the enslaved would prove themselves capable of not only a rebellion, but also a revolution large enough and violent enough to overthrow American slavery.

Furthermore, Brown believed that black Americans could be impressed by Haiti's creed of liberty and equality. Brown was perhaps one of the most vocal speakers concerning America's racial contradictions. After reading Southern newspapers that described emancipation as having a negative impact on slaves, Brown was disgusted.[30] He argued that no greater paradox existed than one that juxtaposed the struggles of the forefathers in 1776 and their principles set forth by the Declaration of Independence with their maintenance and support of slavery. Brown charged, "Seeing what our government is doing today to rivet chains upon the limbs of un-born millions, we must all join in the declaration that the American Union is the most gigantic conspiracy against freedom that the world ever saw."[31] Brown juxtaposed the "Father" of Haiti with that of the United States: "Toussaint liberated

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[29] Brown, *St. Domingo*, 37-38.

[30] As part of the Pro-Slavery Argument, found for example in James Henry Hammond's famous Mudsill Speech, blacks were considered so inferior and lacking in ability that they would become a drain on society if they were free. Additionally, they feared a class of landless poor. Southerners argued that this class was inherently transient and easily manipulated, and as such often destabilized society as a whole. Thus, the greatest threat to democracy was seen as coming from class warfare that destabilized a nation's economy, society, government, and threatened the peaceful and harmonious implementation of laws.

[31] William Wells Brown, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, November 28, 1857.

his countrymen; Washington enslaved a portion of his, and aided in giving strength and vitality to an institution that will one day rend asunder the UNION that he helped to form."[32]

By 1863, Brown had written a collective biography of prominent African American leaders entitled *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements.* Brown's work anticipated contemporary interest in the transatlantic nature of black activism by including leaders of the Haitian Revolution, such as Louverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe. The book also profiled the lives of Madison Washington, who instigated a slave revolt on the ship the *Creole* in 1841, as well as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, all men who plotted and in some cases committed acts of violence against slave owners. Thus, he conveyed some of the ideological inspiration the Haitian Revolution and other rebellions had impressed on the political imagination of black abolitionists.[33]

Like Brown, many abolitionists viewed the Haitian Revolution as a true reform and the American Revolution as incomplete. Black abolitionists claimed that the Haitian Revolution was more important than the American Revolution, and that Louverture's leadership was superior to that of George Washington's. Matthew Clavin contended that this represented a fundamental departure from standard abolitionist memory: "For a half-century, abolitionists throughout the Atlantic world had labeled Louverture the 'Black Napoleon' and the 'Washington of St. Domingo.' Now, African Americans and their radical white allies preferred the memory of Louverture and his revolution to these white revolutionary icons and their revolutions."[34] Black Americans no longer saw Toussaint as the equal of Napoleon and Washington, but as their superior, because he used political violence to establish freedom and

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[32] Brown, *St. Domingo*, 37; Clavin, "A Second Haitian Revolution," 134.
[33] William Wells Brown, *The Black Man; His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1865; rprt., Miami, Fla.: Mnemosyne Pub. Inc., 1969); Sinha, "Coming of Age," 25.
[34] Brown, *St. Domingo*, 37; Clavin, "A Second Haitian Revolution," 134-35.

equality for many. According to Clavin, the canon of radical black abolitionist history began not with David Walker's *Appeal* (1829) or Henry Highland Garnet's *Address to the Slaves* (1843), but with the revolution on the island of Haiti (1791-1804).[35] White abolitionists preferred the example of British emancipation in the West Indies to the violent revolution that had taken place in Haiti, and believed this model could be employed in the United States as wel1. British Emancipation came about nonviolently through legislation put forth in 1833. While many saw British abolition as nonviolent, there were many slave rebellions, the largest being the "Baptist War," which scholars believe precipitated emancipation because of its violent and costly aftermath.[36]

However, it did not take a slave rebellion to spark another national altercation. If language was a weapon, then Elijah Lovejoy's printing press was an arsenal.[37] Living in St. Louis, Missouri, Lovejoy had three printing presses destroyed by proslavery mobs. As a result, not only did he move across the Mississippi River to Alton, Illinois, in 1836, but he took further action. In *Liberator* he admitted "a loaded musket is standing at my bedside, while my two brothers, in an adjoining room, have *three others,* together with *pistols, cartridges,* etc." Lovejoy explained that he had "inexpressible reluctance" to engage in violence or resort to self-defense. Yet, after having lost several previous printing presses, he understood that there would be no police protection for his property. He declared, "There is at present no safety for me, and no defense in this place either in the laws or the protecting aegis of public sentiment."[38] In Alton, he again faced opposition to his antislavery activities.

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[35] Clavin, "A Second Haitian Revolution," 119.
[36] See Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).
[37] Some scholars consider Elijah Lovejoy as the first casualty of the Civil War. See Merton Lynn Dillon, *Elijah P. Lovejoy, Abolitionist Editor* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961).
[38] *Liberator,* Dec. 1, 1837.

When an angry mob set fire to Lovejoy's press for the final time, Lovejoy attempted to defend his property and disperse the mob. The proslavery partisans attacked and killed Lovejoy on November 7, 1837. Elijah Lovejoy's story was an early example of a white abolitionists' movement from nonviolent protest to armed resistance in the form of self-defense. And this episode, in turn, convinced the young Abraham Lincoln that slavery's violence could and had spread to free states.[39] As the 1840s began some black abolitionists also began to transition to a more militant position.

While white Garrisonian abolitionists adamantly supported a growing tradition of nonviolence, African Americans appeared never to have been wedded to the notion of nonviolence, and in particular found it unrealistic to condemn self-defense. Blacks never intended nonviolence to be a cover for a lack of manhood. Thus, in 1843 when Garnet, at age twenty-seven, delivered his "Address to the Slaves" at a National Negro Convention in Albany, New York, he spoke from personal experience. The legal scholar Steven H. Shiffrin claimed that the personal experience had to do with the 1842 *Prigg V. Pennsylvania* Supreme Court case. He asserted that historians have erroneously conveyed Garnet as having entertained a lifelong commitment to revolutionary violence. However, in a speech given to the Massachusetts Liberty Party State Convention in January, 1842, Garnet declared:

> I cannot harbor the thought for a moment that... [the slaves'] deliverance will be brought about by violence. No; our country will not be so deaf to the cries of the oppressed; so regardless of the commands of God… No, the time for a last stern struggle has not yet come.

Shiffrin made it clear that while no conclusive evidence can pinpoint what changed Garnet's stance, Garnet's fugitive slave status and the Supreme Court decision of *Prigg* v.

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[39] See Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).

Pennsylvania, a decision that made it easier for slaveholders to recover runaway slaves, was a factor in changing Garnet. Several months later, Garnet coauthored a response to the *Prigg* decision that echoed Patrick Henry's famous phrase, "Give me liberty or give me death."[40] This motto, "Liberty or Death," was transnational. It was the rallying cry for Toussaint in Haiti in 1791; the Point Coupee, Louisiana slave insurrection of 1795, and Gabriel's Rebellion in Virginia in 1800. In his "Address to the Slaves" Garnet declared,

> Fellow men! Patient sufferers! behold your dearest rights crushed to the earth! See your sons murdered, and your wives, mothers, and sisters doomed to prostitution. In the name of the merciful God, and by all that life is worth, let it no longer be a debatable question whether it is better to choose *Liberty or death.*

Garnet followed these remarks by reminding his audience of the heroes they had in Denmark Vesey, Toussaint Louverture, Nat Turner, Joseph Cinque, and Madison Washington, all of whom had fought for black people's freedom.[41] Garnet referred to these men as "Patriots" and "Noble men." He assumed that the consequences for ending slavery would have to be violent, and charged:

> You had far better all *die—die immediately,* than live as slaves, and entail your wretchedness upon your posterity. If you would be free in this generation, here is your only hope. However much you and all of us may desire it, there is not much hope of redemption without the shedding of blood. If you must bleed, let it all come at once—rather *die freemen, than live to be slaves.*[42]

No doubt at the top of his lungs, Garnet charged the same fiery word three times: "Resistance! Resistance! Resistance!" Garnet claimed, "No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance."[43]

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[40] Steven H. Shiffrin, "The Rhetoric of Black Violence in the Antebellum Period: Henry Highland Garnet," *Journal of Black Studies* 2, no. 1 (Sep., 1971), 45. Garnet quotation found on page 49.
[41] Garnet, "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America, 1843," 2399-2403, emphasis original. Because of the *Address's* controversial nature (endorsing slave rebellions), it was not widely published until l848.
[42] Garnet, "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America, 1843," 2399-2403, emphasis original.
[43] Ibid.

The white abolitionists community noticed this change of tone. In September 8, 1843, a writer for the *Liberator* commented on Garnet's address:

> In his speech in favor of the address, he affirmed *"that the time had come to resort to this course";* that other means had failed, and would fail; that abolitionists, who ... were very benevolent men, had done about all that they could do; that non-resistance was ridiculous, and not to be thought of, even for the present, by the slaves.[44]

William Lloyd Garrison then went on to criticize Garnet's position. But Garnet refused to be condemned by Garrison. "If it has come to this," Garnet replied, "that I must think and act as you do, because you are an abolitionist, or be exterminated by your thunder, then I do not hesitate to say that your abolitionism is abject slavery."[45] Nevertheless, because Garnet's speech was so radical, fellow black leaders voted on whether it should be published. Frederick Douglass, as a moral suasionist, represented those who strongly opposed its. He protested, "There was too much physical force both in the address and remarks of Garnet."[46] A few years later Douglass echoed his sentiments about Garnet's speech when he wrote:

> It is one thing to assert the right of a slave to gain his freedom by force, and another thing to advocate force as the only means of abolishing slavery. We...assert the former...but...deny the latter....We contend that the only well-grounded hope of the slave for emancipation is in the operation of moral force.[47]

Garnet's resolution to call for slaves to rebel lost by one delegate's vote, nineteen to eighteen. Nevertheless, the vote revealed how passionately some black abolitionists believed in the idea of violence as a political weapon. The vote was also symbolic of a change of heart

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[44] *Liberator,* September 8, 1843, Black Abolitionists Archive, University of Detroit-Mercy.

[45] Henry Highland Garnet to Mrs. Maria W. Chapman, November 27, 1843, Carter Godwin Woodson, ed. *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written during the Crisis, 1800-1860*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1926), 194; Leon F. Litwack, "The Emancipation of the Negro Abolitionist," in Martin B. Duberman, *The Antislavery Vanguard; New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 146-173.

[46]According to Douglass biographer William McFeely, Douglass "undertook a great debate with Garnet," however no transcript of this debate at the National Convention of Colored Citizens exists. See William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991), 106; Douglass quoted in Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination*, 18.

[47] *North Star,* Aug. 10, 1849; Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass,* ed., Philip S. Foner (3 vols.: New York: International Publishers, 1950-1955), 1:398-399, hereafter *Life and Writings*; Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 68.

within the abolitionist movement. If black abolitionists could come within just one vote of publishing a speech that endorsed slave rebellions, how much closer were they to abandoning moral suasion as a whole? Garnet's speech did not necessarily start the end of the moral suasion campaign, but it did feed the growing movement among some abolitionists to consider violence.

In an article in the *North Star,* Garnet exclaimed, "You publish that I have no faith in the use of moral means for the extinction of American slavery. I believe with all my heart in such means—and I believe that political power ought to be used for that end and that when rightly used, it is strictly moral." Garnet added, "I also believe that the slave has a moral right to use his physical power to obtain his liberty—my motto is, give me liberty or give me death. Dare you, Frederick Douglass, say otherwise! Speak plainly—I am 'calling you out.'"[48] Garnet wanted to make it clear that Douglass could not deny the justification of self-defense and in a way Garnet asserted his resistant masculinity against Douglass. This did not mean any abolitionists, black or white, condoned the indiscriminate violence that David Walker had called for, but self-defense was definitely back on the agenda in a way that it had not been since the tragedy of Elijah Lovejoy's death.

However, before Douglass opposed Garnet's address, he, too, found himself an advocate of violence. In 1843, the year of Garnet's *Address*, Douglass grabbed a club and rushed into a violent anti-abolitionist mob. Douglass explained that he was attempting to defend his friend and fellow abolitionist, William White, whom he believed the mob sought to attack.[49] In 1893, toward the end of Douglass's life, he recalled that incident in an

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[48] *North Star,* September 7, 1849, *BAPC,* 6: 136.
[49] See Foner, *Life and Writings*, 1:52, 181-82.

unpublished letter, and explained, "I was Non-Resistant til I got to fighting with a mob at Pendleton, Ind: in 1843...I fell never to rise again, and yet I cannot feel I did wrong."[50]

Some who have studied Douglass and his evolving views on violence believe that while he supported self-defense, he remained opposed to violence as a weapon of reform.[51] Douglass's account of his famous fight with Mr. Covey demonstrated that he would not shun self-defense, and revealed that he recalled that experience with "glowing terms."[52] Again, it is likely that few black abolitionists were truly wedded to the notion of nonviolence and moral suasion when facing a personal assault. However, black abolitionists utilized both accommodation and resistance as strategies for survival.[53] And while it was much easier to be nonviolent in word than in deed, black abolitionists were able to make clear distinctions between occasions that were appropriate for resistant masculinity and those that were not. For instance, in the National Negro Convention's report on the Committee on Abolition of in October 1847, Douglass offered what he believed to be a rational view concerning violence:

> The slave is in the minority, a small minority, the oppressors are an overwhelming majority. The oppressed are three millions; their oppressors are several millions. The one is weak; the other is strong. The one is without government; the other possesses every advantage in these respects; and the deadly aim of their musketry holds the slave down.[54]

Douglass explained that in these circumstances, leadership had the responsibility to develop the best means of abolishing slavery. He urged the committee to see the rationale for nonviolent resistance. The committee believed that resorting to bloodshed would be "the perfection of folly, suicidal in the extreme, and abominably wicked."[55]

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[50] Letter to Hinton dated Jan. 17, 1893, *The Frederick Douglass Papers Manuscript Collection* (Library of Congress), hereafter *FDP*; see also Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 64.
[51] Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 64; see also *The North Star,* May 5, 1848.
[52] Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 63.
[53] For the principles of accommodation and resistance within slavery see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.
[54] *North Star,* Jan. 14, 1848.
[55] Ibid.

Most leaders of the abolitionist movement equated violence with sin. Furthermore, the repercussions of slave rebellions and their ultimate failures almost always proved deadly for both the guilty and the innocent.

For a time, 1841-1847, Douglass agreed with Garrison. He refused to condone slave rebellions and worked hard to convince his fellow black abolitionists to refrain from encouraging what he believed would be catastrophic.[56] Historian Leslie Friedman Goldstein argued, "Douglass really believed that persuasion and moral example—moral suasion, as he called it—would be more effective in saving the slaves than would wild resorts to bloodshed." She added, "He actually believed that the slaveholders would be shamed by a transformed public opinion into giving up their own slaves."[57]

During the first five years in which he worked for Garrison, Douglass firmly believed that the American people only needed to be enlightened about the horrible oppression of slavery. This was why Douglass generally called for patience. By the end of the 1840s, however, abolition was not imminent, and Douglass realized he would have to take a different approach.[58] His breaking point may have come in December 1847 after his first meeting with that most violent of all abolitionists, John Brown in Springfield, Massachusetts. Douglass wrote:

> While I continued to speak out about slavery, I became all the same less hopeful of its peaceful abolition. My utterances became more and more tinged by the color of this man's [John Brown] strong impressions. Speaking at an anti-slavery convention in Salem, Ohio, I expressed this apprehension that slavery could only be destroyed by bloodshed, when I was suddenly and sharply interrupted by my good old friend Sojourner Truth with the question, "Frederick, is God dead?" "No." I answered, and

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[56] Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 353-374; Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 65.
[57] Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 66; see also Foner, *Life and Writings*, 1:114-15 and 1:146-47; Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass,* (Hartford, Conn.: Park Pub., 1882), 275.
[58] *North Star,* Feb. 22, 1850; see also Douglass, *Life and Times,* 226; Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 66.

> "because God is not dead slavery can only end in blood." My quaint old sister was of the Garrison school of non-resistants, and was shocked at my sanguinary doctrine, but she too became an advocate of the sword, when the war for the maintenance of the Union was declared.[59]

Earlier that year Douglass asserted his independence from Garrison by establishing his own antislavery newspaper, the *North Star,* with its motto: "Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren." However, Douglass's actions symbolized a step toward black separatism, personal independence, and resistant masculinity. Samuel Ringgold Ward, black abolitionist minister and editor of Boston's *Farmer and Northern Star* and *Impartial Citizen,* claimed that perhaps Douglass and Garrison's public disputes revealed Garrison's own "hostility toward black *manliness* and independence."[60] The loss of Douglass was a major setback for the Garrison camp and all who continued to tout moral suasion. For white abolitionists, Douglass was their greatest public relations tool, their representation for recruitment to the movement.[61]

By 1848, Douglass intensified his new ideological stance. In addition to his break with Garrison on the issue of nonviolence, he also broke from him on the issue of politics. After his move to Rochester, New York, and starting the *North Star*, he made his first move into political antislavery by encouraging his readers that could vote, to vote for the newly formed Free Soil Party.[62] He did not vote himself because, as historian James Oakes wrote,

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[59] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 282.
[60] Mayer, *All on Fire*, 430. Garrison strongly denied Ward's charge and claimed, "A complexional distinction [should] not be tolerated for a moment." He added "a 'black man' is to be criticized, rebuked and 'denounced' as well as a white man, according to his position, failings or errors; and it was very absurd to make any outcry about it." See the *Liberator,* July 4, 1851; emphasis mine.
[61] Pease and Pease, *They Who Would be Free*, 245.
[62] This call to vote targeted Douglass' white male readers as both his female readers and most black male readers were denied the franchise. See Jonathan Halperin Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). The Free Soil Party was a short-lived political party in the U.S. active in the 1848 and 1852 presidential elections. Founded in Buffalo, New York, in 1848 it was a single-issue third party that campaigned on prohibiting the expansion of slavery west into territory gained after the U.S.-Mexican War.

"his Garrisonian belief in a proslavery Constitution held him back."[63] Douglass' new mentor, the white abolitionist and Liberty Party candidate Gerrit Smith, began the process of convincing Douglass that the Constitution was actually an antislavery document. Through correspondence and conversations throughout 1849 and 1850 Smith gradually won Douglass over to his position. This opened the door for Douglass to add political activism to his repertoire of resistance tactics.[64] At about the same time he also began to write more forcefully about the use of resistant masculinity.

In 1849 he declared, "Slaveholders have no rights more than any other thief or pirate. They have forfeited even the right to live, and if the slave should put every one of them to the sword tomorrow, who dare pronounce the penalty disproportioned to the crime?"[65] Filled with righteous indignation, Douglass became frustrated and impatient. He had recognized that since the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, American abolitionists had accomplished little. Douglass was always strategic. It is likely that he understood that justifying slave revolts or slave violence was a way of threatening slave revolts without overtly calling for them. Black abolitionists became frustrated with the movement's ineffectiveness and dominant white leadership. Black leaders wanted control of the movement they founded.

Given Douglass's and Garnet's experiences, few white abolitionists could compare in their motives for abolishing slavery. Douglass and Garnet understood violence as a rational response to oppression, a belief that echoed sentiments proudly hailed during the Revolutionary era. No one could deny the parallel principles of black abolitionists and of the

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[63] Oakes, *The Radical and the* Republican, 17.
[64] Ibid., 18-21.
[65] See *North Star,* February 9, 1849 in Foner, *Life and Writings*, 1:359-60; Robert C. Dick, *Black Protest; Issues and Tactics*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), 138.

Founding Fathers. Neither could anyone ignore the facts of the American Revolution, when an oppressed people engaged in a violent war to win its independence and freedom. Not even Garrison could fail to acknowledge the fact of the patriots' achieving independence with violence —not with moral suasion or electoral politics.[66]

For African Americans who preferred to remain neutral and non-confrontational, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 gave the following choices: fight, flight, or live in fear. Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act on September 18, 1850, as part of the Compromise of 1850. Like the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 it declared that all runaway slaves, upon capture, were to be returned to their masters. However, because many states and citizens in the North had chosen to ignore or defy the 1793 law, the new Fugitive Slave Act went much further. The law created federal commissioners in every county to hear fugitive slave cases, it fined federal marshals $1000 if they failed to diligently execute the law, and stated that anyone who harbored or aided a fugitive slave or interfered with their rendition was subject to a $1000 fine and six months in jail.[67] This law brought the issue home to antislavery citizens in the North as it made them and their institutions responsible for enforcing slavery. Historian Steven Hahn argued that the "most significant contribution that the slaves may have made to the national struggle over slavery in the years after the Nat Turner rebellion was in the form of runaways."[68] Fugitive slaves did more than flee to northern communities and trouble the consciences of Northern white Americans. Hahn contended that runaway slaves created a "direct political crisis in the relations between the slave and free states."[69] The new reality

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[66] Dillon, *The Abolitionists*, 222-23.
[67] Paul Finkelman, *Millard Fillmore: The Thirteenth President, 1850-1853* (New York: Times Books: Henry Holt and Company, 2011), 85-87; Eric H. Walther, *The Shattering of the Union: America in the 1850s* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2004), 14-16, 47-49, 115-117.
[68] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 57.
[69] Ibid.

required black Americans to become active in their own defense by patronizing antislavery newspapers, joining black antislavery societies, producing autobiographical accounts of their enslavement and escape, attending conventions that agitated for their civil and political rights, and organizing resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act. Indeed, activities in these realms provided many black Americans with training for the arena of politics.[70] In a newspaper article, William Wells Brown declared, slightly in jest but also with an underlining of truth, "Resist [the devil], and, it is said he will run away from you, resist the slaveholder and he will run to you."[71] In essence, resistant masculinity against the Slave Power was more challenging than resisting Satan himself. Regardless of how long an escaped slave lived in freedom, he or she could never take for granted their personal safety. The law marked the turning point in black abolitionists' discussion of the politics of violence and sparked the resurrection of a waning antislavery movement as well. In many ways the Fugitive Slave Act produced a sense of militancy and separatism in African American abolitionists.

A number of former slaves published their experiences of escaping slavery, identified with those still in bondage, and explained that they had not forgotten their struggle or the risks taken when an escape attempt was made. In an article published in the *North Star*, a group of former slaves drafted a letter to their comrades in bondage: "We cannot forget you brethren, for we know your sufferings: and we know your sufferings because we know them from experience, what it is to be an American slave." They added that many of them had suffered and lost all in their attempts to obtain freedom. The hardships the newly freed endured often included leaving behind a parent, spouse, or child. Many fugitives coped with

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Quotation by William Wells Brown relates to biblical scripture of James 4:7: "Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you." See *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 18, 1848, *BAPC,* 5: 636.

wounds inflicted by guns or dogs as they fled. Above all, nothing was as horrible as slavery; and hence, they declared, "We dreaded nothing, which could befall us, in our attempt to get clear of it. Our condition could be made no worse, for we were already in the lowest depths of earthly woe."[72]

Yet, the Fugitive Slave Act placed newly found freedom at risk for all runaways. Frederick Douglass wrote that the Act even intimidated freeborn black Americans. He claimed, "Colored people who had been free all their lives felt themselves very insecure in their freedom." He explained that because the law only required the oaths of "any two villains" for a man born free to legally be consigned to slavery for life. Douglass added, "While the law was a terror to the free, it was a still greater terror to the escaped bondman." For fugitives, he declared there was "No peace. Asleep or awake, at work or at rest, in church or market, he was liable to surprise and capture."[73]

From this point forward the rhetoric of black abolitionists became more forceful, more threatening, and displayed more resistant masculinity. Labeled by early twentieth century scholars as "Negro Nationalism" or Black Nationalism, the movement addressed a growing demand for self-determination and self-expression. As historian Howard H. Bell put it, "More radical, more self-contained, and more independent" summarized the character of black abolitionists in the North for all of the 1850s.[74] Black men felt entitled to self-defense (resistant masculinity) and the protection of their families (protective masculinity). They looked forward to proving their manhood, strength, and courage, of which, for so many

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[72] *North Star,* September 5, 1850, *BAPC,* 6: 570-73.
[73] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 287. Some free blacks—even before the Fugitive Slave Act—were kidnapped from the North and enslaved. See Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave* (1853, rprt.: Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).
[74] Howard Holman Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 111-113.

years, they had been robbed during enslavement. In many ways, a rebellious slave was a dead slave, but a free man could demonstrate his resistant masculinity through physical action. And for many the thought of death was preferable to that of renewed enslavement.

In 1850 William Wells Brown wrote to Frederick Douglass about his experiences during the summer of 1849 while heading to Scotland. Brown mentioned a prominent black couple living in Boston, William and Ellen Craft, who had escaped from slavery in Macon, Georgia, in 1848. The Crafts accompanied Brown to the East Boston Warf to see him aboard the steamer that would take him to Europe. Brown remembered the feeling he had while watching the couple wave a white handkerchief and fade into the distance as he sailed away. The Crafts were the last faces Brown saw, and upon his return he hoped theirs would be the first faces he would see. "When I heard of the passage of the fugitive slave bill," Brown recalled, "I had some faint hope that the people there would protect those who had fled to that city for safety. But when I heard of the flight of the Crafts, I gave up all hopes of the fugitives being safe on any soil over which the 'stars and stripes ' float."[75] Brown warned that Northerners should no longer boast of their independence from the Slave Power, "Instead of the people of Boston pointing to the Bunker Hill Monument, and boasting of the heroic deeds of their fathers, they should pull it down, and erect upon its ruins a monument to [Daniel] Webster, and engrave upon it in characters not to be mistaken, 'No protection here for the oppressed.'"[76]

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[75] William Wells Brown to Frederick Douglass, December 20, 1850, reprinted in the *North Star,* Jan. 16, 1851; *BAPC*, 6: 751. For more on the escape of the Crafts see William Craft and Ellen Craft, *Running A Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*, ed. Richard J. M. Blackett (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

[76] William Wells Brown to Frederick Douglass, December 20, 1850, reprinted in the *North Star,* Jan. 16, 1851; *BAPC*, 6: 751. Brown's critique of Webster was based on his support of the Fugitive Slave Act. Webster, then Secretary of State, was a key supporter of the law as expressed in his famous "Seventh of March" speech. This speech upset many in his home state of Massachusetts, including notable figures such as William Lloyd Garrison and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

As a result of the Fugitive Slave Act, Frederick Douglass abandoned the moral suasion camp. Douglass now openly encouraged resistance to the new law and the "shooting down" of any "creature" who would try to steal the life and liberty of a human being. Douglass at last faced the full impact of his own arguments concerning natural rights. He declared that life and liberty were the most sacred of all human rights. He believed that there could not be a more sacred right than that of self-defense. Therefore, Douglass concluded, for those who attacked an enslaved person, "if he be shot down, his punishment is just."[77]

In October 1850, Douglass gave a speech to protest the law in Faneuil Hall, Boston, before black and white abolitionists. He predicted how black Americans would respond to the Fugitive Slave Act in Boston. Douglass warned, "We must be prepared should this law be put into operation to see the streets of Boston running with blood." Because members of the meeting had committed themselves to resisting the law to the point of death, Douglass believed that any altercation over the infringement of liberties would end in violence. He added that he had heard rumors of slave catchers who were preparing to seize him at his home in Rochester. Humorously, Douglass declared that a trapdoor existed inside his attic. He claimed he would wait, and because his home was very small and his enemies rather large, he could receive each hunter one at a time.[78] Audiences and speakers anticipated confronting slave catchers. While Douglass advocated self-defense, most audience members needed little encouragement.

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[77] Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 68-69.
[78] *Boston Herald,* October 15, 1850; *Liberator,* October 18, 1850; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 202-203.

For black abolitionists, the American Revolution was more than a set of principles: it was a precedent.[79] In a letter from fugitive slaves published in the *North Star,* they declared, "If the American revolutionists had excuse for shedding but one drop of blood, then have the American slaves excuse for making blood to flow 'even unto the horse-bridles.'"[80] After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, however, Douglass' resistant masculinity reached new heights when he declared:

> By the natural, God-given law of self-preservation, slaves are bound to defend themselves against those who would deprive them of their liberty and thereby of the capacity to preserve their own lives. Men who are acting to try to enslave their fellow men have put themselves "on the footing with the wild beasts of the forest which live and prey upon each other." Such men, like thieves and assassins, become nothing more than wild beasts in the act of devouring human prey; by their defiance of that natural law which commands allowing fellow humans the security of their own preservation, these creatures forfeit their rights as men-it becomes proper to slaughter them. To act to enslave a fellow man is to declare war against him and to endow him with the right of war—the Liberty to kill his aggressor.[81]

In this way black abolitionists, like Douglass, were increasingly asserted their resistant masculinity, possibly in response to fickle support from white abolitionists. A columnist at the *North Star* claimed that African American abolitionists could safely rely upon white abolitionists from the American Anti-Slavery Society or the Liberty Party. On the other hand, they labeled a large majority of white abolitionists "grossly inconsistent," and therefore, not entirely trustworthy for black abolitionists. The newspaper reported that such people were "so inconsistent, as to vote for anti-abolitionists for civil rulers, and to acknowledge the obligation of laws, which they themselves interpret to be pro-slavery."[82]

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[79] Communications scholar Robert Dick contends that tenets of physical violence derived from several basic principles. First, fugitive slaves believed they were justified in using violence to protect their freedom just as much as the American revolutionaries had been in securing theirs. Dick, *Black Protest*, 147-157.
[80] *North Star,* September 5, 1850, *BAPC*, 6: 751.
[81] Douglass*,* the *North Star,* January 16, 1851; in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2: 206-08; also Douglass, *Life and Times,* 105-106, 311-312; and Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 69.
[82] *North Star,* September 5, 1850; *BAPC*, 6: 751.

Every revolution, every rebellion, every rebellious spirit has its catalyst and climax, the moment when each person or group reaches the peak of their tolerance. The 1850s had brought nothing the abolitionists saw as success and nothing but political grandstanding by an ever-growing Slave Power movement.[83] Black abolitionists faced a firestorm of frustration that convinced some to leave the country altogether.

While the American political landscape evolved, so too, had the abolitionist movement. Just twenty years prior to the 1850s, abolitionism was generally small and intellectual, a nonviolent movement, and a campaign of moral suasion. Yet, because the moral suasion campaign of the 1830s failed to accomplish its promise to abolish slavery not only through nonviolent means, but also by any means, people began to consider other alternatives such as self-defense, violence, and emigration. Feelings of hopelessness and desperation began to overwhelm the movement. Black abolitionists faced an uphill battle in their endeavor to combat slavery and inequality when up against what they perceived as the political strength of the southern Slave Power and their northern allies within the Democratic Party.[84] Few, if any, black Americans had the patience to wait the untold number of years it might have taken for moral suasion to convince white Americans to change their minds about slavery. By the 1850s, black leaders called for radical change. The equation was simple: the violent institution of slavery required a violent demise.

Some black abolitionists insisted that black men not only could gain self-respect by acting in self-defense, but could also increase their standing on the public stage by showing

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[83] See David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

[84] For more on the complicity of Northern Democrats see Michael Todd Landis, "The Northern Democracy: Slavery, the Democratic Party, and the Destruction of the Union" (Ph.D. dissertation, The George Washington University, 2011).

that they were willing to fight against their enslavers, it was time for them to demonstrate their resistant masculinity. Frederick Douglass's newspaper, the *North Star,* declared that the "*manhood* of our race" had to be defended, and that people in general were not willing to respect a person who would not stand up to tyranny and fight for his rights.[85]

In the spring of 1854, a monumental event occurred that would catapult the city of Boston and the abolitionists that lived there into chaos. It also served as an example of resistant masculinity in action. Under the mandate of the Fugitive Slave Act, slave catchers arrested a runaway slave, Anthony Burns, while he was living in Boston. As a slave, Burns had lived in Alexandria, Virginia, and had boarded a ship to Boston to secure his own freedom. When Burns attempted to send for his brother, his master, Charles Suttle, became aware of Burns' whereabouts and traveled to Boston to retrieve him. During his trial, Burns faced the likely prospect of re-enslavement. On Friday May 26, 1854, led by the white abolitionist Reverend Theodore Parker, the Boston abolitionist community met to discuss their plan of action. They made a decision to attempt a rescue on Saturday.[86]

While the white abolitionists gathered in Faneuil Hall, members of Boston's African-American community assembled at the same time at the nearby Tremont Temple. After the meeting, blacks rushed to the courthouse in an attempt to rescue Burns. In the ensuing confusion, hundreds of people ran from the Faneuil Hall meeting to help the Tremont Temple protesters. Parker jettisoned his plan for a Saturday morning rescue attempt when an estimated 2,000 antislavery protesters mobbed Court Square that Friday night, hoping to free Burns. The first challenge facing the rioters involved getting into the courthouse. The doors

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[85] *North Star,* Sept. 25, 1851, in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2:287, 2:435, 2:534; Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 70, emphasis mine.
[86] Albert J. Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

were locked, and U.S. Marshal Freeman expected trouble. He had strengthened the doors and gathered about fifty armed deputies to "protect" Burns. White abolitionist Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson led rioters, (Higginson would later help finance John Brown's failed 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry and after the Civil War began, he served as colonel of the First South Carolina Volunteers, the first federally authorized African-American regiment, from 1862–1864).[87] Displaying his own resistant masculinity, Higginson found a battering ram and assaulted the courthouse door. Inside, the armed deputies waited anxiously. When the door was finally breached, Higginson rushed in, along with a few black and white rioters. A furious hand-to-hand battle ensued, during which the Higginson was slashed in the face with a sword. A couple of gunshots rang out and a U.S. Marshal was shot and killed. Citizens were outraged, not so much over the marshal's death, but over the notion that a black man living in freedom could be seized and sent back to slavery in the city of Boston, a bastion of the antislavery movement. Despite their outrage and Boston's reputation, President Franklin Peirce was bent on enforcing the Fugitive Slave law. He provided marines and artillery to assist in guarding Burns and ordered a federal ship to return Burns after the trial. On June 2, 1854, over 50,000 people lined the streets of Boston to see Burns shackled and sent back to Virginia. The massive turnout was a sign of Boston's consciousness of the politics of slavery. While proslavery constituents had won the battle, abolitionists began preparing for war.[88]

The incident served only to exacerbate antislavery sentiment across the North. Abolitionists both black and white began to speak out more forcefully. In contempt, William Lloyd Garrison set fire to copies of the Fugitive Slave Act, the Burns court decision, and the

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[87] See Edward Renehan, *The Secret Six: The True Tale of the Men Who Conspired with John Brown* (Columbia, S.C.: The University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 2-3, 52-54.
[88] Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns,* 15-21 and 62-78; Mayer, *All on Fire*, 440-443.

U.S. Constitution.[89] *Frederick Douglass' Paper* announced, "The North feels that it has made humiliating concessions to the South on almost every point, and that it is time for Northern policy to be recognized and respected." The editor warned that should the Slave Power agenda continue unbridled, "it will soon be found that the Boston fugitive slave riot is but the beginning of the end."[90] Black abolitionist Charles Remond professed to have the same unapologetic attitude toward political violence and the Fugitive Slave Act. In 1854, Remond spoke before the New England Anti-Slavery Convention, largely about the recent Anthony Bums controversy. Remond admitted, "I know, Mr. Chairman, that I am not, as a general thing, a peacemaker. I am irritable, excitable, quarrelsome—I confess it." However, Remond added, "My prayer to God is, that I may never cease to be irritable, that I may never cease to be excitable that I may never cease to be quarrelsome, until the last slave shall be made free in our country, and the colored man's *manhood* acknowledged."[91] His audience erupted with loud applause, affirming the speaker's righteous frustration. This was a change from the Remond who had started his career as a Garrisonian.

A black abolitionist, a traveling lecturer, and co-editor of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, William J. Watkins, never hesitated to share his opinion. Watkins defended the person who shot the marshal in the case of Anthony Burns, declaring in *Frederick Douglasss' Paper*:

> If he be a murderer, then was Gen. Washington; then were all who wielded swords and bayonets under him, in defence [sic] of liberty, the most cold-blooded murderers. We believe in peaceably rescuing fugitive slaves if it can be peaceably effected; but if it cannot, we believe in rescuing them forcibly. We should certainly kill the man who would dare lay his hands on us, or on our brother, or sister, to enslave us. We would feel no compunction of conscience for so doing—We cannot censure others for doing what we would be likely to do, under the same circumstances ourselves.[92]

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[89] Mayer, *All on Fire*, 444-445.
[90] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, September 1, 1854.
[91] Remond quoted in Ernest G. Bormann, *Forerunners of Black Power; the Rhetoric of Abolition* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 173. Emphasis mine.
[92] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 2, 1854.

Watkins' stance on self-defense was both practical and political. He refused to make exceptions. Furthermore, in an 1855 editorial titled "Are We Ready for the Conflict?" Watkins compared “the abolitionist” to a lone traveler for whom "a sword or a musket would be preferred" in a dark wilderness. While not directly advocating for violence, clearly black abolitionists wanted a response that met proslavery violence and aggression with equal fervor and force. For Watkins, they needed to "maintain a consistent warfare with the Slave Power."[93]

Consequently, black Americans took it upon themselves to determine their rights and ensure their protection. A powerful example of such action came in Cincinnati, Ohio, when a large group of runaway slaves fled to safe houses for refuge. When local white citizens discovered the whereabouts of several of the fugitives, officers set out to make arrests. As the agents approached the home where they believed the fugitives were hiding, the runaways opened fire on the officials and wounded, though not severely, some of the men who attempted to make arrests. The local newspaper editor wrote that one slave woman, Margaret Garner, who found escape impossible, "cut the throats of her children, killing one instantly, and severely wounding two others.” As a result of the siege, six of the fugitives were apprehended, and eight escaped.[94]

What was more remarkable than the slave mother's slaying her child was the praise she received in the *Provincial Freeman* for doing it. The paper claimed:

> It is gratifying to read the accounts that daily come before our notice, of so many noble-hearted men, women and children making their escapes from the land of

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[93] *Frederick Douglass' Paper,* Feb. 9, 1855; for more on Watkins' militancy, see *Frederick Douglass' Paper,* March 2, 1855.

[94] *Provincial Freeman,* February 2, 1856, *BAPC*, 10: 45. Margaret Garner had four children and was pregnant with the fifth. Her two boys were about four and six years old. Her daughter Mary was two and a half, and Priscilla was an infant. Mary was the only child Garner managed to murder.

> oppression; but seldom do we find such utter abhorrence of the fiendish system manifested as in the case of the female above spoken of. May her spirit be fostered wherever the land is polluted with the unhallowed feel of those accused beings, namely, Slaveholders! "Give me liberty or give me death," were the words of Patrick Henry.[95]

Not only did the *Provincial Freedman* support the sentiments and actions of Garner, it added that "all endeavors should have been made to cut the throats of the lawless pursuers, which would have been in compliance with the...scriptures, which say- Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God."[96] Certainly black abolitionists must have reached a particular shift in their ideology to be able to sympathize with Garner. She, in effect, became the symbol of the consequences of slavery. Garner became the portrait of a system so corrupt that mothers were willing to kill their children to prevent their having to take part in its cruelties.[97]

William Wells Brown echoed the actions and sentiment of Margaret Garner in an anecdote concerning Algernon Sydney and King Louis XIV. Brown wrote in the *Liberator:*

> When Algernon Sydney was in exile, he had a beautiful horse, which Louis the Fourteenth was very anxious to secure, and after in vain trying to induce Sydney to set a price upon the animal, he finally told him that if he would not sell the horse, he should take him. Sydney, finding that he must lose his favorite, asked permission to take farewell of him, which was granted, and he went up to him, gazed at him fondly for a few minutes, and then drew a pistol and shot him dead, saying to the French monarch, "You can have him now." … That was the spirit of determination that was needed—if not to shoot the slaveholder, at least to speed the arrow of truth with all the ardor they could, and act with that determination in favor of freedom which the slaveholder and tyrant always exhibit in behalf of slavery.[98]

That African Americans increasingly saw violence as acceptable in the quest for the abolition of slavery became more and more apparent. Brown's analogy was not intended to suggest

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid. This scripture stems from a loose interpretation of the New Testament book of Romans 13:1-7 and the book of Acts 5:27-28.
[97] On slave women and infanticide, see Sally G. McMillan, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South (*Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992), 51-52 and Jane Landers, "'In Consideration of Her Enormous Crime': Rape and Infanticide in Spanish St. Augustine," in *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Michelle Gillespie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 205-217.
[98] William Wells Brown, *Liberator*, August 7, 1857, Black Abolitionist Archives, Doc. No. 18886, University of Detroit-Mercy.

that enslaved and free black Americans favored suicide, but that they thoroughly recognized the need to fight for autonomy even if that fight resulted in death.

While literature praised and rationalized Garner's actions, it dually served to demonstrate the violence that took place in reality, and within blacks' imaginations. Slave narratives and fiction became an essential outlet by which black Americans could speak out on slavery. In the case of several black abolitionists such as Brown and Douglass, violence against oppressors became a dominant theme within their personal and fictional writings. Their writings depicted a form of fantasized violence, unlike actual rebellion; theirs did not always take place in reality, but more often in their imaginations.[99]

The antebellum era produced a flurry of literature, including famous slave narratives, such as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), *The Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave* (1847), and *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb: An American Slave* (1849). Black writers began publishing in unprecedented numbers. Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* was a bestseller and sold over thirty thousand copies in its first five years on two continents. Nearly one hundred slaves produced narratives.[100] William Wells Brown was second only to Douglass in sales; his *Narrative* became a bestseller as well, and he went on to become the first African American to publish a novel, *Clotel: The President's Daughter* (1853), a piece on the horrible conditions of slavery, particularly for mulattos, and a thinly veiled reference to the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Antislavery sympathizers had an insatiable appetite for slave narratives and

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[99] See "Introduction" to Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination*, 12.
[100] See for example Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997); Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 2002); Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, ed. Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968); Craft and Craft, *Running A Thousand Miles for* Freedom; see also Henry Louis Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York, N.Y.: Signet Classics, 2012) for the *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* and *History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave*.

black abolitionists' lecturers. White people wanted to hear and see the perspective of black Americans, as only they could feel the pulse of slavery and perhaps best chart the course to its demise. For too long, white abolitionists and leaders had tried to speak for them. That era was drawing to a close.

After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, the battle by slaveholders and Free-Soil advocates in Kansas, what became known as "Bleeding Kansas" rekindled the zeal of the abolitionist movement.[101] Frederick Douglass stressed that on the issue of Kansas every political advantage was on the side of the Slave Power (the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, the strength of the Democratic Party, the power and patronage of the federal government, various governors sent out under the Territorial government, and proximity to the Territory). Douglass declared that men of great and meager means lend their resources to ensure that Kansas would be a free state. He praised their resistant masculinity and acknowledged that the men who actually traveled to Kansas and became heroes or martyrs made the most sacrifices.[102] Perhaps the greatest was John Brown.

The small group of men that traveled to Kansas with the intention of eradicating slavery for the benefit of African Americans with the tools of political violence had the most profound impact. John Brown made it his personal task to journey to Kansas to help keep the Kansas-Nebraska territory from falling into the hands of slaveholders. Brown was outraged not only by the canning of Charles Sumner, but also by the violence that was taking place at the hands of "border ruffians" against abolitionists and their families who desired these lands

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[101] For more on "Bleeding Kansas" see Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). For Douglass' reaction to these events see "The Nebraska Controversy—The True Issue," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, February 24, 1854 in Douglass *Life and Writings*, 2:276-279; "Our Plan for Making Kansas a Free State," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, September 15, 1854 in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2: 311-316; "The Kansas-Nebraska Bill," speech at Chicago, November, 1854 in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2:316-333.
[102] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 304-306.

to be free from slavery.[103] Brown was infuriated by what he considered to be a lack of courage among the antislavery partisans, most of who were free-soilers, rather than abolitionists. He sought out donors to obtain supplies and guns for "defense".[104] Brown went so far as to petition abolitionists at a convention in Syracuse, New York, for money to buy guns for his work in Kansas. His request brought about intense division among the group, with some offering to help and others objecting to the plan. However, Brown found plenty of support when he traveled to Akron, Ohio, where he received an outpouring of money, weapons, ammunition, and clothing.[105]

In 1856 Henry Ward Beecher, an abolitionist and the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe who had written *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* pledged that his own Plymouth Church would donate twenty-five Sharps rifles to aid in the work of antislavery men.[106] The firearms became known as "Beecher Bibles" because they were often shipped in wooden crates marked "Bibles" or "books." An article in the *New York Tribune* read:

> He [Henry Beecher] believed that the Sharps Rifle was a truly moral agency, and that there was more moral power in one of those instruments, so far as the slaveholders of Kansas were concerned, than in a hundred Bibles. You might just as well... read the Bible to Buffaloes as to those [Boarder Ruffians]; but they have a supreme respect for the logic that is embodied in Sharp's rifle.[107]

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[103] Charles Sumner was a Senator from Massachusetts who, in 1856, was nearly beaten to death on the floor of the U.S. Senate at the hands of South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks. The beating took place after Sumner delivered an intensely anti-slavery speech called "The Crime against Kansas" in which he characterized the attacker's cousin, South Carolina Senator Andrew Butler, as a pimp for slavery. See Williamjames H. Hoffer, *The Caning of Charles Sumner: Honor, Idealism, and the Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). Border Ruffians were pro-slavery activists from the slave state of Missouri, who in 1854 to 1860 crossed the state border into Kansas Territory, to force the acceptance of slavery there. The name was applied by Free-State settlers in Kansas and abolitionists throughout the North. Armed Ruffians interfered in territorial elections, and attacked Free-State settlements. This violence was the origin of the phrase "Bleeding Kansas".

[104] See Renehan, *The Secret Six*. Also see Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *John Brown: The Cost of Freedom, Selections from His Life & Letters* (New York: International Publishers, 2007), 44.

[105] DeCaro, *John Brown*, 44.

[106] John Demos, "The Antislavery Movement and the Problem of Violent 'Means'," *The New England Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 1964), 524.

[107] *New York Tribune,* February 8, 1856.

Some abolitionists, black and white alike, made it clear that neither moral suasion nor votes would result in freedom, only force.

Along similar lines, Douglass contended that "fear of rebellious slaves" in the West Indies had prompted Great Britain to free their slaves, Douglass hoped that the "fear of death" would provoke the South more effectively than had appeals to morality concerning emancipation. Douglass labored to build respect for black manhood in the North, while simultaneously cultivating fear of the enslaved in the South.[108]

Perhaps the controversy over Kansas did more than the Fugitive Slave Act to provoke men to violence, but its greatest impact came in the struggle for political power. Northerners, southerners, and black Americans both free and enslaved could sense the unavoidable clash ahead. Douglass's friend William Watkins aptly described the contentious climate:

> We are living at an eventful era in the history of this nation, and the history of the world. This nation has passed through several important crises, but the present transcends them all in solemn significance, and awful grandeur. A fearful demon of destruction sits brooding on her dark horizon, and lightnings, red with uncommon wrath, are the executors of his dire vengeance. [*New York Tribune* editor and reformer] Horace Greeley has well said, *"We are in the midst of a revolution."* This whole world is in a state of revolution ... Anarchy, repeal, rebellion, revolution; these are the electric words stamped in living brightness, upon the fevered foreheads of the masses, who cry with terrific energy, *"who would be free, themselves must strike the blow."*[109]

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[108] Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 61-72; see Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2:438-440,487, 533-535, 537. Scholars acknowledge that the Baptist War, also known as the Christmas Uprising or the Great Jamaican Slave Revolt of 1831-32 in Jamaica, precipitated or accelerated the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies. The ten-day rebellion rallied as many as 60,000 slaves of Jamaica's 300,000 slave population. The aftermath was devastating: 626 people were tried and 312 people were executed for their involvement in or supposed connection to the island-wide event. For more on Douglass's sentiments concerning British Emancipation see his speech, "'West India Emancipation' at Canandaigua, New York, August 3, 1857," in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2: 426-438.

[109] William J. Watkins, *Frederick Douglass' Paper,* August 18, 1854, Black Abolitionist Archives, doc. No. 15548, 19-23, University of Detroit-Mercy. Watkins' speech was delivered on the anniversary of the emancipation of the British West Indies. His intent was to honor the occasion while simultaneously stressing the need to abolish slavery in America. Watkins and others use of the phrase "who would be free, themselves must strike the first blow," will be examined in Chapter 4.

In Watkins's speech, he predicted that liberty and slavery had begun "marshaling their respective armies for a mighty conflict." He saw violence in Kansas as a sign of things to come because, in his view, freedom and slavery were in direct opposition. Also, Kansas represented the greatest instance in which abolitionists realized the need for more than printing presses and financial resources; they now understood that they required weapons.

While some saw the value of maintaining the offensive position with threats of rebellion, others considered fortifying their defenses. Early vigilance committees working for the Underground Railroad and against the Fugitive Slave Act prepared the way for military companies.[110] In 1853 in Boston, Watkins, along with sixty-five other African American petitioners, appealed for a charter to form an independent black military company.[111] Watkins asked rhetorically, "WHY SHOULD THIS PETITION BE GRANTED?" He answered his own question: "It should be granted because the request is a reasonable one, and one emanating from a body of men who have an absolute right to demand it." If anyone needed protection, it was the black community. Watkins's rationale was utterly practical, through their performance of resistant masculinity black men could protect their community and demonstrate their manhood. He demanded that they only way black people could be elevated as a race was if they were given full citizenship rights. "Give us our rights, we ask no more. Treat us like *men*," Watkins demanded. He declared that if black men were placed in a position to command respect no one would need to fear the consequences.[112] While Watkins's petition attempted to persuade the legislative committee, time would proved that

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[110] A vigilance committee was a group formed of private citizens to administer law and order where they considered governmental structures to be inadequate. In the years prior to the Civil War, groups worked to free slaves and transport them to freedom.
[111] William J. Watkins, February 24, 1853, *Our Rights as Men. An Address Delivered in Boston, Before the Legislative Committee on the Militia* Press, Black Abolitionist Archives, Doc. No. 13923, University of Detroit-Mercy.
[112] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

black abolitionists did not need government permission. Instead of petitioning they simply created their own militias, and quite successfully. By 1859, there were two black companies in Pennsylvania: the Douglass Guards in Reading, and the Henry Highland Garnet Guards in Harrisburg.[113]

Frederick Douglass offered a powerful illustration of what it meant to see black military companies march at an 1855 commemoration of West India Day in New Bedford, Massachusetts. He wrote:

> A novel and striking feature of the presentation was the presence of two colored military companies, the "NATIONAL GUARDS," of Providence, and the "UNION CADETS," of New Bedford ...But how did these companies look and act, you will ask? I answer, for all the world, just like solider[s]? They marched, halted, wheeled, and handled their arms just as you have seen well-drilled white soldiers do. I never saw colored soldier[s] before, and before I saw them I had serious doubts of the wisdom of them coming out that day. It is so easy to be ridiculous, or to seem so; and we, as a people have been so much the objects of ridicule, that I felt adverse to given [sic] cause for anything further in that line. But the companies quite surpassed me by their soldierly bearing, and compelled my admiration....Both companies deported themselves handsomely, and attracted much attention. Of the propriety of forming such companies, it is unnecessary to speak at length here. It is enough to say, that if a knowledge of the use of arms is desirable in any people, it is desirable in us.[114]

Historian Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie argued against the notion that only black leaders such as Frederick Douglass demanded black troops and service of the enslaved and free black Americans to fight during the Civil War. He maintained that, much like the battles in "Bleeding Kansas," these black militia formations represented a clear rehearsal for war. The militancy not only of black speakers and gatherings, but most visually, of militias, served as a sign of their manhood. Furthermore, he contended that the "performative politics of the street" was intended to demonstrate resistance, militancy, and power. These performative

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[113] See Hannah Geffert and Jean Libby, "Regional Black Involvement in John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, eds. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 165-179. Military companies consisted of 80-250 soldiers.
[114] *Frederick Douglass' Paper,* August 10, 1855; see Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War: Black Militias in the Atlantic World," *Slavery & Abolition* 26, no. 1 (April 2005), 1-34.

acts represented clear demonstrations of resistant masculinity. The images of radical black men marching as soldiers made obsolete older images of the "prostrate slave with outstretched hands pleading" for emancipation or the "grateful slave thankful for his freedom."[115] Douglass should have been proud, for the black militias undoubtedly demonstrated black masculinity, served as the epitome of antislavery mobilization, and provided a forceful remedy for whites who ridiculed the notion of black manhood.

As the 1850s progressed it became clear to black abolitionists and many of their white allies that moral suasion had failed. Perhaps the strongest and final act came in 1857 with the Supreme Court case of Dred Scott.[116] The decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* held that African Americans, whether slave or free, could not be American citizens, therefore had no standing to sue in federal court, and that the federal government had no power to regulate slavery in the federal territories acquired after the creation of the United States. The court declared that black Americans, free or enslaved, had "no rights which white men were bound to respect."[117] Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote about what he feared would result from granting Dred Scott his petition. He claimed that it would give black Americans the right to enter every state whenever they pleased; it would allow full liberty of speech in public and private. Taney cringed at the thought of having black Americans hold meetings on political affairs, or worse "keep and carry arms wherever they went."[118] Many whites found

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[115] Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War," 25.
[116] For two very different views on this case see Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (First Paperback ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Austin Allen, *Origins of the Dred Scott Case: Jacksonian Jurisprudence and the Supreme Court, 1837-1857* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2006).
[117] Frederick Douglass, "The Dred Scott Decision, a speech delivered before American Anti-Slavery Society, New York, May 11, 1857," in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2:420. See also "DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD." The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, http://www.oyez.org/cases/1851-1900/1856/1856_0/ (accessed November 29, 2013).
[118] Opinion of the Court, Supreme Court of the United States, 60 US (19 How.) 393 (1857) *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.

unthinkable the prospect of black people asserting their rights. While Taney took into consideration what liberty would accomplish for black Americans, he neglected to take into account the expense it would cost the nation to deny them their rights.

The decision caused anger and despair among black leadership. At an antislavery convention in Rhode Island in 1857, black abolitionist Charles Remond was furious about the decision in his speech and hoped that the participants had come to the gathering for more than a "parade and show." He called the assembly to take on a "defiant attitude in regard to all laws which oppressed the colored man, whether they emanated from that scoundrel Judge Taney, or any other source." Remond believed that nothing would ever be accomplished by a "miserable temporizing and qualifying policy" and that by now, abolitionists and the opponents of slavery were "large enough and old enough to defy American slavery in this country." Remond made it clear that as far as he was concerned, Justice Taney's decision had no validity.[119]

Along similar lines, William Wells Brown called on black Americans and allies to have a defiant attitude not only toward the oppression of slavery, but also toward the decision of Judge Taney. He encouraged the movement to "make the Old Bay State too hot for the foot of a slaveholder." Brown maintained that, by their example, they would "make the country acknowledge their rights as *men*…."[120]

Frederick Douglass acknowledged that his own shift in ideology concerning self-determination and militancy came shortly after the Taney decision that prompted him to announce that he now saw himself primarily as a black leader, as opposed to as an

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[119] Charles Lenox Remond, August 3, 1857, Black Abolitionist Archives, Doc. No. 18864, University of Detroit-Mercy.
[120] William Wells Brown, August 3, 1857, Black Abolitionist Archives, Doc. No. 18864(b), University of Detroit-Mercy.

antislavery leader. The Dred Scott decision provoked a separatist sentiment among African Americans. The impossibility of obtaining basic American rights had caused black Americans to look inward for fulfillment, affirmation, and protection. By 1857, loyal Garrisonians such as Charles Remond and William C. Nell both of Massachusetts, and William Wells Brown, all began to reconsider their positions within the movement, as well as the emigrationist activities of which they had previously disapproved.[121]

By the late 1850s, many black abolitionists had reached their breaking point. Leaders who had spent most of their lives working for abolition could chart its evolution-from the failed tactics of moral suasion and Garrison's nonresistance to the limited and weak cooperation of political parties dominated by white men of the 1840s.[122] What made the decade preceding the Civil War so different from previous abolitionist attempts was the way in which black leaders sought out ways to determine their own destiny. Douglass, in a speech before an audience in New York City where he listed the heroic leadership of black Americans who relied on force and self-determination, stated:

> My friends, every mother who, like Margaret Garner, plunges a knife into the bosom of her infant to save it from the hell of our Christian slavery, should be held and honored as a benefactress. Every fugitive from slavery who…prefers to perish in a river made red by his own blood to submission to the hell hounds who were hunting and shooting him should be esteemed as a glorious martyr, worthy to be held in grateful memory by our people.[123]

Douglas credited black resistance with having shaped the turning of the political tides. As the political landscape became increasingly indifferent to ensuring the rights of African Americans, black Americans became more radical, independent, and insular.

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[121] Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 245; Philip S. Foner, *Frederick Douglass, a Biography*, (2nd ed.; New York: Citadel Press, 1969), 436-437; *Liberator,* August 13, 1858; *Weekly Anglo-African,* July 23, 1859; *Liberator*, August 19, 1859.
[122] Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861*, 162.
[123] Douglass, "West India Emancipation," Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 2:426-438.

Moreover, issues such as emigration to Canada or Haiti, which had met with fierce resistance from black communities, slowly became more appealing.[124] The more that laws and legislation attempted to constrict black Americans' livelihood, the more black Americans sought to demonstrate their capacity to determine their own lives.

While no single issue pushed black abolitionists into militancy, the compounded issues and concerns that arose in the 1850s as a result of the Fugitive Slave Act, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the Dred Scott decision collectively accelerated black militancy. The turbulent 1850s created a space that could not be closed and a gap wide enough for black leadership to take advantage of political turmoil. More than ever, black Americans possessed a sense of urgency. By 1860 Douglass wrote that he had lost faith in the peaceful extinction of slavery.[125] So, while some black abolitionists contemplated emigration to Canada or Haiti, as they battled disappointment and disillusionment, one sentiment seemed to emerge over all others: their faith in the use of force.

Many are familiar with the story of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. It began with Brown and his twenty-one-man "army of liberators" determined to seize the 100,000 weapons held at the Arsenal in western Virginia. The goal was to rally the enslaved and ensure their safe passage to the Blue Ridge Mountains and then on to freedom in Canada. On Sunday evening, October 16, 1859, Brown launched his attack and managed to seize the Arsenal, as well as several other strategic points. However, only a day and a half into the raid, many of Brown's men had been killed or badly wounded by the townspeople and local militia. While Brown's men had killed four people and wounded nine, ten of Brown's men were killed, including two of his sons, Oliver and Watson. Only five of his men managed to

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[124] Ibid.
[125] *Douglass' Monthly,* January, 1860; Demos, "The Antislavery Movement and the Problem of Violent 'Means'," 501-26.

escape. U.S. soldiers stabbed Brown as they stormed the Armory fire engine house in which Brown and his remaining men found themselves trapped. When it was all over, the remaining men faced trial and the jury found them guilty of treason, of conspiring with slaves to rebel, and of murder. On December 2, 1859, the State of Virginia hanged Brown and his fellow raiders. Of the five black men who joined Brown, Lewis Leary and Dangerfield Newby died in action, and John Anthony Copeland, Jr., and Shields Green were hanged with Brown, and Osborne Anderson survived.[126]

It is impossible to write on the topic of black abolitionists and violence and not mention John Brown, whose acts in Kansas, and particularly his raid on Harper's Ferry, set in motion a series of events that would forever change the face of radical abolitionism. In American abolitionism, John Brown was the quintessential anomaly. Brown's peers and historians have struggled to make sense of his contributions to the ending of slavery. Some scholars have in theory given Brown a "black heart." Frederick Douglass proclaimed, "Though a white gentleman, [Brown] is in sympathy a black man, and as deeply interested in our cause, as though his own soul had been pierced with the iron of slavery."[127] Going against the grain of white racism found in the North and even within the antislavery community, Brown took up the black man's burden. Indeed, it is fair to say that his actions

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[126] For more see W. E. B. Du Bois, *John Brown: A Biography*, ed. David Roediger, (1909; rprt., New York: The Modern Library, 2001); Stephen B. Oates, *Our Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln, John Brown, and the Civil War Era*, 2nd ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983); Paul Finkelman, ed. *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harper's Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); DeCaro Jr., *John Brown*.

[127] John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Reynolds, *John Brown,* 104; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 244-46; Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom: Blacks and John Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 67, 209, see notes 10, 11.

put the movement on the offensive in ways that boldly accelerated black and white Americans' efforts to continue to work for the abolition of slavery.[128]

Brown's relationships with black abolitionists allowed him to benefit from their ideologies, particularly in regard to force. Frederick Douglass acknowledged the psychological effects of physical self-defense and self-assertion prior to meeting Brown. Douglass saw the utility in slave revolts in the South. He praised the slave rebellions in the West Indies. While Douglass did not want to promote the general slaughter of southern slave owners, he believed that the enslaved were well within their rights to kill a person who attempted to enslave them. However, the violence Douglass and indeed Brown both spoke of was centered on self-defense and not retaliation. In his autobiography, Douglass recounted the message Brown conveyed to him:

> He denounced slavery in look and language fierce and bitter, thought that slaveholders had forfeited their right to live, that the slaves had the right to gain their liberty in any way they could, did not believe that moral suasion would ever liberate the slave, or that political action would abolish the system. He said that he had long had a plan which could accomplish this end, and he has invited me to his house to lay that plan before me. He said he had been for time looking for colored men to whom he could safely reveal his secret, and at times he had almost despaired of finding such men, but that now he was encouraged, for he saw heads of such rising up in all directions. He had observed my course at home and abroad, and he wanted my cooperation.[129]

Douglass made it clear that while Brown was not averse to shedding blood, he did not intend wholesale slaughter. Although he firmly believed in the practice of carrying arms as a way of performing resistant masculinity and obtaining respect, "No people he said, could have self respect, or be respected who would not fight for their freedom."[130] It is important to note that

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[128] For more on John Brown's "Black Heart" see Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men*, 46-60.
[129] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 279; See also Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 66-67. Goldstein sees Douglass' "about face" from the moral suasion campaign as a sizeable shift, and it developed "via a gradual and somewhat complex process."
[130] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 280.

while Brown did not have a completely receptive audience for his plan, he did in fact have supporters who valued his arguments.[131] As mentioned earlier, black abolitionists were never entirely committed to the ideal of moral suasion in the face of a mob or a slave catcher. Brown's interactions with black Americans must have revealed that he often preached to the choir. Douglass commented many times on how conversing with Brown seemed like talking to another black man.

Douglass and Brown's relationship spanned a significant length of time, during which Brown tried his hardest to convince Douglass regarding his plans and hoped that Douglass would join him. Douglass wrote of how Brown embraced him and declared, "Come with me, Douglass, I will defend you with my life. I want you for a special purpose. When I strike the bees will begin to swarm, and I shall want you to help hive them."[132] Despite their shared values and congenial relationship, Douglass refused to join Brown. Based on the circumstances, Douglass did not see Brown's plan as one that could succeed. Thus, his performance of resistant masculinity had limits. Other than self-defense against anti-abolitionist mobs, his resistant masculinity more frequently took the form of protest rhetoric. If the historian Kathleen Brown was correct in her assertion that, "Black manhood remained a matter of the body throughout the antebellum period," then Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Henry Bibb failed to fulfill their manhood.[133] She was wrong because she neglected to recognize other types of performed masculinity.

The answers as to why so few black people joined Brown in his raid on Harper's Ferry are complex. Of the twenty-one companions working with Brown, only five were black

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[131] Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 64.
[132] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 325. It is not clear if in this reference Brown intended to call black men insects, but it could be seen as a slight to their manhood.
[133] Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...'", 189.

Americans. Black people in the surrounding area did not come to Brown's aid during the conflict. The enslaved did not flee to the mountains, nor did a large slave insurrection occur as a result of Brown's raid. As for some of the most prominent black abolitionists, Frederick Douglass donated financial assistance, but considered Brown's plan to be strategically flawed and foolish.

Of course white Southerners had their own agenda in terms of how to interpret small turnouts from the black community. Racist propaganda charged black inaction to loyalty or docility, alleged characteristics of black people that slaveowners used to promote slavery's supposed paternalistic nature. For example, white Virginians were pleased by the relative lack of black participation in Brown's raid. Many of them charged it either to "prevailing good will and mutual affection between master and slave," or in the most racist explanation, to "congenital black docility." Contemporary Virginia whites described black Americans as a "good-humored, good for-nothing, half-monkey race, who could certainly not be expected to fight."[134] This analysis fails to take into account the resistant masculinity found in such events as those described in numerous slave narratives or the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue of 1858.

The Oberlin–Wellington Rescue of 1858 in Ohio was a key event in the history of the abolitionist movement in the United States before the Civil War. John Price, an escaped slave, was arrested in Oberlin, Ohio under the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and taken to Wellington, Ohio, by the U.S. Marshal. Rescuers took him by force from the marshals and back to Oberlin College, then on to freedom in Canada. Thirty-seven of the rescuers were at first indicted, but as a result of state and federal negotiations, only two were tried in federal

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[134] Daniel C. Littlefield, "Blacks, John Brown, and a Theory of Manhood," in Finkelman, *His Soul Goes Marching On*, 82.

court. During this event John Copland, Jr., provided a prime example of black resistant masculinity. Copeland, a runaway slave himself, drew a gun on the would-be captor of John Price, then helped Price make his way to Canada and later fought with John Brown at Harper's Ferry.[135]

Nevertheless, for abolitionists the lack of greater black violent action was also a topic of debate. A year prior to Brown's raid, black abolitionist John S. Rock gave a speech on the bravery of black men. In it he rebuked white abolitionist and minister Theodore Parker for his claims of cowardice towards blacks for failure to rise up in revolt. Parker claimed in his speech at the Massachusetts State House that "the stroke of the axe would have settled the question long ago, but the black man would not strike." Rock responded, "But when he says that 'the black man would not strike,' I am prepared to say that he does us great injustice. The black man is not a coward." Rock went on to list examples such as the history of black soldiers in the Haitian and American revolutions. He reiterated that there was not a battlefield from Maine to Georgia that had not been crimsoned with black Americans' blood. He added, "I have learned that even so late as the Texan war, a number of black men were found silly enough to offer themselves as living sacrifices for our country's shame."[136]

New York's *Weekly Anglo-African* attested that despite having only five black participants in the raid, the state of Virginia would never have been afraid of seventeen or even 1700 armed white men, "even if they had all been John Browns." They contended that the five black men who went with Brown armed and willing, and the 500,000 black men

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[135] For more on Copeland and his role in both the Oberlin Rescue and the raid on Harpers Ferry see Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); John A. Copeland Jr., "The Letters of John A. Copeland, Jr.: A Hero of the Harpers Ferry Raid," Oberlin College, http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/Copeland/copeland_letters.htm (accessed November, 30, 2012).

[136] *Liberator,* March 12, 1858; see also Nash, *The Forgotten* Fifth. One-fifth of all American Revolutionary soldiers were African-American.

among them in Virginia "armed with a quarrel" were the ones who had caused white Virginians to panic.[137]

Unfortunately, black Americans tended to bear the brunt of proslavery violence. After the raid, many slaveholders went on a rampage, arresting and lynching slaves they simply suspected of associating with Brown. "What in the tone of southern sentiment had been fierce before became furious and uncontrollable now," wrote Douglass. He added, "A scream for vengeance came up from all sections of the slave States and from great multitudes in the North." Concerned for his own life, Douglass fled to Europe to escape capture and indictment. Douglass was confident that if he were found, he would share the fate of Brown, particularly as a black man who had met with Brown several times and had supported him with funds. He wrote, "[t]he morning papers brought no relief, for they announced that the government would spare no pains in ferreting out and bringing to punishment all who were connected with the Harper's Ferry outrage, and that papers as well as persons would be searched for."[138] Douglass might have thought that resistant masculinity could turn to retreat when prudent for survival but in fact Douglass remained in Europe for nearly two years until federal officials confirmed that the John Brown case was closed and he could return to the United States.

Even Garrison had to concede that Brown's acts bore a sense of legitimacy. Garrison acknowledged that while he was still staunch in his belief in nonresistance, he sympathized with the path Brown had chosen. At Boston's Tremont Temple on the day of Brown's execution, Garrison asked the question: "Was John Brown justified in his attempt?" He responded with the following logic:

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[137] *Weekly Anglo-African* (New York), December 10, 1859.
[138] Douglass, *Life and Times,* 311, 312-313.

> Yes, if Washington… and [John] Hancock were in theirs. If men are justified in striking a blow for freedom, when the question is one of a three penny tax on tea, then, I say, they are a thousand times more justified, when it is to save fathers, mothers, wives and children from the slave coffle and the auction-block, and to restore them to their God-given rights.[139]

By the end of the 1850s even Garrison had made some concessions to political violence if it brought about a greater good. Although still describing himself as a pacifist, Garrison wished "[s]uccess to every slave insurrection at the South, and in every slave country." He added, "[a]nd I do not see how I compromise or stain my peace profession in making that declaration." Garrison argued that in the contest between the oppressed and the oppressor, his heart always remained with the oppressed and always against the oppressor.[140] Perhaps Garrison had reconciled the notions of optimism and realism and had come to terms with the fact that the institution of slavery, as a system, could be abolished only by force. In his own way Garrison began to perform a more aggressive, resistant masculinity, at least in his rhetoric.

Several months later Douglass echoed similar sentiments in a letter to the abolitionist James Redpath. He argued, "The only penetrable point of a tyrant is the *fear of death.* The outcry that they make, as to the danger of having their *throats* cut is because they deserve to have them *cut."* Douglass rationalized that the efforts of John Brown and his comrades, while unsuccessful, "have done more to upset the logic and shake the security of slavery, than all other efforts in that direction for twenty years."[141] Leading up to Brown's raid, it appeared that the abolitionist movement had experienced setback after setback, from the

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[139] *Liberator,* Dec. 16, 1859.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Frederick Douglass to James Redpath, June 29, 1860, *Liberator*, July 27, 1860; Pease and Pease, *They Who Would be Free*, 245.

Fugitive Slave Act to the Dred Scott decision. Brown's raid constituted a major offensive that none could ignore.

Right up to and particularly after Brown's raid, few free black Americans wavered on their stances regarding violence as tool to combat slavery. The *Anglo-African* newspaper declared, "So, people of the South, people of the North! Men and brethren, choose ye which method of emancipation you prefer—Nat Turner or John Brown's." It was clear that the question was posed to white Americans; for free blacks, it was obvious which side they had chosen to attain their freedom.[142] The arming of black men foreshadowed the thousands of soldiers that would take up arms in the Civil War. "John Brown's Body" became the marching song of the Massachusetts 54th and 55th African American regiments. Indeed, the avengers of the enslaved arose.[143]

Prior to the outbreak of war, black leadership had few viable options and some leaned more and more toward emigration. The attraction of emigration never fully went away, black abolitionists for some time looked to Canada, parts of Mexico, and in particular, Haiti, as lands in which they could obtain freedom and political enfranchisement.

Support for emigration had actually been growing since 1850. The National Emigration Convention of Colored People, led by early abolitionist and African-American nationalist Martin R. Delany, convened in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1854. It gathered to discuss the merits of emigration and develop a practical plan for African-Americans in the U.S. to emigrate to the West Indies, or Canada, or Central or South America, or even Africa. One of the resolutions that emerging from this convention recommended emigration to Haiti. In

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[142] Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 245; *Anglo-African Magazine*, (December 1859).
[143] On black soldiers in the Civil War see George Washington Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865 (1887)*, ed. John David Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 686-687; Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle.*

1855 James Redpath and the black Episcopal minister James Theodore Holly entered the debate and began to promote this plan. Through Holly's efforts, by 1860 activists had planned to settle free blacks in Haiti and over 100 traveled with him there in March of 1861. Frederick Douglass, like many other black abolitionists, initially viewed emigration with skepticism. Yet, he, like those who had previously not favored emigration, began to see its utility given the present state of affairs in the United States. Douglass's empathy toward the emigration movement did not go unnoticed. While previously Douglass had never fully embraced emigration, he came to see it as a practical option. Scholars claim that he began to support emigration when politics proved useless in attaining black emancipation and equality.[144] To show his support, Douglass allowed full-page ads to run in his newspaper the *Douglass Monthly* to recruit black Americans to Haiti.[145]

In addition, after Douglass had returned to the United States from England and on the eve of war, he himself planned a trip to Haiti, with all expenses paid by the Haitian government. In an essay titled "A Trip to Haiti," he wrote, "Born a slave as we were, in this boasted land of liberty, tinged with a hated color, despised by the rulers of the State…treated as an inferior race, incapable of self government…we, naturally enough, desire to see the free, orderly and Independent Republic of Haiti, a refutation of the slanders and disparagements of our race."[146]

As Douglass prepared for his trip, he was informed that South Carolina had fired on Fort Sumter. He canceled his trip immediately. In May of 1861, Douglass wrote in his

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[144] Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 222; Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, 280-283; McFreely, *Frederick Douglass*, 183-200.
[145] See "Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of Colored People, Cleveland, Ohio, August, 24-26," (Pittsburg: A.A. Anderson Publishing, 1854); The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, "In Motion: The African American Migration Experience," The New York Public Library, http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm?migration=4&topic=5 (accessed Nov. 16, 2013).
[146] Douglass, "A Trip to Haiti," in Douglass, *Life and Writings*, 3:85-88.

newspaper: "We propose to act in view of the settled fact many of them [black Americans] are already resolved to look for homes beyond the boundaries of the United States, and that most of their minds are turned toward Haiti." Douglass, though, chose to adopt a wait-and-see approach rather than leave for the island at once.[147] Scholars claim that the additions of Douglass, William Wells Brown, and others to the emigration position marked the end of an era.[148] By the middle of 1861, no prominent black leaders publically promoted stay-at-home-at-any-cost beliefs. After Lincoln's endorsement of emancipation, however, Douglass became a staunch foe of all emigration projects. Like many blacks, he believed that once emancipation became an explicit Union goal, the larger aim of full black equality would soon be coming. Indeed, Douglass's turn against emigration and his influence over black opinion partly explain his dampened enthusiasm for the Haitian project.

Initially the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln gave little hope for black abolitionists. While many black Americans saw the Republican Party as their great political ally and their best hope for change, few put stock into the party's ability to alter their situation. Even Douglass, who championed the Republican Party, considered party members fickle. Though Lincoln abhorred slavery, as president he publically repeated his priority to preserve the Union, and if necessary, to do so at the expense of abolition. In 1858, during a speech in Chicago, Lincoln declared, "I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any abolitionist."[149] Though Lincoln believed that the underlying principle of the party was

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[147] *Douglass's Monthly,* May 1861; Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861*, 221.
[148] See Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement*; Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, 280-283; McFreely, *Frederick Douglass*, 183-200.
[149] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 215.

antislavery, antislavery did not necessarily mean equality for black Americans. Just as in the conflict over Kansas, free-labor ideology took racism as its first principle.[150]

In 1860, the *Weekly Anglo-African* claimed that anti-slavery, to Republicans, meant nothing more than "opposition to the black man." In a speech given in Massachusetts, escaped slave, abolitionists, and pro-emigration supporter H. Ford Douglas told an abolitionist audience that no political party proved worthy of their votes "unless that party is willing to extend to the black man all the rights of a citizen." Even Frederick Douglass, who maintained his support for the Republican Party, revealed his frustration with the lack of progress on the political front.[151] Just a month before Lincoln's election, Douglass wrote:

> If speech alone could have abolished slavery, the work would have been done long ago. What we want is anti-slavery government, in harmony with our anti-slavery speech, one which will give effect to our words, and translate them into acts. For this, the ballot is needed, and if this will not be heard or heeded, then the bullet.[152]

Garrison could not bear the political climate. He too, in response to President Lincoln's first Inaugural Address, took a position that resembled the threats of black abolitionists. Lincoln contended that in regard to Southern opposition, he believed bloodshed and violence were not necessary unless it was "forced upon the federal authority."[153] In fierce objection, Garrison charged: "Either blood must flow like water, or Mr. Lincoln and the North must back down, and confess that the American Union is dissolved beyond the power of restoration." Even Garrison saw violence as an inevitable factor if Lincoln sought

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[150] See Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*; Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil*; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).
[151] *Weekly Anglo-African,* March 17, 1860; *Liberator,* July 13, 1860; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men,* 295-96.
[152] Dick, *Black Protest*, 146-147, see also *Douglass' Monthly,* January 1861.
[153] Abraham Lincoln, "'First Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1861' at the Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy," Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln1.asp (accessed November, 17, 2013).

to maintain a Union worth maintaining. It was clear that no one in a position of power appealed for moral suasion on the brink of disunion.[154]

On December 3, 1860, the mob violence that took place at Tremont Temple in Boston represented perhaps one of the strongest appeals by black and white abolitionists for violence.[155] The meeting commemorating the anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry coincided with the anniversary of his execution.[156] After a speech by a pro-Union supporter that blasted John Brown's acts as treasonous, black leaders became outraged. Douglass then came before the audience in response. He "showered ridicule so plentifully and so effectively among his opponents" that joint forces began to rise in anger to drown out Douglass's voice. When the angry mob realized they could not silence Douglass, a party rushed the platform in an attempt to clear it of black leadership. The police intervened against the majority, but within minutes a fight ensued. *Douglass' Monthly* declared that cheers came from one side for Virginia Governor Henry Wise, who had ensured Brown's execution, as well as for the Fugitive Slave Act and from the other for "freedom and liberty of speech." Nothing could quell the commotion. The editor wrote:

> Men were thrown boldly from the platform down among the audience ... The women were greatly frightened, and helped the turbulence by loud cries. Mr. Douglass fought like a trained pugilist; and, although a score opposed him, he cleared his way through the crowd to the rostrum, which he clutched with an air that indicated his determination to hold to his place. His friends, however, were less combative, and so he was left, unaided, in the hands of a strong number of police, who dragged him away and threw him down the staircase to the floor of the hall.[157]

Fortunately, no one was severely injured during the skirmish. Yet, the mob at Tremont Temple literally demonstrated the truth that black abolitionists had found themselves pushed

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[154] "Mr. Lincoln's Inaugural Address," *Liberator,* March 8, 1861.
[155] McFreely, *Frederick Douglass*, 208.
[156] Ibid.
[157] *Douglass' Monthly*, January 1861.

to the edge of their tolerance and that once again violence had descended upon them, even in the North.

Resistant masculinity was one way in which Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass demonstrated their manhood. For each of them, this performance began with their escape from slavery and gradually progressed to a call for armed resistance. They knew that only outside of slavery could they truly be seen as men and over time came to understand that physical action would be the only way to end slavery. In the antebellum period, resistant masculinity emerged as a significant part of black manhood. For Frederick Douglass and other escaped slaves—cum—black abolitionists, resistant masculinity often ranked as the first way in which they defied subordination and established their independence. Once they were free, the varied forms of resistance—self-defense, helping escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad, encouraging slave revolts, and favoring violence to achieve the overthrow of slavery—all contributed to their performance of resistant masculinity. Nevertheless, their physicality only went so far. If they allowed their body to become "the only resource that they could count on," they would confirm the stereotype of their people endorsed by proslavery advocates.[158] Attainment of manhood required that they conform to certain standard expectations of free men in nineteenth-century American society. To a certain extent this required physical action. Yet this did not entail armed resistance by these three men. Even when presented with the opportunity, Douglass did not take up arms. Therefore their resistant masculinity included both physical action and rhetoric. By the time of the Civil War they called for others to take up arms, but did not do so themselves. In the end, their performance of resistant masculinity constituted only part of their efforts to demonstrate their manhood. The scholar R.W. Connell, wrote "men's

[158] Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...'", 189.

predominant use of violence is only one facet of gendered power."[159] Through this statement Connell contented that men within the gendered order contain more than one essential core masculine component. Each man includes various "masculinities."[160] For that reason, to fully understand Bibb, Brown, and Douglass as men we must examine other forms of performed masculinity, such as protective masculinity, self-made masculinity, and intellectual masculinity.

[159] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 17.
[160] Ibid., 68-69.

CHAPTER 2: Protective Masculinity—1837-1854

At an antislavery speech at Faneuil Hall in Boston in 1847, Henry Bibb explained what convinced him to escape from slavery. During the summer of 1837 Bibb and his wife Malinda were weeding a cabbage patch. Their master, William Gatewood, arrived drunk when he came to examine their work. After inspection Gatewood stated that they failed to weed it properly and blamed Malinda for this failure. Malinda apologized and begged for his forgiveness. To no avail, the slave master responded by procuring a whip and a piece of rope. Again Malinda asked for leniency, but her torment continued. Gatewood "seized her, stripped off her clothes, tied her hands, threw the rope over a limb of an apple tree which stood near, drew her up, and scourged her most severely until blood trickled down her back and formed a puddle at her feet." At the start of the whipping, Bibb implored Gatewood to beat him instead of Malinda. Nevertheless, this only "enraged the master more and he told [Bibb] to hold his tongue or he would flog him too." Bibb later wrote in his narrative that at this point he wanted to kill Gatewood. He banished the thought from his mind, because he knew that the outcome if he were to harm or kill any white person for anything would be death or sale away from his family. Even so, Bibb decided that he could take no more of slavery. Either he would become a murderer, a murder victim, or escape the great "torture chamber," as he put it, that was slavery.[1] This story details events that produced rage in black men resulting from having to watch family members viciously "scourged" by whites. This was both sexual and physical abuse, which must have had tremendous psychological

[1] *Western Citizen*, 21 Dec 1847 (Chicago) reprinted this article from the *Daily Mail* (Boston). Quotes are from Bibb as they were reported in this paper. Boston was the center of abolitionism in the Northeast. Fanueil Hall, once the focal point for Boston's town meetings, became a main venue for abolitionist agitation. Lecturing at Faneuil Hall was a must for prominent abolitionists like Bibb while on their antislavery lecture tours.

impact on both the beaten and the observing slaves, as witnessed by Bibb, William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup, and countless millions of others.[2]

In many ways William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, and virtually every other enslaved African American males in the antebellum South shared Henry Bibb's experiences. Male slaves could not protect their mothers, wives, or daughters from the abuses of the white master class. Historian Edward Baptist wrote that:

> [A]ccording to the grammar of American manhood, enslaved men were not men at all. They could do none of the things that made white males men. Whites denied African American men the fruits of their labors, seized their possessions, destroyed their marriages through sale and forced migration, and prevented them from raising their own children.[3]

The scholar Daniel Black, in his discussion of manhood and the enslaved male, articulated well the emasculation experienced by black men in slavery: the ability to defend one's relations and provide for one's self and family underpinned notions of husbands and fatherhood not only for black men in Africa, but also for male slaves and free black men in nineteenth century America. Enslavement distorted the role that black men had as husbands, fathers, and defenders of family and community. This process of undermining black manhood began with their capture in Africa, slave traders reinforced the process during the Middle Passage, and became fully revealed in the most barbaric ways on the plantations and farms of the Americas.[4] Yet this view fails to account for ways in which enslaved men

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[2] See Henry Bibb, "Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave," in Gilbert Osofsky et al., *Puttin' on Ole Massa; the Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

[3] Edward E. Baptist, "The Absent Subject: African American Masculinity and Forced Migration to the Antebellum Plantation Frontier," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 136.

[4] Daniel P. Black, *Dismantling Black Manhood: An Historical and Literary Analysis of the Legacy of Slavery* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 99-135. On the damage to slaves' masculinity see Silvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Darlene Clark Hine, and Earnestine Jenkins, eds. *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity*. *Volume 1 – "Manhood Rights": The Construction of Black Male History and Manhood, 1750-*

attempted to and succeeded in subverting the system and that they demonstrated some a modicum of control over their lives.[5] Of course, this limited ability to impact their lives and protect their family was fully contingent upon the capricious nature of the slave masters.

During their time as enslaved men, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass all faced abuses to their families and shared the inability to stop those abuses. They also experienced similar efforts after achieving freedom they worked to establish safe homes and families. After each escaped they lived much of their lives surrounded by white abolitionists. While white abolitionists remained patriarchal, many held very different views regarding gender and the family.[6] Nevertheless, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass each married and set up homes in a way that matched the typical Northern middle-class model. This was one of their first efforts in freedom to perform masculinity in a way they could not have done within slavery.

Former slaves like Bibb had faced the ultimate form of subordination within slavery until they escaped. Once they escaped, they began performing hegemonic masculinity by legally marrying and protecting their wives and children. This followed an accepted form of masculinity of the time because it guaranteed the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

In many ways the lives of these men followed the same trajectory. They were born within a span of four years, with Brown born first in 1814. He and Bibb, born 1815, were both born in Kentucky. Douglass was born in 1818 in Maryland. Each was the product of a

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1870 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," in *Courage and Conscience: Black & White Abolitionists in Boston*, Donald M. Jacobs, ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993).

[5] See Kathleen M. Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...Arms Like Polished Iron': Embodying Black Masculinity in an Age of Slavery and Propertied Manhood," in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 172-192; Rebecca Fraser, "Negotiating their Manhood: Masculinity Amongst the Enslaved in the Upper South, 1830-1861," in *Black and White Masculinity in the American South, 1800-2000*, ed. Lydia Plath and Sergio Lussana (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 76-94.

[6] See the Introduction for a discussion of white abolitionists views on gender and family.

slave women and a man from the white slave-owning class. And each in his own way observed the cruelties that slavery inflicted upon the abilities of black men to protect their families.[7]

Unlike Bibb or Brown, Frederick Douglass spent little time with his mother, Harriet Bailey. She lived on the larger Lloyd plantation in St. Michaels, Maryland, while Douglass lived on the outskirts of the plantation with his grandparents, Isaac and Betsey Bailey, in Tuckahoe, Maryland, about twelve miles away.[8] Several times in his writings Douglass mentioned his meager knowledge of his mother. He said he never "enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care."[9] According to him this "practice of separating mothers from their children and hiring them out at distances too great to admit of their meeting, save at long intervals, was a marked feature of the cruelty and barbarity of the slave system; but was in harmony with the grand aim of that system, which always and everywhere sought to reduce man to a level with the brute."[10]

So, unlike other slave men, he did not observe the abuse of his mother, but this did not exempt him from the knowledge that husbands and sons had no way to protect their

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[7] For a more detailed autobiographical account of their early years see: Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave: Written by Himself,* (1850 rprt.: New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969); William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave,* (1847 rprt.: New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1970); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* (1845 rprt.: New York: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2000). Hereafter each notation will include the author's last name and *Narrative*.

[8] Douglass was born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. It was rumored that his father was Aaron Anthony, manager of Edward Lloyd's plantation, his mother's master. After his escape to freedom he changed his last name to Douglass; see *Narrative*, 13. Biographer William McFeely notes that it was possible that Douglass' father was actually a "Mr. Stewart" to whom Anthony had hired out Harriet Bailey. See William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991). For more see Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Richard Yarborough, "Race, Violence, and Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass's 'the Heroic Slave'," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); A. Kristen Foster, "'We are Men!': Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 2 (2011), 143.

[9] Douglass, *Narrative*, 14.

[10] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass,* (1881 rprt; Hartford, Conn.: Park Pub., 1882), 24.

wives or mothers within the slave system without facing retribution. At the age of six Colonel Lloyd sent Douglass to live on another of his plantations. In his *Narrative* Douglass wrote that early after his arrival he witnessed an event that likely played out many times throughout the slave South. His master, Aaron Anthony, had taken a keen interest in Douglass's Aunt Hester. So much so that he had forbidden her from going out evenings just in case he "desired her presence."[11] Additionally he had ordered her to stay away from a young man, Ned Roberts, a slave of Colonel Lloyd. After Anthony discovered that Hester was away during the evening and in the company of Ned, he determined to punish her. Douglass wrote that Anthony

> took her into the kitchen and stripped her from neck to waist, leaving her neck shoulders, and back, entirely naked…. He then told her to cross her hands… he tied them with a strong rope… and tied her hand to [a] hook… Her arms were stretched up at their full length… He then said to her, "Now, you dammed bitch, I'll learn you how to disobey my orders!" and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin [whip], and soon the warm, red blood (amid heartrending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor…I had never seen any thing like it before… I had therefore been, until now, out of the way of the bloody scenes that often occurred on the plantation.[12]

This account closely resembled Henry Bibb's regarding his wife Malinda, as well as a beating to William Wells Brown's mother witnessed by Brown.

William Wells Brown was the youngest of seven children, born to Elizabeth, a slave owned by Dr. John Young of Kentucky. Brown, his six brothers, and one sister all had different fathers. Brown's father was a relative of Dr. Young, George Higgins. Thus, his mother was like Frederick Douglass's when Douglass wrote "[m]y poor mother, like many other slave-women, had many children, but NO FAMILY!"[13] At the age of two Brown

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[11] Douglass, *Narrative*, 21.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. John David Smith (1855, rprt.; New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 29.

moved along with his mother to the Missouri frontier with Dr. Young and his other slaves. By 1820 Dr. Young won election to the lower house of Missouri's general assembly and placed the management of his plantation in the hands of an overseer, Groove Cook. At the time Brown served as a house servant while his mother worked in the fields. He wrote that in Dr. Young's absence "everything was left in charge of Mr. Cook, the overseer, and he soon became more tyrannical and cruel."[14] Indeed, "[t]he whip was put in requisition very frequently and freely, and a small offence on the part of a slave furnished an occasion for its use." Brown remembered that on one occasion his mother arrived ten to fifteen minutes late to the field and "[a]s soon as she reached the spot where they were at work, the overseer commenced whipping her."[15] Brown remembered, "I heard her voice, and knew it, and jumped out of my bunk, and went to the door. Though the field was some distance from the house, I could hear every crack of the whip, and every groan and cry of my poor mother. I remained at the door, not daring to venture any further. The cold chills ran over me, and I wept aloud."[16] As boys, neither Brown nor Douglass could protect their loved ones from these beatings or even protest the abuses. They learned these lessons early, and as they grew older the understanding of the nature of the abuses became more acute. Both William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass made their final escapes to freedom when they were each about twenty years old. At that point in their lives neither had been permitted the opportunity to marry or have a family. Henry Bibb at twenty-seven, on the other hand, married and had children before escaping slavery. Thus, in his experience he saw the abuses of slavery and his inability as man to perform protective masculinity.

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[14] Brown, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 181.
[15] Ibid., 180.
[16] Ibid., 180-181.

During his years in slavery Henry Bibb had three women who played critical roles in his life: his mother Milldred Jackson, his first wife Malinda, and his daughter Mary Frances. His relationships with these women developed in the context of a patriarchal white supremacist system of enslavement. In 1920 the scholar W.E.B. DuBois wrote: "I shall forgive the white South…its slavery, for slavery is a world-old habit….But one thing I shall never forgive…[is] its wanton and continued and persistent insulting of black womanhood which it sought and seeks to prostitute to its lust."[17] Like William Wells Brown's mother, Milldred Jackson bore six children to six different white men, including Henry, her oldest.[18] Examples similar to these provided the basis for DuBois's condemnation and began the young enslaved boy's education into their diminished role as men within the slave system. Bibb introduced his mother Milldred Jackson in his *Narrative* and in doing so related her victimization and abuse as a slave woman:

> My mother was known by the name of Milldred Jackson. She is the mother of seven slaves only, all being sons, of whom I am the eldest. She was also so fortunate or unfortunate, as to have some of what is called the slaveholding blood in her veins. I know not how much; but not enough to prevent her children though fathered by slaveholders, from being bought and sold in the slave markets of the South.[19]

She experienced one of the cruelest ironies of the system: her children, though fathered by white men, were still enslaved and at times sold off like animals. Jackson and Bibb recognized that the practitioners of slavery used women's bodies as a piece of economic machinery.[20] Sexual exploitation and abuse of black women were integral parts of

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[17] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater; Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 172.
[18] Milldred Jackson later had a seventh child who was fathered by her husband Robert Jackson, a free black man she married.
[19] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 64.
[20] For more on "black bodies" within slavery see Dorothy E. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Carlyle Van Thompson, *Eating the Black Body: Miscegenation as Sexual Consumption in African American Literature and Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

slaveholding society. White men, planters and non-planters, sexually assaulted and impregnated black and slave women with impunity. Slave women, by virtue of their sex, race, and status experienced multiple jeopardies.[21]

For most of her child-bearing years, Milldred Jackson was sexually assaulted by slaveholding men who ensured that she would live a burdensome life as a single-mother by denying her children a father. Forcing black women to breed, or attempting to turn them into sexual animals, then abandoning them and enslaving and selling their children, epitomized the appalling violence done to slave women by white men, and the system of racialized and gendered slavery that they employed.[22] As a slave child, Bibb learned well that it was "almost impossible for slaves to give a correct account of their male parentage." He wrote, "my mother informed me that my father's name was James Bibb. He was doubtless one of the present Bibb family of Kentucky; but I have no personal knowledge of him at all, for he died before my recollection."[23]

Historian George P. Rawick, in his discussion of the black family, wrote that many types of family arrangements existed. These included the nuclear family, the extended family, and the single mother family. In several family configurations Rawick noted the presence of a father or father figure and also the importance of male kinship. He credited enslaved blacks for maintaining diverse family structures in spite of the slave system that by and large laid siege to the black family. He cautioned that the "slave family" was not a

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[21] Slaveholders sometimes forced women into sexual intercourse with slave men and vice versa; if either party refused they could be punished. Slaveowners too, placed a premium on fertile women especially according to several scholars, after the abolition of the foreign slave trade in 1808. See Herbert George Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 75-85; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27-30; and Gregory D. Smithers, *Slave Breeding: Sex, Violence, and Memory in African American History* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2012).
[22] Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 22-55.
[23] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 64.

monolithic structure, but one characterized by variety. Toward the end of slavery there were nearly four million enslaved persons, meaning that the black family was heterogeneous in its formation.[24] Historian Herbert Gutman similarly documented that many slave families were headed by both parents, and that men, as fathers and husbands, were integral to their families.[25]

Though scholars like Rawick, Gutman, and historian John Blassingame have revealed the presence and importance of fathers to their families, it remains significant that many slave children were deprived of or did not know their fathers. Even when the father was a white man and possibly also a slaveholder, he typically failed to acknowledge paternity. If the father was a free black man or enslaved, his wife and children could be sold away from him, or he from them. The legal standing of children followed their mother, thus even free black men, if their wives were slaves could have their children taken away. These realities thwarted black fathers' efforts to prove their manhood.[26]

Henry Bibb ranked among those many slaves who did not know for sure who their fathers were and were raised by their mothers. Many slaves also did know their fathers and lived with them. Yet, even if fathers were present their place in their child's life could prove very tenuous. Slave fathers were routinely removed from their families at the whim of their masters. Numerous slave mothers lacked the support of husbands and fathers for their children, and at the same time, might experience sexual brutality by those who denied them a family life. Such callous treatment inspired Bibb to write that in slavery, black "female virtue

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[24] George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pub. Co., 1972), 77-93.
[25] Gutman, *The Black Family.*
[26] John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community; Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 129-166. For the status of slave children see Paul Finkelman, ed., *Slavery & the Law* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

is trampled in the dust with impunity."[27] Bibb did not say whether or not his mother lived with any extended family members, though they possibly were present. If Milldred Jackson lived alone with her sons, then her single mother family would represent one of the various family arrangements within the slave community.

Malinda Bibb stood at the center of Bibb's *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, and for years after they were forcibly separated she remained the "mistress" of his heart.[28] From Bibb's own account he loved Malinda very much. Though he did not give Malinda's age at the time of their marriage, he noted his age as eighteen. Bibb had already at this age carved out a "runaway career" for himself, having since the age of eight engaged in several temporary escape ventures. Before he fell in love with Malinda, he had decided to flee permanently to Canada and attain freedom, the "object which I held paramount to all others."[29] But his love for her was so overpowering that he was now willing to trade "the quest of freedom for the love of a woman."[30] Commenting about the beginning of their relationship Bibb wrote:

> when I arrived at the age of eighteen, which was in the year of 1833, it was my lot to be introduced to the favor of a mulatto slave named Malinda…[she] was a medium sized girl, graceful in her walk, of an extraordinary make, and….[h]er skin was of smooth texture, red cheeks, with dark and penetrating eyes. She moved in the highest circles of slaves, and free people of color… I considered Malinda to be equaled by few, and surpassed by none.[31]

The historian Maria Diedrich, in assessing the impact Malinda had on Bibb, cogently noted that for Bibb, Malinda "becomes the incarnation of the ideal woman, in whom physical, intellectual, and spiritual beauty are ideally joined." Diedrich continued: "[i]n this girl

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[27] *Voice of the Fugitive*, 2 Dec. 1852.
[28] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 75.
[29] Ibid., 74.
[30] Deborah G. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, (New York: Norton, 1985), 146.
[31] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 74-75.

physical attractiveness, diligence, kind-heartedness and social responsibility form a harmonious whole."[32] According to Bibb, Malinda "moved in the highest circle of slaves."[33] He fell in love with her, and to his delight, she with him as well: "The first two or three visits that I paid to this dear girl, I had no intention of courting or marrying her, for I was aware that such a step would greatly obstruct my way to the land of liberty… But in spite of myself, before I was aware of it, I was deeply in love…[and] I became satisfied that it was reciprocal."[34]

Not everyone thought that the relationship was a good thing. Milldred Jackson opposed the marriage. She thought that her son was too young, and that marrying would only involve him "in trouble and difficulty." Jackson knew that her son could not assume full responsibility as husband and father. Additionally, Jackson understood that white men could molest Malinda and, as a slave, Bibb could not defend her without risking losing his life as a result. Jackson realized only too well that as a slave husband Bibb would not be able to exercise fully his manhood.[35]

On the other hand, some, like William Gatewood, Malinda's owner, were in favor of the marriage. Bibb wrote: "Malinda's master was very much in favor of the match, but entirely upon selfish principles. When I went to ask his permission to marry Malinda, his answer was in the affirmative with but one condition, which I consider too vulgar to be written in this book."[36] Without the consent of Malinda's owner the marriage would not have taken place. Though Malinda had parents, the slaveholder held the ultimate authority; his

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[32] Maria Diedrich, ""My Love is Black as Yours is Fair": Premarital Love and Sexuality in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," *Phylon,* 47, no. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1986), 240.
[33] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 74-75.
[34] Ibid., 75.
[35] Ibid., 78.
[36] Ibid., 79.

authority superseded that of the slave parents toward their children. In almost every aspect of life for the enslaved, the slaveholder had full control. In all likelihood, the condition Gatewood gave Bibb that he found "too vulgar" had to do with sex. Perhaps Gatewood agreed because he saw the potential children that could issue from the marriage. These children would not belong to Bibb and Malinda, or to Bibb's owner, but to Gatewood. The marriage of this couple would lead to the increase of his economic assets and therefore his wealth through their production of more slaves.[37]

During the Christmas holidays of 1833 Bibb and Malinda "jumped the broom," even though he knew that in the eyes of whites their marriage lacked legal standing. At a lecture in Boston, Bibb explained the marriage ritual of "jumping the broom" that he and other slaves engaged in. The Boston *Daily Mail* recorded that:

> [t]he parties to be united, go to one of the largest rooms in the "Negro Quarters," and join hands, and the slaves and sometimes their masters attend as witnesses of the ceremony. Two hold up a long broom before the bride and bridegroom and when the words are pronounced making them man and wife, they jump over the broomstick to show their consent and willingness to be thus united.[38]

Even though both parties knew that in the eyes of whites their marriage lacked legal standing, most believed that they were truly married and that the marriage was "honorable before God, and the bed undefiled."[39] The later aspect would become central to Malinda and Henry Bibb as they sought to live as a married couple. Bibb, reminiscing about the period shortly after their marriage, remarked:

> I often look back to that period even now as one of the happy seasons of my life; notwithstanding all the contaminating and heart-rending features with which the

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[37] For more on slave breeding and the economics of the internal slave trade see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Deyle, *Carry Me* Back; Smithers, *Slave Breeding*.
[38] Boston *Daily Mail*, reprinted in the *Western Citizen*, 21 Dec. 1847.
[39] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 79.

> horrid system of slavery is marked… yet I still look to that season with sweet remembrance and pleasure… and Malinda as an affectionate wife.[40]

Marriage brought happiness to the couple, but soon after Bibb's wedding he faced a family separation when his current master, Albert Sibley, sold his farm and moved to Missouri, taking five of Bibb's brothers with him, separating them from their mother and wives in the process. He did not take Bibb with him for two reasons: Bibb successfully pleaded with Sibley to let him remain in Kentucky because of Malinda, and Sibley feared that Bibb would again embark on his escape career and flee from him at the first chance once in Missouri. Sibley consented to Bibb's pleas and sold Bibb to his brother, John Sibley, who lived within seven miles of Malinda, and her owner William Gatewood.[41]

With the permission of both his and Malinda's owners, Bibb, like many slave husbands who married "abroad," visited Malinda on weekends.[42] He would arrive at the Gatewood farm on Saturday night and returned to his plantation on Monday morning. Bibb, like many "abroad" husbands, faced the whip if he did not return to his plantation before sunrise on Monday morning. Fearing that Bibb would prove an unsuitable and unhappy slave on account of his wife being on another plantation, John Sibley sold Bibb to Malinda's owner, William Gatewood. Even though Bibb finally reunited with his wife, he was not happy. Living with Malinda put him in full view of the daily verbal, physical, and likely sexual abuse she received from Gatewood.[43] Historian John Blassingame wrote that when a slave husband "lived on the same plantation with his mate, he could rarely escape frequent demonstrations of his powerlessness….The most serious impediment to the man's

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 80.
[42] The phenomenon of the "abroad husband" was a feature of slave life. These husbands, living on nearby or distant plantations, apart from their wives, often visited on weekends or sometimes during weeknights. For more information on the abroad husband see White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 76, 152-153, and Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
[43] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 80.

acquisition of status in his family [manhood] was his inability to protect his wife from the sexual advances of whites and the physical abuse of his master."[44] Bibb as a husband had no claim to his wife. He could not defend her; he could not demonstrate protective masculinity within slavery.

Witnessing Malinda's abuse and humiliation, Bibb had to confront his own powerlessness and the negation of his manhood. The scholar Daniel Black noted that Bibb's "perception of himself is so damaged that he has difficulty facing himself. Certainly his impotence is not his own fault; yet the insult this crime leveled upon his manhood leaves him wishing that he had heeded his mother's advice and remained single for life."[45] According to Black, a central notion of West African construction of manhood was the defense of women, just as it was among white men in the United States during the nineteenth century. Slavery ensured that Bibb and other slave men could not live up to the standards of manhood, whether their model was African or Western European in origin.[46] Gatewood's abuse of Malinda, as a model for the violence committed on the persons and psyches of black women, reverberated throughout Bibb's *Narrative*. "On the same plantation I was compelled to see my wife shamefully scourged and abused by her master; and the manner in which this was done, was so violently and inhumanly committed upon the person of a female, that I despair in finding decent language to describe the bloody act of cruelty."[47]

For the slave system to work for American slaveowners they had to be able to terrorize the enslaved by using physical and psychological violence in order for the enslaved

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[44] Blassingame, *The Slave Community,* 88.
[45] Black, *Dismantling Black Manhood*, 113.
[46] See "Violence, Protest, and Identity: Black Manhood in Antebellum America," in James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 80, 89; Kimmel, *Manhood in America,* 52-54; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 362-402.
[47] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 81.

to surrender totally to their will. Even though they had some success at this goal many slaves failed to surrender. Beginning in 1705 in Virginia and 1723 in Maryland the legal code allowed for dismemberment, including castration or literal emasculation, as punishment for a slave's disobedience.[48] Masters used whippings of both female and male slaves to degrade and subdue them, and to eventually break their spirit. They carried out whipping and other torture to ensure that the slaves stood "in fear" of them.[49] Whites used the whip and other forms of torture on black bodies not only for physical correction, but also to deliberately instill terror and fear within the minds and souls of the enslaved. Slave masters were not the only ones capable of such cruelty; slave mistress also used physical violence and torture to establish their authority.[50] This resulted in helplessness, a powerlessness that motivated many male slaves to run away from slavery. The idea of protecting their families was always uppermost in the mind of slave husbands and fathers. Even so, the slave system did not totally subdue blacks or make them stand in total fear of whites. Enslaved people fought back, sometimes in very dramatic and violent ways.[51]

On Gatewood's estate Malinda gave birth to a little girl named Mary Frances. Although mother and father rejoiced at the birth of the child, they knew that she did not

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[48] See Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*, Revised and Updated ed. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1995), 34-35; Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 76; Sharon Block, "Violence Or Sex? Construction of Rape and Race in Early America," in *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction, and Authority in the Colonial Americas*, eds. John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 111-127; Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 209-229; Paul Finkelman, ed., *Slavery & the Law* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

[49] Kenneth Stampp included a chapter entitled "To Make Them Stand in Fear" in his *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*, (New York: Knopf, 1956).

[50] For the viciousness of slave mistresses, see Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5-7, 17, 25, 30-31, and especially chapter 2 "'Beyond the Limits of Decency': Women in Slavery"; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 132; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010), 26-27.

[51] See Chapter 1 on resistant masculinity and the use of violence.

belong to them. Though Bibb loved his daughter dearly, he voiced his pain at fathering a slave child. While only his experience made up the events in the *Narrative*, we can surmise that Malinda felt the same anguish, not at bringing a child into the world, but bearing a child instantly enslaved. Bibb reminisced:

> Little Mary Frances was a pretty child; she was quiet, playful, bright, and interesting. She had a keen black eye, and the very image of her mother was stamped upon her cheek; but I could not look upon the dear child without being filled with sorrow and fearful apprehensions, of being separated by slaveholders, because she was a slave, regarded as property. And unfortunately, for me, I am the father of a slave.[52]

Mary Frances, like her parents, experienced physical abuse. Being an infant did not prevent the slaveholders from beating her. Malinda and her husband both worked in the field and had no one to look after the child while they were gone. They had no choice but to leave the child with Gatewood.[53] The slave mistress, as child-minder, abused little Mary Frances by continually slapping the child across the face: "[h]er little face was bruised black with the whole print of Mrs. Gatewood's hand. This print was plainly to be seen for eight days after it was done."[54] Through his narrative Bibb lashed out against the slave system and the Gatewoods. Nonetheless, he realized his powerlessness against it. He could not implement protective masculinity on behalf of Malinda or Mary Frances. Bibb lamented:

> But oh! this darling child [Mary Frances] was a slave; born of a slave mother. Who can imagine what could be the feelings of a father and mother, when looking upon my infant child whipped and tortured with impunity, and they placed a situation where they could afford it no protection. But we were all claimed and held as property; the mother and father were slaves![55]

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[52] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 81.
[53] Large plantations often had nurseries for babies and young children tended by the elderly, infirm, and sometimes teenagers. See Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 13-14.
[54] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 80.
[55] Ibid., 80-81.

The feelings of rage, impotence, and uselessness evidenced themselves in Bibb's words. He knew that Mary Frances's status sealed her doom, because under American slavery, children born to slave mothers inherited their mother's status.[56] Still, he inferred that Malinda found great distress with the beating of Mary Frances. Scholar Daniel Black remarked that Bibb's role as father became irrelevant because he could not protect his infant from abuse. Likewise, the abuse negated Malinda's role as mother.[57] The Bibbs' experience of family life under slavery, though individualized, represented much of the experience in the slave community as a whole. The slave family was a vulnerable institution.

The beating of Mary Frances as a baby, and the slave parents' inability to intervene on the child's behalf, highlighted the defenselessness of slave children. Their parents had to think twice before attempting to defend them. The highly vulnerable position of slave children, the inability of their parents to defend them, and the abuse, stress, and trauma children and parents suffered under enslavement, have led some scholars to conclude that enslaved families suffered "soul murder".[58] Historian Nell Irving Painter pointed out that much of the literature on child abuse in North America failed to mention the abuse of slave children, even though many psychologists and therapists appropriate the language of slavery to describe child sexual and physical abuse.[59] Henry Bibb despaired at his status as a slave father and at the status of his daughter and wife as slaves. He became fearful that they all

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[56] Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law*, 17-37.
[57] Black, *Dismantling Black Manhood*, 121.
[58] See King, *Stolen Childhood*; Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Nell Irvin Painter, ""Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting"," in *U.S. History as Women's History, New Feminist Essays*, ed. Linda Kerber and et al (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 125-46. The psychiatrist Leonard Shengold coined the term "soul murder" in his 1991 book *Soul Murder: The Effects of Child Abuse and Deprivation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991).
[59] Painter, "Soul Murder," 125-131.

would be separated through sale. Bibb knew that only escape would remedy his fear and apprehension.[60]

In December 1837, at the age of twenty-two, Bibb made his initial escape to Canada, he ran away during the Christmas break so that his absence would not be readily noticed. Six months later, after he established connections along the escape route, Bibb backtracked to Kentucky to liberate Malinda and Mary Frances. He did not succeed. All were captured and jailed in a Louisville, Kentucky, prison. As a result, Gatewood sold all three to a slave trader named Madison Garrison. In prison, Malinda, Henry, and Mary Frances endured a nightmarish experience. For Malinda, sexual and physical assaults by white men continued unabated. Garrison took Malinda "to a private house where he kept female slaves for the basest purposes. It was a resort for slave trading profligates and soul drivers, who were interested in the same business."[61] Garrison perhaps intended to sell Malinda in the "fancy girl" trade, an aspect of the internal slave trade specifically designed for the sale of extremely light-skinned slave women and girls "for the exclusive purpose of prostitution and concubinage."[62] Garrison, by taking Malinda to a brothel with the intent to prostitute her, demonstrated his power over her and his disregard for her well-being, her marriage, or her family. Henry Bibb reported that Garrison himself attempted to rape Malinda, but she resisted him. For some time he continued to attack her, and she continued to resist. Enraged at her he whipped her until her "garments were stained with blood."[63] To punish her further, he sent Mary Frances to another part of town and threatened Malinda with the sale of her daughter.

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[60] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 81.
[61] Ibid., 112.
[62] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 37. For an extended discussion of the fancy girl trade see Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (New York: Ungar, 1959), 327-334 and Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 127-130.
[63] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 121.

After Garrison took Malinda's child away from her, he sent her back to prison with Bibb. Bibb wrote that Malinda entered his jail cell "shrieking and sobbing." Bibb recorded her words: "Oh! my dear little child is gone? What shall I do? my child is gone." Malinda felt distressed at the loss of her daughter.[64] For his part, Bibb noted his lack of protective masculinity—he could do nothing to protect, save, or defend Mary Frances or Malinda. Slavery had stolen his rights as husband, father, and as a man.

To the Bibbs' joy, Garrison either decided not to sell or could not sell their daughter. They reunited shortly before Garrison set out with Bibb, Malinda, and a host of other slaves for New Orleans. There, a Baptist deacon named Whitfield purchased the Bibb family. Luckily, slave traders did not separate them and Whitfiled purchased all the members of the family.[65] Potential buyers thought he looked "too intelligent," for some he appeared "too white," others suspected (quite rightly) that he frequently ran away, and still others believed he could read and write. Already they saw the qualities of manhood in Bibb, but perceived them as "defects". These defects made Bibb unattractive to several prospective buyers.[66] In the end, Deacon Whitfield purchased all three and took them to his plantation along the Red River district bordering Louisiana and Arkansas. According to Bibb, Whitfield was the most sadistic owner he ever had. His brutality unmatched, he had a routine of tying up female slaves, stripping them naked, and beating them.[67]

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[64] Ibid., 111.
[65] The interstate slave trade breathed new life into the slave system as hundreds of thousands of bonded people from the Upper South were sold farther south or to the Western states. "Incorrigible" slaves like Bibb were prime candidates to be sold "down the river" to the Lower South. Slaveholders had a propensity to sell mothers together with their children, and males separately. That Bibb was sold together with his wife and child was due to Bibb's plea to the "soul driver" Daniel Lane to sell them together. On the interstate trade see Deyle, *Carry Me Back.*
[66] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 113-117.
[67] Ibid., 119-121.

Bibb described Whitfield's plantation as hell on earth. The deacon fed his slaves inadequately, he did not call a doctor when they were sick, and he whipped them at the slightest offence. Malinda suffered ill health after their arrival and she later gave birth to another child, but that child soon died. This aggrieved Bibb a great deal and he lamented that he "was compelled to dig my own child's grave and bury it myself without even a box to put it in." He and Malinda had to bury their child as if it were a "dumb beast" without a prayer or a coffin.[68]

Bibb responded to Whitfield's denial of his child's humanity by running away. At Whitfield's farm he fled three times, the second time with his wife and child. That Malinda choose to run with Bibb this second time had significance. Men, roughly between the age of seventeen and forty, ran away more frequently than women. Women, due to pregnancy, child-rearing, and for some a lack of geographical knowledge, were less likely to engage in flight.[69] Nonetheless, Malinda chose to run with her husband because she feared that Bibb might suffer a monumental 500 lashes for a previous escape attempt. According to Bibb, he conferred with Malinda and they made the decision to run together. "So we started off with our child that night, and made our way down to the Red River swamps among the buzzing insects and wild beasts of the forest. We wandered about in the wilderness for eight to ten days before we were apprehended, striving to make our way from slavery; but it was all in vain."[70] Unfortunately the Bibb family failed to escape to freedom, and Whitfield (or his agents) beat Henry nearly to death after their apprehension. Whitfield, in order to terrorize

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[68] For Bibb and Malinda's experience at Whitefield's plantation see ibid., 109-140. Quotation page 123.
[69] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 209-230. For more information on female runaway slaves see also Adrienne Shadd, "The Lord Seemed to Say 'Go': Women and the Underground Railroad Movement," in *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 41-68.
[70] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 125.

the rest of the slaves and humiliate Bibb completely, made Bibb's punishment very public. Whitfield called together his entire slave population to watch Bibb's flogging. Bibb suffered a public assault on his limbs, life, dignity, and manhood; and he served as an example to his fellow slaves.

The historian Deborah Gray White noted that this public defamation of slave husbands like Bibb, who tried to make life better for their families, caused many other bonded men to reject marriage and to seek self-affirmation through flight.[71] Bibb, in relating his story, noted the grief and anguish of his wife and daughter, who stood "by weeping." In this instance, Bibb could not help himself:

> While I suffered under this dreadful torture, I prayed, wept, and implored mercy at the hand of slavery, but found none. After I was marked from my neck to my heels, the Deacon took the gory lash, and said he thought there was a spot on my back where he could put a few more. He wanted to give me something to remember him by…. After I was flogged almost to death in this way, a paddle was brought forward and eight or ten blows given me with it, which was far worse than the lash. My wounds were then washed with salt brine, after which I was let up.[72]

Slaves' wives, like Malinda, who watched such a spectacle, also felt their own powerlessness.

The severity of Bibb's punishment meant that for some time after the whipping he could not work. Additionally, his master required that he wear an iron collar with a bell around his neck, and at night, sleep with his feet in the stocks—another assault on his pride, dignity, and masculinity. From his account, it seemed that Deacon Whitfield wanted to make an example of him.[73] Nevertheless, as soon as another opportunity arose, Bibb ran again. And yet again, he failed. A slave with a penchant for running away was not a good slave. They set a bad example to the other slaves and put notions of freedom in their minds. The

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[71] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 146-147.
[72] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 130.
[73] Ibid.

Deacon at that point determined to get rid of Bibb. Both William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass detailed similar experiences in their *Narratives* of escape and recapture for either themselves or others. Clearly, the slave system failed to subdue Bibb, as it also did with William Wells Brown and with Frederick Douglass. Although slaveholders instilled fear in these men because of their attacks on women and children, it failed to crush their manhood.

Whitfield found his revenge by selling Bibb away from his family while he worked in the field. A group of gamblers road up and Whitfield made the transaction then and there. Bibb requested that he be allowed to say goodbye to his family, but Whitfield refused.[74] What Bibb feared most—separation from his family—had come to pass. Bibb traveled with the gamblers into Texas, attended races with them, and served them as a personal servant.[75] He recorded that the gamblers treated him well, provided him enough to eat, and even gave him money at times. Bibb stated that he found his way into their good graces and soon implored them to call on Whitfield and persuade him to sell them Malinda and Mary Frances. The gamblers consented and they all rode to Deacon Whitfield's plantation.

After they arrived the sportsmen explained the purpose of their visit. Incensed, Whitfield insisted that Bibb be removed from his yard. Malinda heard her husband's voice and rushed out to see him. Bibb wrote:

> my poor bereaved wife, who never expected to see me again… came rushing to me through the crowd, throwing her arms about my neck…. The poor woman was bathed with tears of sorrow and grief. But no sooner had she reached me, than the Deacon

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[74] Ibid., 136.

[75] Bibb's adventures and life as a slave clearly reveal the different occupations that enslaved persons engaged in. Plantation owners and agriculturalists were not the only groups of persons who owned and used slaves. As Bibb's employment by the gamblers attest, enslaved Americans were deployed in a variety of non-agricultural pursuits. For more on this topic see James E. Newton and Ronald L. Lewis, *The Other Slaves: Mechanics, Artisans, and Craftsmen* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978); Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (London, New York: Oxford U.P., 1967).

> peremptorily commanded her to go to her work. This she did not obey, but prayed that her master would not separate us again, as she was there alone, far from friends and relations whom she would never meet again…. to take away her husband… would be like taking her life.[76]

The experiences the Bibbs endured did much to cement their love and affection for each other. At this point, Henry Bibb experienced the final full realization that as slaves their marriage had no sanctity, that his family could be broken up at any time, and that the law and white society did not regard him as a man, despite his valiant and risky efforts to save his family.

In the end, neither Malinda's tears, nor the appeal of the gamblers softened Whitfield's heart. He took the lash to Malinda and began to curse her and Bibb. The gamblers intervened and begged him to desist from beating Malinda, they said they would pay him a thousand dollars for her and Mary Frances. But the gamblers' words fell on deaf ears as Whitfield continued to whip Malinda. She and Bibb sank to their knees and begged Whitfield not to break up their family, but the Deacon hardened his heart to their request and continued to apply the lash to Malinda who uttered "heart-rending shrieks." Meanwhile, Mary Frances "stood by, sobbing at the abuse inflicted on her mother." With Whitfield striking a prostrate Malinda and Mary Frances hysterical, Bibb departed Deacon Whitfield's estate. The parting scene became forever imprinted on his mind. "As we left the plantation, as far as we could see and hear, the Deacon was still laying on the gory lash, trying to prevent poor Malinda from weeping over the loss of her departed husband, who was then, by the hellish laws of slavery, to her, theoretically and practically dead….This occurred in December 1840, I have never seen Malinda since that period. I never expect to see her

[76] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 138.

again."[77] And he never did. Like the many thousands of slave families affected by separation, Malinda and Henry suffered a similar fate. This encounter described by Bibb became a tale told and retold through his slave narrative and antislavery lectures. Contemporaries state that when Bibb lectured in the free states and described this scene he moved his audience to tears.[78]

The love story that blossomed on Gatewood's plantation turned into a story of sorrow on Deacon Whitfield's estate. But this parting scene did not end the tale. Henry Bibb, having passed from the gamblers to another slaveowner, made his final escape from slavery in the winter of 1841 and arrived in Detroit in January 1842. Even though he made it to freedom, Bibb could not rejoice. He had gained his freedom, but at a steep cost. In Detroit, he discovered that while his body was free, his mind was not. Bibb's situation underscores one historian's comment that "Separation created physical voids and left deep emotional scars. By any standard, splitting apart families was one of the harshest aspects of bondage."[79] In freedom, Bibb longed to reunite his family.

In the end, the love that Bibb had for his family strengthened his resolve to once again attempt to rescue his family from slavery. He spent four years in Michigan grieving. The fact that he spent four years without developing another romantic relationship underscores his affection for Malinda. Then in 1846, against the advice of his friends, he went back to Kentucky to inquire about his family. Once there he gathered information that his wife "was living in a state of adultery with her master, and had been for the last three years." According to Bibb, Malinda herself sent news to her mother in Kentucky about her situation. She relayed to her mother that after Whitfield sold her husband he then sold her to

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[77] Ibid., 138-139.
[78] Fred Landon, "Henry Bibb, a Colonizer," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 4 (Oct., 1920), 437.
[79] King, *Stolen Childhood*, 99.

a French planter from Mississippi for the purpose of concubinage, at a very "high price."[80] This piece of information, Bibb wrote, "was a death blow to all my hopes and pleasant plans."[81] Slavery had desecrated his family and his marriage.[82]

Bibb's mother counseled him to forget Malinda as it "was no use for me to run any more risks, or to grieve myself any more about her."[83] At that point Bibb made up his mind to leave Malinda in "the hands of an all wise Providence."[84] He then wrote:

> As she was then living with another man, I could no longer regard her as my wife. After all the sacrifices, sufferings, and risks which I had run, striving to rescue her from the grasp of slavery; every prospect and hope was cut off. She has ever since been regarded as theoretically and practically dead to me as a wife, for she was living in a state of adultery, according to the law of God and man.[85]

Even though Bibb must have known that Malinda had no say in her fate, he seemed to blame her. Possibly he used this as a way to move on with his life and mend his broken heart, or as a way to assert his masculinity in his new life. It also assured his largely white female audience that he had done all he could, and Malinda, not him, had given up on their marriage.

Firmly convinced that he would not see Malinda again, Bibb threw himself wholeheartedly into the abolitionist cause. Since 1844 he involved himself in various antislavery activities. He continued his work for several abolitionist societies in Michigan and travelled and lectured there and in the state of Ohio during 1846. Later, he toured New England, where he "found a kind reception where ever [he] traveled among the friends of

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[80] Bibb, *Western Citizen*, 21 Dec. 1847.
[81] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 162.
[82] For slaves as prostitutes see Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll; the World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 460-461.
[83] Ibid., 163. In 1845 Milldred Jackson gained her freedom through manumission due to poor health. By this time Henry Bibb was living in freedom. After receiving word from his mother as to her condition, he paid a white man to bring her from Kentucky to his new residence in Boston. She later relocated with him to Canada.
[84] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 163.
[85] Ibid.

freedom."[86] As his career as an abolitionist progressed, Bibb's slave family took center stage in his speeches, writings, and particularly his *Narrative*. While this focus on the family functioned as a tool for the abolitionists' cause, his and other black abolitionists' efforts to form stable families in freedom served as both a personal attempt to develop a conventional life and a determination to establish African American families within the emerging middle class of the nineteenth century. In this way their efforts to perform protective masculinity also served as an effort to uplift their race.[87]

White and black abolitionists alike insisted that slavery had a particularly dreadful impact on the gender dynamics and family life of the enslaved. In this view, "the slave family was the immediate victim" of the peculiar institution resulting in the separation of wives and husbands, masters tearing children from their parents arms, and young women being sold into prostitution.[88] To emphasize the point, the masthead of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* regularly featured images of enslaved families on the auction block, waiting to be sold, alongside horses and cattle.[89] Antislavery narratives, such as those by Bibb, Brown, and Douglass, highlighted descriptions of families shattered simply to satisfy the greed of their masters, marking them as symbols of slavery's unfathomable and deeply personal cruelty.[90]

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[86] Ibid.
[87] For more on the gendered act of family formation and social status within the black community see Fraser, "Negotiating their Manhood," 81-85; John W. Blassingame, "Status and Social Structure in the Slave Community: Evidence from New Sources," in *Perspectives and Irony in American Slavery: Essays*, eds. Carl N. Degler and Harry P. Owens (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Department of History, 1976), 137-151; James Walvin, "Slaves, Free Time and the Question of Leisure," *Slavery and Abolition* 16 (1995), 1-13.
[88] *Colored American*, November 13, 1841.
[89] Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 174-176.
[90] For female slave narratives see Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997); William Craft and Ellen Craft, *Running A Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*, ed. Richard J. M. Blackett (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

Some of those same white and black abolitionists also insisted that their families might serve as models for others to emulate. While some radical white abolitionists challenged or even rejected the notion of separate spheres, scholars have argued they went even further and attempted to model "true marriages." The historian Chris Dixon contended that radical abolitionist reformers expressed new feelings about marital intimacy and incorporated into their relationships more flexible ideas about gender roles. Their marriages, he maintained, were unusual not just because one and often both spouses pursued a career in antislavery reform, but also because the couples worked self-consciously to prevent domestic duties from enslaving the woman.[91] In this way Dixon claimed they directly challenged the patriarchal system dominant within middle class society. Black abolitionists, however, hoped to emulate respectable middle class families within that same system and thus become a "class of 'elevated'" African Americans.[92]

The path to respectability for many escaped slaves began with legally recognized marriages. Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, and other black abolitionists, who had been enslaved, once they gained freedom, married and purchased property. This represented a significant component of nineteenth-century manhood rights and a symbol of their independence.[93] Each of these men did this through their own hard work, ingenuity, and performance of protective masculinity.

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[91] For more information on white male and female abolitionists views on gender, the family and marriage see Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997). Dixon examined eight families who demonstrate the limitations and possibilities of nineteenth-century radicalism: Lucretia and James Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Henry Brewer Stanton, Lydia Maria Child and David Child, Angelina Grimke and Theodore Dwight Weld, William Lloyd Garrison and Helen Benson, Abby Kelley and Stephen Foster, Wendell Phillips and Ann Terry Greene, and Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell.
[92] Erica Ball, *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Black Middle Class* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 1.
[93] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 13.

For white people in nineteenth-century Americans, a man's ability to provide for and protect women and children helped measure his masculinity. In a way this protective masculinity fit the model of "self-made" manhood as described by both the sociologist Michael Kimmel and the historian E. Anthony Rotundo.[94] Southern slavery made it nearly impossible for enslaved black men to play either role, although some attempted to despite the risks involved for themselves and their families.[95] As Bibb, Brown, and Douglass escaped slavery they began a process to prove their manhood by performing protective masculinity—creating free families and establishing homes. The reality, however, happened to be that even though they were free, nineteenth-century American society did not accept them as men—they still had to prove their manhood.

In all likelihood this reality prompted both William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass to marry nearly immediately after gaining their freedom, a quick and visible way in which they could begin performing masculinity. Brown escaped to freedom in January of 1834 and married Elizabeth Spooner, a free black woman, that summer. Two years later, the Browns moved to Buffalo, where William began his career in the abolitionist movement.[96] Frederick Douglass in 1837 met Anna Murray, a free black woman in Baltimore. On September 3, 1838, Douglass successfully escaped enslavement by boarding a train to Havre de Grace, Maryland, dressed in a sailor's uniform and carrying identification papers which he obtained from a free black seaman. Douglass intended to make it to New York. After his safe escape, he sent for Murray to follow him; they were married on September 15, 1838, eleven days after his arrival in New York. The couple later moved to New Bedford,

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[94] See Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 12-15; and Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 129-166.
[95] James Oliver Horton, "Freedom's Yoke: Gender Conventions among Antebellum Free Blacks," *Feminist Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring, 1986), 52-53 and 55.
[96] Brown, *Narrative* in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 222-223.

Massachusetts, and after an 1841 antislavery meeting in Nantucket, Douglass began his career as an antislavery activist. [97]

William Wells Brown's marriage to Elizabeth Spooner, whom he called Betsey, ended in divorce, thus scholars view it as the least successful marriage of these three men.[98] Brown's biographer William Farrison wrote that Brown's marriage to Elizabeth, one of "haste," failed as a result of Brown having little knowledge of her family and her character. This later developed into somewhat of a public scandal that forced Brown to defend his manhood against charges that he had "deserted" his wife. [99]

After spending the first two years of their marriage in Ohio, the Browns moved to Buffalo and remained there together until the summer of 1845. They had three children, all daughters, Clarissa and Josephine, and one who died at birth. In an open letter to the public published in *The Liberator* Brown attempted to explain their troubles were not his fault. He first wrote that prior to their marriage he did not know her "mother was living with a second husband, while her first was still alive, having never been divorced…[her] sister was a mother, without having been a wife… [and her] eldest brother, John, was in the Auburn, N.Y. State prison."[100] Brown used this as pretext to explain that Betsey's character was not of a high moral standard. He stated that beginning in December 1844 they began to have marital difficulties and soon after that he discovered her affair with a good friend of his, James Garrett. Brown initially attempted to forgive Betsey and she pledged not to allow

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[97] Douglass, *Narrative*, 99-102; See chapter XI of his *Narrative*.
[98] Landon, "Henry Bibb, a Colonizer," 437; William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown: Author & Reformer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Afua Ava Pamela Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842—1854" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto [Canada]), 2000.
[99] Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 62.
[100] Brown, "To the Public," *Liberator*, 12 July 1850 in William Wells Brown, *The Works of William Wells Brown: Using His "Strong, Manly Voice"*, ed. Paula Garrett and Hollis Robbins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 447.

Garrett in the house during Brown's absence. After returning from another trip, Brown found Betsey and Garrett in *flagrante delicto*, or as he stated he "found Garrett there, and under circumstances of a still more revolting character than on a former occasion."[101] They persuaded him not to expose them, but at that point he had determined to leave Buffalo with his two daughters.

The Browns had many conversations regarding a separation and they determined to end their marriage in the spring of 1847, at which time William took his two daughters to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Betsey went west to Detroit where Garrett lived. Brown had not heard from her until the summer of 1848 when she arrived in Boston with a child and began meeting with various antislavery leaders including William Lloyd Garrison. Brown determined that she had evil intentions and attempted "to poison the minds of the best of friends against me."[102] Betsey eventually met with Brown. He did not see her child, whom he implied Garrett fathered. She asked for money and wanted to see their daughters. After giving her money and allowing her to see Clarissa and Josephine, Brown assumed she would return to Buffalo as promised.

After Brown returned from an antislavery convention in Philadelphia, however, he found Betsey still in Massachusetts. She had traveled to Springfield, Worcester, and again to New Bedford, "spreading injurious reports against [him]" and "using up the time in going among influential abolitionists, to prejudice them against [Brown]."[103] This led some to question why the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society would employ an agent whose wife publicly complained about him. As a result the society appointed a committee to look into the matter and held a conference with the Browns. At this acrimonious conference Betsey

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[101] Ibid., 448.
[102] Ibid., 449.
[103] Ibid.

failed to cooperate until Brown threatened to write to neighbors in Buffalo "to procure some evidence against her" as to the cause of their separation. Later in a private conversation with Brown, Betsey agreed to join him in a petition for divorce. Brown related the details of the conference and these conversations to William Lloyd Garrison in a letter dated September 15, 1848.[104] The committee refrained from making a ruling on the Browns' troubles because they determined they were not fully aware of all the facts. In the end the plans for a divorce remained in the discussion phase, Betsey returned to Buffalo, and they never saw each other again. In March 1850, while Brown toured and lectured in Europe, a brief story appeared in the *New York Daily Tribune* titled "A Stray Husband." The story stated that Elizabeth Brown, wife of abolitionist and fugitive slave William Wells Brown, had been deserted by her husband and was destitute.[105] Only after this story appeared did Brown make public his wife's indiscretions to protect his livelihood, his daughters, and his manhood.[106]

While it appeared that this failed marriage thwarted Brown's efforts to bolster his manhood within Northern white society, it actually gave him an opportunity to demonstrate that he understood the concept very clearly. The open letter "To the Public" published in the *Liberator* in which Brown detailed his marital failings demonstrated his efforts to conform to self-made manhood, which was the hegemonic masculinity of the nineteenth century.[107] Brown showed civilized restraint toward his philandering wife and thus understood that a man did not blithely give in to aggressive tendencies or animal instincts. Coming home to find one's wife in bed with another man might lead most men to acts of violence. Yet, Brown showed self-control and did not give in to any animal instincts. Secondly, Brown

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[104] Brown to Garrison, 15 September 1848, William Lloyd Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library.
[105] Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 169.
[106] Brown, "To the Public," *Liberator*, 12 July 1850 in *The Works of William Wells Brown,* 447-450.
[107] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 33-38; Connell, *Masculinities*, xviii.

demonstrated an understanding of hegemonic masculinity and the importance of patriarchy. For the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, William Lloyd Garrison, and the readers of the *Liberator*, his word trumped Betsey's, as evidenced by the fact that he remained an agent for the Society and his career as an antislavery lecturer continued. Also, understanding patriarchy and his legal rights as a father, he took full custody of his daughters due to Betsey's indiscretion. He strove to protect them from the influence of both her and her family's "low moral character."[108]

Possibly due to increased activity surrounding his abolitionist work during the tumultuous 1850s or because he choose to be more cautious, Brown did not remarry until 1860. According to biographer William Farrison, "On April 12 [1860] he was married to Annie Elizabeth Gray," a resident of Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, and twenty years his junior.[109] Farrison continued: "By the middle of June the Browns had established their home next door to that of Mrs. Brown's parents on Webster Avenue in Cambridgeport….The Browns maintained their home there eighteen years."[110] While only circumstances compelled him to make the events surrounding his failed first marriage public, it did provide him an opportunity to show his understanding of nineteenth-century middle-class manhood. Additionally, Brown's second marriage and ownership of the home in Cambridgeport further demonstrated his effort to preform protective masculinity.

By modern standards and in comparison to that of William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass's marriage to Anna Murray was a success. The two remained married for forty-four years until her death in 1882. Although they were not engaged in the same intellectual work

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[108] Connell, *Masculinities*, 37, 77; Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 447, source of quotation.
[109] Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 314.
[110] Ibid., 317. Farrison provided a detailed discussion of property tax and census records that detailed Brown's home ownership.

(Anna was not active in his newspaper endeavors) they had a successful marital partnership. Douglass's marriage held significance as his first effort at performing manhood in white Northern society. Even so, some of his other reform efforts challenged this performance. As part of his antislavery and reform activities, Frederick Douglass advocated for women's rights, even to the point of attending and supporting the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848. Nevertheless, the realities of his own life with his first wife, Anna, illustrated the problem of reconciling ideas with the immediacy of real life situations. Within Douglass's household he expected and portrayed fairly traditional gender roles. Anna Murray financed Douglass's escape from slavery, giving him her savings from nine years of housekeeping. She followed him to New York where they married, then on to New Bedford, where she worked as a domestic servant between the births of three of their five children, and finally moved with him and the family to Rochester, New York, where they purchased a home and set up his newspapers. The couple had five children together, daughters Rosetta and Annie, and sons Lewis, Frederick, Jr., and Charles.[111]

When Douglass left for a lecture tour of Britain in 1845, Anna's self-reliance comforted him. She supported the family with a job in a shoe-bindery while Douglass lectured in Britain for nearly two years. During his absence, he periodically sent Anna money to help their family, but upon his return, he found she had put every penny he sent into a bank account. Her thrift set the foundation for the family's later prosperity.[112] Frederick Douglass performed protective masculinity by supporting his family, while Anna exemplified the double role lived by many free black women. She worked as a domestic

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[111] McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 146-216.
[112] Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass*, (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 10, 36, 99-101, 111; Philip S. Foner, *Frederick Douglass, a Biography*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1969), 22-24; Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 15.

servant to help her family, while she simultaneously worked to uphold the tenets of "true womanhood" in her own home.[113] While some might view Anna Douglass's actions as a desire for her own social mobility, scholars of gender and race argue free black women understood the need for black men to demonstrate their manhood. Historian Kristen Foster wrote, "Black Americans, like Anna Douglass…understood racial uplift to be a communal effort," one which required men to established themselves first.[114] In the end much of this was done in an effort to help Douglass perform masculinity as a provider and a protector.

Like William Wells Brown, Douglass clearly understood and acted upon hegemonic masculinity. Even though he worked and wrote in support of women's equal treatment, in his own home he followed the common practice that called for "the dominant position" for men "and the subordination of women."[115] Douglass also took advantage of his position as patriarch of the family and limited Anna to the more traditional roles of mother and housekeeper. While he was away fighting for the cause of the enslaved, she remained at home taking care of the children and had only a limited role in abolitionism or other nineteenth-century reforms. This could be seen as Douglass's effort to maintain his dominant male position, thus enhancing his manhood; or, it could also be seen as a sign of his limitations as a provider, which could have the opposite effect. While he could maintain his home and his family, they were not wealthy enough to be able to hire others to watch their children and take care of their home, like many of the other white antislavery activists. Then again, it could have been as historian Kristen Foster argued, "that black women

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[113] See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, Part 1 (Summer, 1966), 151. True womanhood was a prevailing value system among the white upper and middle classes during the nineteenth century in the United States. This value system emphasized new ideas of femininity, the woman's role within the home and the dynamics of work and family. "True women" were supposed to possess four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness.
[114] Foster, "'We are Men!'," 153.
[115] Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

understood the urgency of establishing the manhood of black men first, not because black women were helpless victims but because without 'collective autonomy' there could be no 'personal autonomy.'"[116] It should be noted that Frederick and Anna's marriage did face some challenges. Rumors emerged in 1854 that Frederick and the British abolitionist Julia Griffiths engaged in infidelity while she helped edit and publish the *North Star*. Additionally, speculation surrounded his relationship with the German abolitionist Ottilie Assing.[117] Both of these alleged infidelities drew added attention because both women were white. Douglass denied the rumors, and he and Anna remained married. Whatever the case, the Douglass's marriage remained based on traditional nineteenth-century gender roles, which provided Frederick Douglass with the opportunity to demonstrate protective masculinity.

Henry Bibb and his second wife, Mary Miles, had the least traditional marriage of these three black abolitionists. In many ways it resembled the marriages of the white abolitionists; a somewhat equal partnership in which both parties participated in reform activities outside the home.[118] Nevertheless, while it provided a way for Bibb to restore some of his manhood lost to slavery, the nature of the relationship and the fact they failed to have any children limited the impact it had on his performance of masculinity.

As stated above, the parting scene between Henry Bibb and his first wife Malinda became a staple in his antislavery lectures. Antislavery journals and newspapers printed and reprinted his story. Even if he wanted to forget Malinda, he could not. Like some suffering

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[116] Foster, "'We are Men!'," 152.
[117] Martin, *Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 41; McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 163, 165, 166, 170, 182; Maria Diedrich, *Love Across Color Lines: Ottilie Assing and Frederick Douglass* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). See also the forthcoming work by historian Leigh Fought tentatively titled *Frederick Douglass' Women* (New York: Oxford University Press.) Additionally, Fought's work can be found at http://leighfought.blogspot.com/, of particular interest is her critique of Diedrich's *Love Across Color Lines*.
[118] See Dixon, *Perfecting the Family*.

from a broken heart, Bibb decided to assuage his grief by finding another partner. "So I conceived the idea that it would be better for me to change my position, provided that I should find a suitable person."[119] In the summer of 1847, Bibb met Mary Miles, a free black Quaker schoolteacher from Rhode Island, at an antislavery meeting in New York City. They began correspondence, and a year later married in Dayton, Ohio, where Miles taught school.

The marriage to a freeborn person meant that it would be recognized as a legal bond. Bibb stated that they "were joined in holy wedlock. Not in slaveholding style, which is a mere farce, without the sanction of law or gospel; but in accordance with the laws of God and our country."[120] Next, Bibb discussed how slavery forced its victims into adultery. In slavery, "the sacred marriage bed of the enslaved is not sacred, and slavery plunders the rights of the husband and father, especially those of the husband." He could now love Mary Miles freely and demonstrate his manhood through protection of her. Additionally, Miles as a free woman helped Bibb protect future children. If they had children, the children would be free. Bibb wrote, "I am now free from the hand of the cruel oppressor, no more to be plundered of my dearest rights; the wife of my bosom, and my poor unoffending offspring."[121] This statement suggested that even in his new life, Bibb never forgot that enslavement robbed him of his manhood rights; rights celebrated by men in any male-dominated society. It was clear that in such a society free black men, as well as slave men, were not considered complete men. They had to struggle to obtain any measure of respect as men.

An only child, born into a family who had been free for generations, Mary Miles had the benefit of a good education, something denied to most people of her race and gender.

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[119] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 163.
[120] Ibid., 164.
[121] Ibid.

She came of age in Boston and moved in the social circles of some of the most renowned abolitionists of the time. In her milieu she would have known William Cooper Nell, the black activist who led the charge against Boston's segregated school system. Her mentors were none other than education reformer Horace Mann and abolitionist Samuel J. May, both powerful white men and leaders within their respective fields.[122] Additionally she corresponded with the Quaker abolitionist and women's rights activist Lucretia Mott. For a black woman of the time she occupied a relatively privileged space.[123]

When Miles met Bibb in 1847 at the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York, she had taught elementary school for three years. In these years, she taught in Boston, Albany, and Cincinnati, demonstrating the itinerant lifestyle required of teachers, particularly black women with limited job opportunities. Nonetheless, this gave Miles the prospect to make her own money and support herself.[124] The opportune meeting of Miles and Bibb at an abolitionist meeting occurred at the right time for both. The two exchanged letters for a year, after which they determined that they had "much in common." In June 1848 they married in Ohio, where Miles taught. Bibb, drawing on personal experience, wrote in his *Narrative* and contrasted his slave marriage with this legal one by stressing the loss of patriarchal rights suffered by slave men, and the sexual violation suffered by slave women at the hands of their white masters. "She is to me what a poor slave's wife can never be to her husband while in the condition of a slave; for she can not be true to her husband contrary to the will of her master. She can neither be pure nor virtuous,

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[122] Horace Mann was a leading educational reformer and Samuel J. May was a prominent radical abolitionist.
[123] See Afua P. Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb: Black Woman Teacher in Nineteenth-Century Canada West," *Ontario History* 83, no. 1 (1991), 39-54. Through the mentorship of Mann and May, Mary Miles attended the Lexington Normal School in Massachusetts from 1842-1844. She graduated with a teaching certificate and found employment in a Boston primary school. From Boston, Miles moved in November 1845 to Albany, New York where she taught at the colored school. Miles remained in Albany until 1847 when she relocated to Cincinnati, Ohio with Bibb.
[124] Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb," 39-45.

contrary to the will of her master. She dare not refuse to be reduced to a state of adultery at the will of her master; from the fact that the slaveholding law, customs and teachings are against the poor slave," Bibb recalled.[125]

Mary Miles as a free woman and wife came to symbolize Bibb's freedom and a restoration of his manhood. Bibb understood this reality. Freedom meant that the family enjoyed his security and protection. After they married, Mary continued teaching in Cincinnati and Bibb continued his speaking and writing. During the years 1848-1850 they moved between Detroit, Cincinnati, and Boston, with the later place as their base. During this time Bibb made extensive tours of the New England states and in 1849 published his autobiography.[126] The Bibbs' lifestyle and marital arrangement remained unorthodox and defied the typical middle-class gender conventions of the day. Yet, they both believed that a woman educated like Mary Bibb should continue to teach and be an active agent to fight racial oppression and for the cause of the enslaved.[127]

In November 1850, fearing the application of the new Fugitive Slave Law, the couple moved to Sandwich, Canada West, or as it is now known, Windsor, Ontario. (They lived in the village of Windsor, but it did not gain official status until 1854.) Only after this move did they live together for long periods of time. At this point Henry Bibb's life took on a more public nature; one historian has written that in Canada he found his "life's work."[128] In Canada Bibb launched several memorable ventures.

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[125] Bibb, *Narrative*, in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 192-191.
[126] See introduction to Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa* and Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb".
[127] Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb".
[128] Landon, "Henry Bibb, a Colonizer," 437-447.

The Bibbs now saw Canada as their "chosen field."[129] The increasing number of escaped slaves arriving at various points along the U.S./Canada border needed help and assistance. Mary Bibb wrote that she went to Canada to labor among the fugitives as an uplift worker and a reformer.[130] Mary, along with her husband, started a school for black children, cofounded the Windsor Anti-Slavery Association, and often wrote articles for Bibb's newspaper, *Voice of the Fugitive*. She also organized a host of other community activities such as fund raising dinners and "mental improvement" events to raise funds for the Windsor Baptist church.[131]

Mary Bibb's name became linked with her husband's not simply as his wife, but because of the work they did together. She expanded the helpmate role by choosing to be her husband's colleague. Thus, like white abolitionists, the Bibbs held a unique view of marriage and family roles. They were much more like Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld, who also led a very public life together, working for the same cause. Few other Black abolitionist men, however, had their wives by their side. The free black abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet's wife Julia assisted him in his church and school, but she maintained only a supporting role. And Frederick Douglass, as well as white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, kept their wives in the background.[132] Comparatively, Henry and Mary Bibb's marriage appeared as one of equals.

After gaining their freedom, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass all demonstrated protective masculinity. Henry Bibb, however, went a step farther with his efforts. Bibb knew that for

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[129] See Mary Bibb to Gerrit Smith, 8 Nov. 1850, in the Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit-Mercy; original Gerrit Smith Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University.
[130] Ibid.
[131] *Voice of the Fugitive*, 30 July, 19 Nov. 1851.
[132] See Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); and Earl Ofari, *Let Your Motto be Resistance; the Life and Thought of Henry Highland Garnet* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

the hundreds of refugees fleeing the United States for Canada, having an opportunity to own their own land would improve their lot in life. When Bibb settled in Ontario, he busied himself with the organization and implementation of a land program targeted at landless blacks there. From these efforts emerged the Fugitive Union Society and eventually the Refugee Home Society. While not the first effort to establish a black settlement, Canadians had not yet founded one.[133] The Refugee Home Society officially came into being at a meeting in Farmington, Michigan, in May of 1851. Black and white abolitionists from Ontario and Michigan met to discuss how best to help the hundreds of refugees coming from the United States into the Detroit River frontier as a result of the Fugitive Slave Act.[134]

The need for this land program arose from the substantial migration of blacks, from both slave and free backgrounds coming into the province. The Detroit River district, as a border region, felt the most pressure from this migration. Though Canada beckoned as a land of freedom from the beginning of the century, blacks as a group encountered racial discrimination from whites when they arrived, much like they had in many Northern free states. Whites excluded blacks from churches, schools, and even temperance societies. Though some of the incoming blacks purchased land and farms, many others remained landless and had no choice but to work as laborers or lease land to support themselves.[135]

On November 11, 1850, less than two weeks after arriving in the province, Henry Bibb called a convention.[136] The delegates formed the Fugitive Union Society, with the objective, " to enable every fugitive from slavery, if possible to become an owner and tiller

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[133] See William Henry Pease and Jane H. Pease, *Black Utopia; Negro Communal Experiments in America* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963).
[134] *Voice of the Fugitive*, June 9, 1851.
[135] See Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).
[136] See report of the meeting under the title "Fugitive Slaves in Canada West," in the *Voice of the Fugitive*, January 1, 1851, Black Abolitionists Archive, University of Detroit-Mercy.

of the soil, so as promote the cause of temperance and education among our people; and that any person who does not sell or use intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and who bears good moral character, may become a member of the Society."[137] The Fugitive Union Society aimed to buy twenty-thousand acres of land, which it would sell to the refugees at cost. They had a clear vision for the land that they laid out in their early plans. Each person or family could not buy more than twenty-five acres of land; one third of the money from sales would be set aside for education, and the rest used for further land purchase. Other resolutions pertaining to the security and racial uplift also emerged from early meetings. They planned to circulate a report to the free black population of the northern United States, urging them to immigrate to Canada where they would be recognized "as men." The Society appointed vigilance committees in the villages of Chatham, Amherstburg, and Sandwich, Ontario. The *Voice of the Fugitive* also had its genesis at the convention. "Resolved, That we make immediate effort to have a newspaper established in our midst, which shall be the advocate of the colored people in Canada West."

Some delegates remained unsure if land ownership could solve the problems of incoming refugees. In response, Bibb noted that the bulk of the refugees understood agricultural pursuits: many had worked as farmers on Southern plantations, while others had agricultural experience laboring on Northern farms. He felt that with a little assistance these persons could establish themselves as farmers in the province. His statement that "agriculture is the most certain road to independence and self-elevation" formed the center of his

[137] Ibid.

philosophy regarding the best method for blacks to achieve independence and black men to prove their manhood.[138]

As the Society adjourned in November 1850 it set August 1, 1851, for its next meeting date. Bibb eagerly engaged this new challenge. In his paper, he lauded the "superiority" of the land in Ontario and the area's favorable climate, especially its southernmost portions. As part of his call for emigration to Ontario, he wrote an article for the *Voice of the Fugitive* in which he declared that many blacks from the United States had written, informing him that they planned to come and settle in Canada.[139]

In the March 26, 1851 issue of the *Voice of the Fugitive* Bibb opened with part one of a three-part editorial entitled "What Do the Fugitives in Canada Stand Mostly in Need of?" Bibb articulated his thoughts on the Fugitive Union Society and outlined his plans. This article dealt with the same theme as the November 1850 Sandwich Convention report. In this case, however, Bibb delineated how landownership would help to establish black manhood. He thanked the "antislavery friends" who had been helping the fleeing fugitives with their donations of food and clothing but noted: "if we would be *men* and command respect among *men*, we must strike for something higher than sympathy and perpetual beggary. We must produce what we consume." The article continued with an explanation by Bibb of the importance of land and education as the real needs for the fugitives; and that through these black men could lift up their race, take care of their families, and thus "command respect among men."[140]

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[138] Ibid. Bibb's vision foreshadowed Michael Kimmel's concept of a self-made man in *Manhood in America*, 13-16, as well as Chapter 3 of this study on self-made masculinity.
[139] Bibb, *Voice of the Fugitive*, March 12, 1851.
[140] Bibb, *Voice of the Fugitive,* March 26, 1851. Emphasis is mine.

In the second installment of the editorial on fugitives' needs, Bibb continued to stress his philosophy of land acquisition for black racial uplift. From this editorial Bibb made it clear that he believed blacks needed to get by with as little help from whites as possible. Many black leaders, including Bibb, believed that they were constantly under the white gaze.[141] Whites watched and judged the fugitives' actions, and thus they needed to give stellar performances. Nevertheless, the expectations which black leaders and white abolitionists held for the refugees remained high, and possibly unrealistic. Bibb himself in numerous articles in the *Voice* noted that since the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act more and more destitute blacks coming into Ontario had great needs. The abolitionist resources of Ontario and Michigan strained to help these immigrants. Initially they had basic needs: food, clothing, and shelter. Bibb asserted that only with their own land could they become independent, respectable farmers, thus freeing up resources for other fugitives, and thereby lessening their dependence on whites. Through his writing Bibb hoped to inform whites that black leadership did not support black dependence on whites, but encouraged black self-reliance; for Bibb, these appeals would serve as a "call to *manhood*."[142]

Soon, this mission to assist fugitives in Canada took on a new dimension. At the meeting of the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society (MASS) held on May 21, 1851 in Detroit, members of the Society made assistance to fugitives an important agenda item. At this meeting these antislavery workers formed the Refugee Home Society. The *Voice* reported to its readers, "[w]e attended the state convention in Detroit on the 21st where the…society was organized for the purpose of trying to purchase 50,000 acres of land for the fugitive slaves in Canada to settle upon." Bibb then added a cautionary note: "God speed the society in its

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[141] For more on the concept of the "gaze," see George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008).
[142] Bibb, *Voice of the Fugitive*, April 9, 1851. Emphasis is mine.

noble undertaking. May it become auxiliary to societies which have been organized for the same object and work with them in union until the object is obtained."[143]

What emerged from this meeting were two groups with similar aims. One based in Windsor, the other in Michigan—one predominantly white, and the other overwhelmingly black. It is not known whether the Fugitive Union Society agreed with the Refugee Home Society's proposal to buy fifty thousand acres of land. Bibb clearly held misgivings about the later. His statement that the Refugee Home Society should be an auxiliary group was telling. Additionally, he noted that the MASS meeting "was not very numerously attended," and that "their plans were not so well matured as they should have been." On the other hand, he also called the delegates some of the "truest friends of the cause."[144]

Whatever the case, at this meeting Bibb outlined the purpose, function, strategies, and operation of the land settlement project of the Fugitive Union Society. It became apparent that Henry Bibb had the idea and plans for the land settlement program for landless black refugees and the Refugee Home Society used Bibb's ideas. The project, at a later date, would be wholeheartedly taken up by the Refugee Home Society.[145]

As the Refugee Home Society took off, two prominent New York abolitionists, William Allen and Lewis Tappan, came out publically in support of the plan. Allen, a professor of languages at New York Central College, wrote to Bibb saying,

> I like much the idea of self-help which you are endeavoring to press upon our people. That idea, and that alone, worked out, is to be our salvation… Your plan, i.e., the purchasing of twenty thousand acres of land in Canada for the fugitives to settle upon is worthy of you. The manner in which you propose to raise the money also is such as

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[143] Bibb, *Voice of the Fugitive*, June 4, 1851.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Henry Bibb's role as originator of the Refugee Home Society idea and plan is well documented in Landon, "Henry Bibb," 437.

> no one will object to. Put me down for one share of the stock in your "bank of charity"…[146]

Lewis Tappan, an original founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society, wrote to Bibb stating that he (Bibb) and the project could "calculate on aid from [his] quarter."[147]

In November 1851 the Refugee Home Society made its first purchase in Sandwich Township of two-hundred acres of land from one Lucy Bouchette at a purchase cost of six-hundred and ten dollars.[148] A group of Detroit men, led by the Refugee Home Society's president Nathan Stone, and invited by Bibb, came and inspected the land—they gave it their approval.

At a meeting held in Farmington, Michigan, January 29, 1852, the Fugitive Union Society and Refugee Home Society officers and trustees appointed a new committee to draft another constitution and bylaws. The committee appointed Henry Bibb as the executive of the board of trustees, while they elected Nathan Stone as president. Additionally the committee commissioned Bibb to go east to collect funds and established the *Voice of the Fugitive* as the official organ of the Society. The Society made provisions for education, a land clearance policy, and put requirements in place for the type of houses to be built within the constitution. Additionally, the Society wrote deeds to ensure the protection of women and children in the event of the death of a husband or father so that the land would legally belong to the wife and children. They built into this system protection for families and made an

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[146] Bibb, *Voice of the Fugitive*, March 26th, April 23rd 1851; February 12, 1852. Professor Allen was one of the first persons to pledge monies to the Refugee Home Society. In addition to the $10 cash he sent to Bibb with his letter, he pledged $100 to the project. See *Voice* July 30, 1851. Allen was an African American professor at New York Central College. The school had an integrated faculty and student body. Allen taught Rhetoric, Greek, and Literature. Despite the schools integrationist policy Allen was forced out and had to flee the country when he married one of his white students. For more on Allen see R. J. M. (Richard) Blackett, "William G. Allen: The Forgotten Professor," *Civil War History* 26, no. 1 (1980), 39-52.
[147] See *Voice of the Fugitive*, June 1, 1851.
[148] *Voice of the Fugitive*, November 19, 1851.

effort to follow the gendered expectation of husbands and fathers as breadwinners as they performed a traditional model of masculinity.[149]

Also at this January 1852 meeting the two groups—the Fugitive Union Society and the Refugee Home Society—merged. Or more accurately, the FUS conceded their operations to the RHS. The officers and trustees of both groups simply formalized what had become evident to all. From the Canadian side Henry and Mary Bibb assumed local leadership of the society.[150] Due to leadership of the Refugee Home Society resting in the hands of white Michiganders it might appear that they were the societies' leaders. In spite of the predominance of the Detroit group, however, Henry Bibb has been most closely identified as the leader of the Refugee Home Society.

By the time of Bibb's death in August of 1854 the Refugee Home Society had acquired 1,696 acres of land and contracted for another two hundred and they had settled about two-hundred people. The Society continued until 1876 and eventually bought and distributed approximately four thousand acres. Scholars such as William and Jane Pease, Robin Winks, and the editors of the *Black Abolitionist Papers*, have called this a failure because they did not achieve the ultimate goal of fifty thousand acres, or even the less ambitious goal of twenty thousand acres.[151] The aim of purchasing fifty thousand acres and raising one-hundred thousand dollars may have been overly ambitious—perhaps unrealistic. Yet, the Refugee Home Society raised money, bought land, and settled some sixty families in Canadian freedom. Though Henry and Mary Bibb, the Michigan abolitionists, and others devised strategies to enable the fugitives to own land, most fugitives and later freedmen went

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[149] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 16. Kimmel noted that the term "breadwinner" came into use between 1810 and 1820, and that it denoted the "responsible family man."
[150] Bibb, *Voice of the Fugitive*, February 12, 1852.
[151] See Pease and Pease, *Black Utopia*; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; George E. Carter and C. Peter Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers, 1830-1865* (17 vols.; Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1993). See volume 2 on Canada.

their way and worked out their destinies themselves, without the aid of leaders—black or white. Nevertheless, Henry Bibb tried to share his experience as a man with other fugitive slaves. When he wrote, "I had broken the bands of slavery, and landed myself in Canada, where I was regarded as a *man*," he knew that others needed to share in his experience as a way to not only improve themselves, but also to improve black manhood in general.[152]

When Bibb unexpectedly died on August 1, 1854, he and Mary had been married for six years. Despite striving to demonstrate manhood through free land ownership and self-reliance, Bibb died without any children and did not have the opportunity to demonstrate his masculinity through fatherhood. Nevertheless, for Bibb, at the time of his death, he may have seen his most manly accomplishment as the creation of the Refugee Home Society, which helped poor landless blacks obtain a home of their own.

Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass publically demonstrated their manhood by protection of their families and the establishment of a home. As their parallel lives unfolded, each became fully aware that within slavery black men were powerless to protect their loved ones. Each observed in brutal detail the physical attacks, sexual abuse, and mental torture inflicted on the women and children in their lives. They all knew that only outside of slavery could they truly be seen as men. Yet freedom alone was no guarantee of manhood. Manhood required continued performances of various masculinities.

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[152] Bibb, *Narrative* in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 65. Emphasis is mine.

CHAPTER 3: Self-Made Masculinity—1834-1863

William Wells Brown, a leading abolitionist, playwright, author, and public intellectual, was born in 1814 in Kentucky to Elizabeth, a slave, and a white father related to his owner. Brown escaped to freedom in January 1834 and within two years began his abolitionist career. With a career more varied than most, he initially worked as an antislavery speaker, then he published his *Narrative* (1847), and later produced the novel *Clotel* (1853) and the play *The Escape* (1858). Additionally, he wrote about race, gender, and history. This included work such as *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863). Nevertheless, from running away in 1834 to publishing his *Narrative* in 1847, Brown began his efforts to perform self-made masculinity in the arena of public speaking. After several years of traveling regionally and speaking in Erie County, New York, where he worked as a seaman on Lake Erie, Brown had his first experience with speaking at the national level. His speech at the American Anti-Slavery Society's convention in May of 1844 in New York City opened the door for him to become a touring abolitionist lecturer. Later, while on the lecture circuit in New Lisbon, Ohio, a local newspaper reported on his quality as a speaker:

> On the first evening, he had a considerable house full to address—the second evening, the Seceder church as about as full as it could hold. On both occasions, he did lash slavery, slaveholders, and their apologists, severely—no quarter was given for such fugitives from righteousness by this fugitive from [slavery]. He exposed pro-slavery hypocrisy and shallowness most essentially. The audience was frequently in roars of laughter, and anon everything was as quiet as a tomb, save his strong, *manly* voice.[1]

[1] Speeches were given on September 9-10, 1844. *New Lisbon* [Ohio], *Aurora*, September 11, 1844. Quoted in William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown: Author & Reformer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 90. Emphasis is mine.

Brown's "strong, manly voice" has frequently been the focus of historians and literary scholars. William Farrison included a chapter in his biography of Brown titled "His Strong Manly Voice," and a collection of Brown's works edited by Paula Garrett and Hollis Robbins is titled *The Works of William Wells Brown: Using His "Strong, Manly Voice"* (2006).[2] This gendered language used to describe his antislavery endeavors focused on the masculine image he worked to create for himself and the voice he used to call for slavery to end. Each of the men under consideration here, Bibb, Brown, and Douglass, all became self-made men as understood by contemporaries and modern scholars, as did countless others who garnered less fame. They performed another aspect of manhood, a self-made masculinity that they found in their careers as abolitionists.

By the 1840s, the prescriptive discourse that characterized the mainstream of Northern culture idealized the virtuous, respectable, independent, self-made man.[3] These men were expected to be "manly"—meaning paragons of virtue and high-minded self-restraint who shunned immoral spaces and activities and preferred moderation to excess. The quintessential man was also expected to be self-made, someone who, rather than resting on his ancestors' laurels, proved himself in the public sphere and found success in the new and rapidly expanding market order. Ideal manly men were, by definition, independent men of good character, free of debt and vice, who embraced the Protestant work ethic in their business affairs and attended to self-improvement and self-cultivation. And by remaking

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[2] William Wells Brown, *The Works of William Wells Brown: Using His "Strong, Manly Voice"*, ed. Paula Garrett and Hollis Robbins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Farrison, *William Wells Brown*.
[3] By definition prescriptive discourse is any discourse that promotes what should be thought, spoken, or done. Essentially normative discourse about what ought to be the case rather than descriptive discourse about what is the case.

themselves in this image, virtuous middle-class men expected to achieve a Franklinesque rise from obscurity to greatness.[4]

Literary scholar Robert S. Levine argued that slave narratives share much of Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*'s emphasis on self-improvement, reliance on the Protestant work ethic, and elevation from one's humble beginnings. Levine also found that "in [Frederick] Douglass's and many other narratives of the antebellum period, the Franklinian model is ultimately put to the service of lining [up] the individual uplift of the black persona [with] the revolutionary cause of freedom."[5] In addition to the slave narrative, other abolitionist activities such as antislavery lecturing, editing of black abolitionist newspapers, and writing novels or plays that attacked slavery constituted forms of racial uplift for African Americans in the antebellum era. According to E. Anthony Rotundo, a leading scholar in the history of American masculinity, in the nineteenth-century the "Self-Made Man" took "his identity and his social status from his own achievements… a man's work role…formed the essence of his identity. And men fulfilled themselves through personal success in…the professions."[6] The sociologist Michael Kimmel wrote that "the Self-Made Man, a model of manhood that derives identity entirely from a man's activities in the public sphere, measured by accumulated wealth and status," took hold in the nineteenth-century. The "Self-Made Man was also…desperate to achieve a solid grounding for a masculine identity," this concept "of the Self-Made Man came to dominate the American

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[4] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 18-25; Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 18-21; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10-13. For a historical perspective on the issue of self-made men, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[5] See Robert S. Levine, "The Slave Narrative and the Revolutionary Tradition of American Biography," in Audrey A. Fisch, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 106.

[6] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3.

definition of manhood."[7] Both Rotundo's and Kimmel's studies focused on white men of the nineteenth-century; nevertheless, it also served as the dominant ideal of manhood that Bibb, Brown, and Douglass each strove to achieve.

The concept of self-made masculinity centered on work—the various jobs in which Bibb, Brown, and, Douglass were employed to earn a living. Within this masculine identity that they performed through their careers as abolitionist speakers, newspaper men, novelists, and antislavery activists, these men further established their manhood and modeled a form of masculinity essential to middle-class nineteenth century American men. All held several occupations and each performed manual labor immediately after their escape. However, their antislavery activities is the focus of analysis here.

The writer and literary scholar Henry James, in an essay on Ralph Waldo Emerson, wrote that a man without a profession was in an ambiguous relation to the public.[8] This referred to Emerson leaving his work as a Unitarian minister to create for himself a profession as a lyceum lecturer and public intellectual. In the same way Bibb, Brown, and Douglass recreated themselves through their chosen careers. Frederick Douglass entered the profession of newspaper editor, Henry Bibb established himself as an antislavery lecturer, and William Wells Brown made himself into a successful novelist and playwright. Each of these men, through their chosen professions, performed self-made masculinity that further demonstrated their manhood.

As previously noted, during the 1840s prescriptive discourse (advice or conduct literature) abounded throughout the northern United States. Much of this developed in reaction to the changes wrought on society by the Second Great Awakening and the Market

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[7] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 17.
[8] See "Emerson" in Henry James, *Partial Portraits*, ed. Leon Edel (1888 rprt.; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), 13.

Revolution that followed. This literature targeted the emerging white middle class in order to help them with their new, fluid, and undefined status. Accordingly, aspiring men and women had to engage in a self-conscious project of self-identification, claiming virtue, morality, and respectability as the cultural markers that would distinguish them from those above and below on the socio-economic scale.[9] Conduct literature, middle class readers hoped, might teach them how to acquire and maintain the precise manners, moral habits, and restrained, virtuous character that would help them to rise in status, mark them as members of a higher station, and to navigate the new market oriented culture. Northern blacks who sought to rise from their former condition as enslaved men and women, and to transform themselves into "ideal" free men and women, also turned to conduct literature for guidance and support.[10]

Much like conduct literature, slave narratives could link self-improvement, race consciousness, and antislavery activism in ways that resonated with aspiring free black men searching to demonstrate their manhood. In fact, the narratives penned by former slaves who had achieved prominence in the free black community, such as Bibb, Brown, and Douglass, provided excellent examples of how to perform self-made masculinity.

The narratives written by male former slaves dramatized the link between male self-improvement and the independence that came with freedom. In addition to critiquing the violence, inhumanity, and greed fostered by the system of slavery, the slave narrative functioned as an elevation story for the northern black reader. For example, as literary critic

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[9] Historians are increasingly moving away from sociological explanations of class in favor of approaches that analyze the "middle class" as a cultural process, a set of behaviors and a shared set of values and aspirations that began to coalesce in the early nineteenth century. For examples of this approach, see Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Jennifer L. Goloboy, "The Early American Middle Class," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 4 (Winter, 2005), 537-545.

[10] For more on advice literature within the free northern black community see chapter one, "African American Advice Literature and Black Middle-Class Self-Fashioning" in Erica Ball, *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Black Middle Class* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

David Leverenz argued, Douglass's original *Narrative* and all its subsequent revisions focused on manhood, "the dignity of labor and the Protestant work ethic" as well as on "being a self-made man, a topic on which [Douglass] frequently spoke."[11] But the authors of these narratives not only invoked the idea of the self-made man on the printed page but reminded readers that they physically embodied the concept. The arc of the slave narrative illustrated self-improvement principles in the most distilled fashion—a movement from the degradation of total dependence demanded by the slave power to freedom and presumably independence in the North. Many authors crystallized this arc of elevation to self-made manhood throughout their narratives, including Henry Bibb's *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1849), William Wells Brown's *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself* (1847), and Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (1845).[12]

Readers of these narratives would have been aware that many of those who wrote about the institution of slavery were prominent members of the northern black community. Henry Bibb as an important leader of the fugitive slave community in Detroit and Canada West also served as an educator, promoter of land settlement for black refugees, and a newspaper editor. Douglass won fame for editing the *North Star* as well as for his oratorical

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[11] David Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 128-129. See also Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 253-278.

[12] These are the original titles and dates of publication for each narrative. Both Brown and Douglass later published other editions of their narratives and other autobiographies or memoirs. See for example William Wells Brown, *My Southern Home; Or, the South and its People* (1880 rprt.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); William Wells Brown, *The Travels of William Wells Brown: The Narrative of William Wells Brown, a Fugitive Slave, and the American Fugitive in Europe, Sketches of Places and People Abroad*, ed. Paul Jefferson (1855 rprt.; New York: M. Weiner Publishers, 1991); Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass,* (1881 rprt.; Hartford, Conn.: Park Pub., 1882); Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855 rprt.; New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

skills. And William Wells Brown became a prolific writer as well as an antislavery lecturer, publishing plays, a novel, and works of African American history after gaining his freedom.

These same achievements often threatened these men's "authenticity" for white audiences; yet they also made them "representative men" for members of the northern black activist community. White abolitionists often worried that educated black lecturers would not convince hostile white audiences that they had, in fact, been enslaved. In *My Bondage, My Freedom*, Douglass wrote that white abolitionists had encouraged him to mask his oratorical abilities and asked him to keep "a little of the plantation manner of speech" to avoid appearing "too learned."[13] By contrast, northern blacks valued literary skill and oratorical prowess as badges of leadership. The black abolitionist Martin Delany praised the narratives of Bibb, Brown, and Douglass as "masterly efforts, manifesting great force of talent." Delany described Bibb as "an eloquent speaker" who "with equal advantages, would equal many of those who fill high places in the country, and now assume superiority over him and his kindred."[14]

Through courage and ingenuity, these men had transformed themselves from chattel property into literate, eloquent, and famous men. Brown pointed out, "in our own country, there are men who once held the plough…without any compensation, [who] are now

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[13] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 24-25.

[14] Martin Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852 rprt.; Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1993), 123, 130. This work served as a manifesto calling for black emigration from the United States to Central America. Martin R. Delany was an African American abolitionist, writer, editor, doctor, and politician. Born in Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia), he was the first black field officer in the United States Army, serving as a major during and after the American Civil War (1861–1865), and was among the first black nationalists. A fiercely independent thinker and wide-ranging writer, he coedited with Frederick Douglass the abolitionist newspaper *North Star* and later he also authored *Blake; or, The Huts of America*, a serial publication about a fugitive slave who, in the tradition of Nat Turner, organizes insurrection.

presiding at the editor's table."[15] Such men provided living proof of the attainability of black self-made masculinity. Force of will had transformed them from personal property owned by another into free men, even statesmen of sorts, ambassadors for the African American population. If these once-enslaved men could rise to prominence and independence and dedicate their lives to antislavery work, other free black men in the North had a duty to strive to do the same.

As scholars have pointed out, self-made education was at the center of Frederick Douglass's narrative.[16] He characterized his hard fight for literacy as the beginning of his transformation from bondsman to free man. Douglass recalled how he learned to read while still enslaved, gleaning knowledge from the whites around him: the mistress who made the mistake of teaching him the alphabet, the young white schoolboys who gave him lessons between errands. He leaned to write by watching the carpenters at the Baltimore shipyards where he hired out his time from his master. He goaded boys into giving him writing lessons by challenging them to best his ability to write the few letters he knew. He used whatever writing implement he could find or fashion to improve his skills: "During this time," he recalled, "my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk." Finally, he wrote in the empty spaces of his young master's copybook, until "after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write."[17] In short, he made clear the difficulties inherent in the process of self-elevation, and that attempts

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[15] William Wells Brown in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, October 2, 1851, in George E. Carter and C. Peter Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers, 1830-1865*, Microfilm ed., 17 vols. (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1993), 7:124. Hereafter *BAPC* to differentiate this microfilm collection from the published *The Black Abolitionist Papers*. See C. Peter Ripley et al., ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (5 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Hereafter *BAP*.
[16] See Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) and William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991).
[17] Douglass, *Narrative*, 50-51, 55-56.

at personal transformation should be inextricably bound up with one's desire to vanquish the peculiar institution.

When they arrived in the free states or newly adopted countries, these fugitives felt compelled to continue their antislavery labors and join abolitionist organizations, traveling as antislavery lecturers, and participating in societies designed to aid the free black populations. Douglass joined William Wells Brown on the abolitionist lecture circuit before settling in Rochester and inaugurating the *North Star*. And Bibb ultimately emigrated to Canada West, present day Ontario, became a leader of the fugitive community established there, as well as published the *Voice of the Fugitive*.

As the activities of these men make apparent, narratives highlighted the ongoing quest for independence, ultimately creating a uniquely African American interpretation of class mobility: a person garnered dignity, respect, and acclaim not on the basis of his or her origins but rather by success at forms of self-fashioning, at rising in society, and at working on behalf of their people, not just liberating themselves. Writing in 1855, Douglass recalled that before the 1840s, "a colored man was deemed a fool who confessed himself a runaway slave, not only because of the danger to which he exposed himself of being retaken, but because it was a confession of a very low origin!"[18] But by the end of the decade, northern blacks praised "self-made" and "great" men such as Bibb precisely because he began life as "an ignorant slave," and "by his own powers" became "an educated fee man" who "left a name that will not soon fade away." Brown then continued, "There are few characters more worthy of the student's study than that of Henry Bibb."[19]

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[18] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 24-25.
[19] William Wells Brown, *The Black Man; His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1865 rpt.; Miami, Fla.: Mnemosyne Pub. Inc., 1969), 87.

For northern black audiences, then, famous fugitive slaves clearly served as examples of courage, resilience, perseverance, strength, and virtue. And young aspiring African Americans were expected to emulate these examples and to place personal conduct and behavior in the service of the freedom struggle. While slaveholders inevitably descended further into the depths of sin, the African American heroes of some of the most powerful abolitionist texts could maintain their dignity in the face of overwhelming odds, claim their freedom, and elevate themselves to the status of free men, even statesmen, clearly demonstrating their self-made masculinity.

During the 1840s and 1850s, as memoirs and narratives by African Americans proliferated, they helped to create the archetype of the black self-made man. Slave narratives sketched out the path free black men could take up from slavery and reinforced the links that northern black conduct writers forged among independence, morality, and education. Together, this discourse offered an ideal to which young black men were expected to aspire as they trained themselves to live out self-made masculinity. It served as a counterpoint to the anxieties black conduct writers expressed about the many temptations and moral dangers faced by their most promising young men. Indeed, by 1859, Douglass, exemplar of the revolutionary possibilities of the process of self-made masculinity, would be lecturing on "Self-Made Men" to audiences across the North.[20]

Frederick Douglass, like many abolitionists, worked in various fields in the fight to end slavery. In 1841 he began his career as an abolitionist after giving a rousing, impromptu speech at an antislavery convention in Nantucket, Massachusetts. He used his oratorical skills in the ensuing years to lecture in the northern states as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society and earned a salary from the organization. Douglass also helped slaves

[20] Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 256.

escape to the North while working with the Underground Railroad. After returning from a trip to Britain in 1847, however, Douglass decided to make a career change.[21]

On October 28, 1847, Frederick Douglass, back from Europe, wrote to the Quaker abolitionist Amy Post to tell her, "I have finally decided on publishing the *North Star* in Rochester and to make that city my future home." In this way Douglass took another step up the social ladder of the antebellum republic. He had risen from being a slave field hand to a skilled caulker in Baltimore to a free laborer in New England, and eventually an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Yet, he found his true calling as a newspaperman and editor.[22]

When Douglass began the *North Star*, several other newspapers edited by African Americans already existed. These included *Freedom's Journal* and *The Colored American* however, none had an editor with such vaunted name recognition as did the *North Star*. He started the paper with funds gathered during his tour of Great Britain (August 1845 to April 1847) and sustained the venture with the financial support of the very wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith.[23] Douglass also began this project with a partner, the black abolitionist Martin Delany. Both were eager to establish themselves as men through their ownership and publication of the *North Star*. William Lloyd Garrison, Douglass's former employer at the American Anti-Slavery Society, perceived the launching of the *North Star* as a betrayal and a challenge to his manhood. This was due in part to Garrison's belief that the *North Star* would rival Garrison's the *Liberator*, and in part because Gerrit Smith was the main

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[21] William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991), 146-162; Douglass, *Narrative*.
[22] McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 149-150; Douglass to Amy Post October 28, 1847; see Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ed. John W. Blassingame, 5 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979-1992). Here after *FDP*.
[23] McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 161. *Freedom's Journal* (1827-1829) was edited by Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm and *The Colored American* (1837-1841) by Samuel Cornish alone.

benefactor. Garrison and his followers disliked Smith because as a Liberty Party man and rival antislavery leader, he had taken the issue of slavery into the world of electoral politics, which men such as Garrison eschewed.[24] Just as Douglass had changed his views regarding the use of violence, he also moved away from Garrison regarding the role that politics should play in the fight against slavery.[25] All in all, Douglass's move to Rochester and his foray into a career as a newspaperman symbolized his efforts at demonstrating his independence and his self-made manhood even, perhaps especially, from white abolitionists.[26]

Douglass established the *North Star* on December 3, 1847, in Rochester, New York, and developed it into the most influential black antislavery paper published during the antebellum era. The paper not only denounced slavery, but also fought for the emancipation of women and other oppressed groups. Its motto was "Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color - God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren."[27] It had a circulation of more than 4,000 readers in the United States, Europe, and the West Indies. In June 1851 the paper merged with the *Liberty Party Paper* of Syracuse, NY and they renamed it *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Under this new name the paper circulated until 1860. Douglass devoted the next three years to publishing an abolitionist magazine called *Douglass' Monthly*. In 1870 he

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[24] At the 1840 annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, abolitionists split over questions of strategy and tactics. One group of abolitionists looked to politics as the most promising way to end slavery and proposed creating an independent political party dedicated to ending slavery. Arthur and Lewis Tappan, two wealthy New York businessmen, and James Birney, a former Alabama slaveholder, founded the Liberty Party in 1840. Another group of abolitionists, led by William Lloyd Garrison, turned in a more radical direction. They withdrew from membership in churches that condoned slavery and refused to vote and hold public office. Also, they planned to continue the use of moral suasion to end slavery.

[25] Benjamin Quarles, "The Breach between Douglass and Garrison," *The Journal of Negro History* 23, no. 2 (Apr., 1938), 144.

[26] McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 151-155.

[27] It should be noted that Douglass attended the Seneca Falls Women's Convention in 1848 and prior to the Civil War spoke in favor of women's rights, including the right to vote.

assumed control of *The New Era*, a weekly established in Washington DC to serve former slaves. He renamed it *The New National Era*, and published it until it shut down in 1874.[28]

Like Douglass, Henry Bibb founded a newspaper and worked as its editor. He established in 1851 the *Voice of the Fugitive*, Canada's first paper edited by an African American. Bibb's early death in 1854, however, ended that. Thus, Bibb, made his living through his career as an antislavery lecturer and performed self-made masculinity. Bibb had begun his career as an orator telling the story of his slave experience in the spring of 1844 in southern Michigan. When he began his public lecturing career, white antislavery crusaders were more than ready to hear and sponsor a fugitive slave acquainted with the evils of slavery. However, Bibb did not start that trend. In 1841, after hearing Frederick Douglass speak at an abolitionist meeting and being vastly impressed, John A. Collins, general agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, persuaded Douglass to become a lecturing agent for the society. Initially Douglass remained reluctant, but later agreed and lectured for a sum of four hundred and fifty dollars per year.[29] Collins later wrote to William Lloyd Garrison and commented: "the public have itching ears to hear a colored man speak, and particularly a slave. Multitudes will flock to hear one of his class."[30]

Fugitive slaves turned abolitionist speakers gave a new impulse to the fight against slavery. One of the criticisms consistently hurled at white abolitionists by their proslavery detractors was that they knew nothing about slavery and therefore had no grounds to speak against an institution that they could not fully understand.[31] Fugitive slaves who had directly

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[28] Ibid., 146-162.
[29] Philip S. Foner, *History of Black Americans: From the Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom to the Eve of the Compromise of 1850* (2 vols.; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 461-463.
[30] Quoted in Henry Louis Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York, N.Y.: Signet Classics, 2012), xi.
[31] See Eric L. McKitrick, *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963) and Paul Finkelman, *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003).

experienced slavery spoke with authority. Northern whites lukewarm to the cause of abolition took notice when ex-slaves spoke because these speakers "could convey the atmosphere of chains, whips, bloodhounds."[32] From their position, the ex-slave speakers gave a new direction to the abolitionist crusade. The public entry of fugitive slaves into the ranks of abolitionist speakers also came at a time when the national antislavery society split apart due to infighting. Given the potential for crisis the movement needed a new direction. The fugitive slave speakers, many of whom evolved into gifted orators, provided a new focus. Noted historian Benjamin Quarles stated that former slave speakers "proved a godsend to the cause." While historian James B. Stewart observed that the fugitive slave speakers "made perhaps the most effective contribution to the crusade for slavery." And finally historian Larry Gara wrote that, though "their number was always small, their influence was not."[33]

As an antislavery lecturer Bibb had tremendous influence. It took intense focus and a single-mindedness to make repeated escape attempts against horrible odds. Both of these features made him attractive to antislavery groups. In addition, like the national antislavery movement, the Michigan wing also needed a new impetus. Historian Philip Foner wrote that many ex-slaves (including those lacking formal education) and free blacks "developed the fundamentals of public speaking" at self-improvement societies organized by free blacks. Noted historian of black abolitionists Benjamin Quarles emphasized that these self-improvement societies served as a springboard for blacks entering the public realm.[34]

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[32] Foner, *History of Black Americans*, 457.
[33] Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 61; James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 137; Larry Gara, "The Professional Fugitive in the Abolition Movement," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 48, no. 3 (Spring, 1965), 196.
[34] Foner, *History of Black Americans,* 102-106; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 68-89. For more on the importance of public speaking in the nineteenth century free

Only two years out of slavery Bibb entered the ranks of the professional lecturer. His sponsors must have seen him as a very authentic voice for the crusade of abolition. Bibb, as lecturer, would join the ranks of a formidable cadre of former slaves turned speakers—William Wells Brown, Henry "Box" Brown, Frederick Douglass, James W.C. Pennington, Henry Highland Garnet, Samuel Ringgold Ward, Josiah Henson, William and Ellen Craft, Sojourner Truth, and others. Before fugitive slaves became contributors to the antislavery crusade, free blacks such as Charles Lenox Remond, William Cooper Nell, and Robert Purvis represented African Americans in the movement. These free blacks served as members, supporters, and lecturing agents for various antislavery societies, especially those in Pennsylvania and New England.[35] Yet, the lecturing against slavery done by fugitive slaves had a more significant impact. It provided a public forum in which to stand up and demonstrate that they were men and should be treated as such.[36]

From all accounts, Henry Bibb was a very good antislavery lecturer. While he initially began by simply narrating his life and escape attempts, he quickly progressed to a paid agent and became a traveling lecturer representing both state and national antislavery organizations.[37] As a lecturer he had a significant impact on William Wells Brown, so much so that Brown included Bibb in his historical monograph *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863). Regarding Bibb, Brown wrote:

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black community see Dexter B. Gordon, *Black Identity: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish, "Reinventing the Master's Tools: Nineteenth-Century African-American Literary Societies of Philadelphia and Rhetorical Education," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (Autumn, 2000), 19-47; Shirley W. Logan, *We are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999).

[35] Ibid., 410, 455, 464-466, 475-476.

[36] Foner, *History of Black Americans*, 58-63.

[37] Many state level antislavery societies, as well as the American Anti-Slavery Society, employed paid agents. In addition to their speaking duties agents organized and planned meetings, collected donations for the society, and might often recruit volunteer celebrity speakers to join them on occasion. On average the American Anti-Slavery Society maintained 40-50 paid agents each year. See John L. Myers, "American Antislavery Society Agents and the Free Negro, 1833-1838," *The Journal of Negro History* 52, no. 3 (July, 1967), 200-219.

> In personal appearance he was tall and slim, a pleasing countenance, half white, hair brown, eyes grey, and possessed a musical voice, and a wonderful power of delivery. No one who heard Mr. Bibb, in the years 1847, '8, and '9, can forget the deep impression that he left behind him. His natural eloquence and his songs enchained an audience as long as the speaker wanted them.[38]

Speaking and lecturing empowered the ex-slave in much the same way that their engagement in writing and literature did. Speakers and writers performed their manhood through use of their intellect and as a means to provide for their family. Most literary scholars now agree that former slaves founded the African American literary tradition, and in a similar manner, they left their mark on African American oratorical traditions.[39] Henry Bibb left his mark as an orator and in doing so demonstrated his self-made masculinity.

Like Bibb, William Wells Brown lectured on the antislavery circuit. Yet, through his career as a novelist and playwright he made evident his self-made masculinity. His work not only served as a career, but also functioned as a unique means by which to attack the institution of slavery and challenge hegemonic white masculinity. Brown's challenge to that hegemony, however, did not occur in a way to remake the natural order, but operated as a mode through which he placed black men into the system on the side of patriarchy, along with white men. The following literary analysis of Brown's work shows the ways in which he attacked slavery, questioned the manhood of white slave owners, demonstrated the masculinity of black men, and performed a self-made masculinity of his own. Essentially, manhood and masculinity resided at the heart of his fictional and historical writings, not only concerning black masculinity but white manhood as well.

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[38] Brown, *The Black Man*, 86-87.

[39] James Olney, "I Was Born: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," in Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, eds., *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 149-158; Carter Godwin Woodson, *Negro Orators and their Orations* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969).

William Wells Brown used America's early national history as part of his literary project to combat slavery. Brown's use of the past depicted a Puritan American nation with complex beginnings, both flawed and exemplary, that would continue to inform American culture well into the nineteenth century. He believed that the revolutionary origins of the United States included both the ideals of freedom to which black men could aspire and the ideological basis of their oppression. Brown invoked the late eighteenth century in his novel *Clotel*, not to praise American origins but to highlight the incongruous juxtaposition of a nation that rhetorically privileged universal equality while it politically authorized and socially endorsed the enslavement of African Americans. He thus employed early national history, then, not to solve the nation's mid-century dilemma, but, as the literary scholar Russ Castronovo has argued, he "turn[ed] to the past" to "articulate a disjunctive national history always fractured by inconsistency and contradiction."[40]

Throughout his work Brown unrelentingly critiqued the United States for its oppression of African Americans and he placed much of the blame on the nation's founders, the men who allowed slavery to become an integral part of American identity. From his perspective, America's origins not only corrupted the nation as a whole, but also the character of its people, especially the white men who maintained the legacy of the founders. To understand this legacy, Brown examined America's political ideology, most notably its reliance on liberty and freedom as fundamental notions of individual and national identity, which conflicted with actual American practice. For white Americans, such ideology adequately represented their status as Americans. For African Americans, however, such ideology remained bitterly ironic. Even to those who were nominally free, it represented not

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[40] Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 17.

their experience of America but an ideal beyond reach because of American racism. While America's founders did champion freedom, they also devised a national system that would minimize African Americans' access to legal protections and political power. From Brown's perspective the founders' affirmation of the place of slavery within the nation subverted the Lockean ethos of government by consent represented by the Declaration of Independence, a grave error that left America's revolution incomplete.[41]

Brown's work demonstrated that the nation's continued attempt to strike a balance between South and North, slavery and freedom, not only oppressed African Americans but also compromised the morality of later generations of white Americans, especially white American men.[42] He showed that slavery encouraged white southern men, who under a different set of social conditions might have been morally exemplary, to become dissolute and even sexual predators. Even America's northern men, implicitly part of a national system that sustained slavery, became corrupted.

Brown's stance mirrored that of white abolitionists, which made sense because he published some of his writings in the *Liberator*, received support from Garrison, and toured with like-minded white abolitionists. It would be a mistake, however, to fully identify him with white abolitionists because he rejected elements of their approach to abolitionism as unrealistic. To a certain extent, he understood radical reform as an outgrowth of revolutionary ideology and the decades of compromise that had created the political situation in antebellum America. From this perspective, the northern whites that abhorred slavery but

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[41] Lockean ethos refers to English philosopher John Locke, generally regarded as the father of modern liberalism, and the influence of his ideas on Jefferson and the authors of the Declaration of Independence. His concept of liberalism found its basis in liberty and equality.

[42] The effort to balance the competing interests of North and South can be traced through some of the most important legal and political documents of early American history. The Constitution (1787), the Fugitive Slave Law (1793), the Missouri Compromise (1820), the Compromise of 1850 (which included the stronger Fugitive Slave Act), and the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) were all part of America's history of compromises on slavery.

did nothing to advance the cause of abolition were a part of the national compromise that perpetuated slavery. They could voice their objections to the institution, thus providing them a position of moral superiority without expending any actual effort or compromising themselves in any way. This reinforced a national dynamic in which many northerners opposed slavery without hastening its demise. Garrisonian abolitionists worked to abolish slavery, yet, in one crucial way, even they participated in this dynamic for they disavowed any physical resistance to slavery and instead advocated moral suasion; essentially, Garrisonian abolitionists rejected resistant masculinity. For Brown, such a position was an anathema: ideology had to join with action for abolition to become a reality. This would begin with engaged intellectuals, such as Brown, drawing attention to the problem of slavery and then calling for change—violence if necessary—resistant masculinity in action.

As an ex-slave and abolitionist author, Brown needed to produce work that would ultimately subvert slavery in the South and its supporters in the North, and ambivalence in both regions. Like others in his position, he initially used the slave narrative to achieve this end, but he later took the unusual step of writing fiction.[43] This allowed him to more thoroughly investigate America than he could by taking the conventional literary route of the ex-slave author. By writing a novel, *Clotel*, and a play, *The Escape*, which explored the place of slavery within American culture, Brown used the flexibility provided by fictional narrative to closely examine the construction of nationhood, especially as it related not only to African American masculinity but also the ethical status of white men throughout American history.

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[43] As is evident from the slave narratives addressed here, white abolitionists encouraged ex-slaves to use methods that had proven successful in the past, usually the nonfiction slave narrative. Such encouragements may have discouraged some ex-slaves from turning to fiction. As Brown's work showed, however, fiction provided possibilities unavailable in the slave narrative, in the same way that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* demonstrated that point. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; Or, Life Among the Lowly* (New York: The National Era [as a serial] & John P. Jewett and Company [in two volumes], 1852).

Like other abolitionists, Brown scathingly criticized an ethically compromised nation, compromised because of institutionalized slavery, and he also identified America's white men as the creators of America's ethical problems.

The central issues addressed here focus on Brown's representation of how white manhood was fused to national identity and the subsequent social ramifications of that fusion, Brown's depiction of the interplay between white masculinity and national identity from revolution to mid-nineteenth century, and how Brown's fictional and historical writings bolstered the case for African American masculinity. Although historians have infrequently examined Brown's writing aside from his *Narrative*, a number of literary scholars have turned a critical eye to his work. American Studies scholar Castronovo investigated Brown's depiction of an unstable and incongruous national history, which thus illustrated the instability and incongruity of mid-century notions of American identity. The literary scholar John Ernest examined how Brown's work challenged contemporary notions of racial identity, particularly how Brown questioned northern notions of whiteness.[44] Drawing on these works, an investigation of how Brown, throughout *Clotel; or the President's Daughter* (1853), *The Escape; or a Leap for Freedom* (1858), and *The Blackman: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1865), examined the complex convergence of national identity and the culturally produced definitions of race and manhood that had developed during the republic's early history. In these works, Brown critiqued America's white masculinity while also identifying in America's origins and in the ideology of separate spheres a means to abolish slavery and to empower African American men.

Brown's attitudes toward separate spheres ideology and gender issues represented an important point of departure from contemporary white abolitionists. Brown shared many of

[44] The most important historical biography of Brown is Farrison, *William Wells Brown*.

the beliefs of the white abolitionists around him. He supported their distrust of government and would no doubt have concurred with Garrison's belief that "the framers of our government" had "by the infamous bargain which they had made between themselves... virtually dethroned the Most High God, and trampled beneath their feet their own solemn and Heaven-attested Declaration."[45] That Brown could share such a radical vision of American government and its origins does not, however, mean that he also shared the white abolitionists' vision of gender reform rooted in women's rights activism. From Brown's representation of gender he clearly rejected Garrison's call for absolute gender equality and his statement that, "Both sexes are ultimately to stand upon the dead level of humanity equal in rights, in dominion, in honor, in dignity, in renown."[46] In fact, Brown's work suggested that separate spheres ideology in general and hegemonic masculinity specifically would provide a model for African American men to perform masculinity. While some white abolitionists challenged conventional notions of gender, during the 1850s, as historian Kristin Hoganson observed, the Garrisonians altered their rhetorical strategy regarding separate spheres. Long criticized for their own subversion of gender norms, they began to fight "their detractors by using the same gender assumptions that had been effectively used against them."[47] In short, contemporary proslavery critics had for two decades argued that many abolitionists subverted traditional notions of gender and wanted to eliminate all distinctions between the sexes.[48] This anti-reform strategy effectively undermined reform efforts. Cast in

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[45] William Lloyd Garrison, "The United States Constitution" in William Lloyd Garrison, *Selections from the Writings and Speeches of William Lloyd Garrison.* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 302-316.
[46] William Lloyd Garrison, "Declaration of Sentiments of the National Anti-Slavery Convention" in ibid., 66-72.
[47] Kristin Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Dec., 1993), 558.
[48] For example, see George Fitzhugh on the abolitionists' intention to modify the relations of husbands and wives in *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves without Masters*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (1857; rprt, Cambridge, Mass.:

this light, abolitionists themselves, and not slavery, became the issue. Garrisonians responded by making similar claims about Southerners, arguing that because of slavery Southerners failed to maintain traditional standards of morality, virtue, and masculinity or femininity through emasculating the men and degrading and denigrating the women. Brown would have certainly agreed with such an appraisal of white Southerners; however, unlike Garrisonians, whose use of separate spheres appeared to be largely a tactical move, he invoked separate spheres and hegemonic masculinity because from his perspective it provided the best model for American men, both black and white, to demonstrate their manhood. Additionally this allowed free black families access to social mobility into the middle class. Brown thus departed from white abolitionists in that he did not identify the underlying patriarchal notions of personal and national identity as the root of African American enslavement and oppression; rather, the Founders' patriarchal vision remained for Brown a valid, even a preferable, means of organizing family, the nation, and gender relations. This served black men as both a way to perform masculinity and as way to lead their family up the social ladder.

Before Brown could bolster black masculinity, he needed first to show that slavery degraded Southern white manhood and impinged on white Northern men as well. Brown made apparent the effects of slavery on the African American family, and by extension, on the nation, in the opening chapter of *Clotel*, "The Negro Sale," which presented some of Brown's chief concerns about America and slavery. The slave auction Brown detailed was familiar to contemporary readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Liberator*, and other abolitionist periodicals, but Brown did more than revisit familiar territory. In addition to highlighting the

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Harvard University Press, 1960), 85 and William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (1961; rprt, New York: Oxford University Press 1993), 165-74.

inhumanity of the slave trade, he used this chapter to establish slavery's deep roots in American identity and its degrading effects upon the morality of Americans, both black and white.[49] To illustrate the sexualized nature of the moral decay associated with slavery, Brown wrote that "Society does not frown upon the man who sits with his mulatto child upon his knee, whilst its mother stands a slave behind his chair," and that in "slave states, the real Negro, or clear black, does not amount to more than one in every four of the slave population," which "is, of itself, the best evidence of the degraded and immoral condition of the relation of master and slave in the United States."[50] This connection between institutionalized slavery and the debasement of southern whites, a recurring theme of abolitionist literature, remained part of their attempt to establish the breadth of slavery's influence. One example, roughly contemporary to the publication of *Clotel*, appeared in Garrison's "Southern Degradation":

> Slavery . . . has most fearfully debased and deteriorated the slave holders, and the entire white population of the slave states....It has destroyed in them all sense of justice, all perception of right, all knowledge of virtue, all regard for humanity; so that, habitually, they put darkness for light, and light for darkness, and call good evil, and evil good.[51]

Brown's representation of the South, however, did more than establish the moral degradation inherent to slavery. He linked what he called an "immoral condition," a direct reflection of the ethical status of southern white manhood, to Thomas Jefferson himself. As the father of Clotel and Althesa, Jefferson represented the white slave owner whose behavior Brown identified as problematic. The slave auction, implicitly identified as a form of forced

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[49] Brown's depiction of the slave trade matches that found in the scholarly works of Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Gregory D. Smithers, *Slave Breeding: Sex, Violence, and Memory in African American History* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2012).
[50] William Wells Brown, *Clotel, Or, the President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 45.
[51] Garrison, "Southern Degradations," *Liberator*, September 19, 1856.

prostitution, thus became an extension of Jefferson's own behavior, a part of his legacy equally significant, if less a part of national mythology, to his role as a Founding Father. This produced what Brown considered the fundamental American irony: "Thus closed a Negro sale, at which two daughters of Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the presidents of the great republic, were disposed of to the highest bidder."[52]

Brown repeatedly invoked Jefferson, what the American Studies scholar R. J. Ellis has called the "Jeffersonian refrain," as a constant reminder of the troublesome nature of national origins, employing Jefferson to represent the paradox of American identity and the questionable nature of white manhood.[53] It is important to note that Brown's use of Jefferson's words operated outside of the political and philosophical milieu in which Jefferson operated. As an abolitionist author, Brown's goal was to end slavery, so he represented Jefferson and American history in a way that would advance his agenda, crafting an approach designed to create the greatest impact, no doubt simplifying Jefferson's political philosophy and America's post-revolutionary political history. For Brown, Jefferson, as the author of the Declaration of Independence, and more pointedly, the lines, "we hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal," embodied American ideals of equality and freedom. In this sense, as the philosophical father of the nation, he espoused the political beliefs that Brown endorsed. As literary scholar Christopher Mulvey noted, for Brown, "the Declaration of American Independence remained [a] statement of the politically ideal," even though Jefferson's status as a slave owner ran counter to his rhetorical devotion

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[52] Brown, *Clotel,* 53

[53] Ellis uses the term "Jeffersonian refrain" to describe Brown's "sustained repetition of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and his name (implicitly invoking this document) in R. J. Ellis, "Body Politics and the Body Politic in William Wells Brown's *Clotel*," in *Soft Canons: American Women Writers and Masculine Tradition*, ed. Karen L. Kilcup (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 104.

to freedom and liberty. Though Brown "quoted Jefferson against Jefferson," Mulvey continued, he "did not propose to devalue the language of the American creed."[54] In this sense, Brown embraced certain aspects of American origins and admired Jefferson and the other founders for their work in the Revolution, but despite his regard for the philosophy informing the Declaration, Brown also invoked Jefferson to show that American origins included both the real and the philosophical enforcement of oppression. As a slave owner, and as the father of slave children as presented in *Clotel*, Jefferson represented what antebellum abolitionists would have identified as the greatest ethical failing of both American politics and American white manhood.

Moreover, Jefferson's writings and behavior further complicated the matter. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he outlined how slavery could be gradually eliminated. In Congress Jefferson argued against slavery and in personal correspondence he commented on the incongruous behavior of men who could champion freedom while maintaining slavery, some of which Brown quoted at length in *Clotel*.[55] In language as forceful as that of the most fervent Garrisonian abolitionist, Jefferson wrote in *Notes on the State of Virginia*,

> the whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions; the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other. With what execration should the statesman be loaded who, permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patriae of the other.[56]

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[54] Christopher Mulvey, "The Fugitive Self and the New World of the North: William Wells Brown's Discovery of North America," in *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture*, ed. Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 104.
[55] Brown, *Clotel,* 138-139.
[56] Brown quoting Jefferson in ibid., 138. See also Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia (1785)*, (1861 rprt.; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964). Following the lengthy passages from *Notes*, Brown also quoted from Jefferson's letter to Jean Nicholas Demeunier, p. 139: "What an incomprehensible machine man is! Who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself, in vindication for his own liberty, and the next moment be deaf to all those motives, whose power supported him through his trial, and inflict on his fellow man a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose". Commenting on these words, Brown wrote, "But, sad to say, Jefferson is not the only American

Despite such powerful anti-slavery rhetoric, Jefferson willingly sold off his own slaves to cover personal debt, and refused to free them during his lifetime.[57] Brown knew that this contradiction between the universal claims associated with the ideology of freedom and the oppression of the vast majority of African Americans informed American politics during the decades following the American Revolution and featured among the regional tensions that ultimately led to the Civil War.[58]

Jefferson's presence in *Clotel* served only as a beginning to Brown's examination of the interdependence between white masculinity and antebellum American culture. Brown depicted a nation that reproduced Jefferson's own ambivalence concerning freedom and slavery, revealed most clearly through both regional and ideological divisions. During its development, the nation had also created an increasingly elaborate political and social architecture to maintain a balance between the competing ideologies of freedom and slavery. Brown used *Clotel* to reveal how the legacy he closely identified with Jefferson shaped American society: White men possessed the inalienable rights Jefferson championed, slaveholders repeated Jefferson's enforcement of human bondage, and those opposed to

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statesman who has spoken high-sounding words in favor of freedom, and then left his own children to die slaves," 139.

[57] In Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), the author describes Jefferson's position on slavery as "oscillating between outright condemnation of slavery as incompatible with republican values and equally outright procrastination when pushed to offer practical remedies to end it". He also noted that Jefferson during the 1780s had "assumed a leadership role in pushing slavery onto the agenda in the Virginia Assembly and the federal Congress," but that "his most famous formulations, it is true, were rhetorical: blaming the slave trade and the establishment of slavery on George III in the Declaration of Independence; denouncing slavery as a morally bankrupt institution that was doomed to extinction in *Notes on the State of Virginia*" (both quotations, p. 145).

[58] The genetic evidence indicating that Jefferson did in all likelihood father slave children, a revelation to some but merely a restatement of fact to others, demonstrates that we are today still dealing with the complexities of the Jeffersonian legacy. See Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*, 1st Paperback Edition edition (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998); Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*, Reprint Edition, paperback edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009); Clarence Earl Walker, *Mongrel Nation: The America Begotten by Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

slavery reiterated Jefferson's moral concerns about the institution. Yet the nation, like Jefferson himself, generally did little to address these contradictions until the North began supporting the Republican Party and its opposition toward further expansion of slavery in the 1850s.

That Jefferson's daughters would be auctioned off to the highest bidder, and for likely sexual use no less, set the tone for Brown's exploration of national character and white masculinity. Shortly following this scene, Brown shifted from the slave auction to a rather direct assault on the ethics of southern white men. Throughout *Clotel*, but primarily in the early chapters, he described the many ways southern white men debased themselves morally. Not only were they sexually immoral, but also because they became so inured to the dehumanizing effects of slavery they often broke up slave families with no outward sign of remorse. Moreover, Brown associated these men with drunkenness and gambling, character flaws not necessarily attached to slavery but behaviors he nonetheless associates with slave owners corrupted in a myriad of ways due to their association with the institution.[59]

In Chapter II, "Going to the South," Brown described the events aboard a southern steamship as a microcosm of southern society and, more specifically, of southern male character. Here Brown presented the drinking and gambling he consistently identified as decadent behavior, but also the violence he linked to slave culture. Brown wrote that at Baton Rouge a boat picked up new passengers, several of who "had been attending the races.

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[59] In a discussion of temperance and race in *Clotel*, literary scholar Robert Levine observed that “Over the course of the novel Brown shows how the lack of restraints on white’s ‘enslaving appetite’ for drink, power, and sexual gratification helps to perpetuate the enslavement of blacks in the south and the marginalization of free blacks in the North” (95). He further argued that “the forever offstage (because dead) Thomas Jefferson emerges as the ur-intemperate master for having fathered two daughters by Currer, the slave woman who formerly ‘kept house’ for him” (98). See Robert S. Levine, "'Whiskey, Blacking, and all': Temperance and Race in William Wells Brown's *Clotel*," in *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature*, ed. David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

Gambling and drinking were now the order of the day." When dinner began that evening, he continued,

> the report of a pistol was heard in the direction of the Social Hall. However, nothing serious had occurred. A man at one of the tables where they were gambling had been seen attempting to conceal a card in his sleeve, and one of the party seized his pistol and fired; but fortunately the barrel of the pistol was knocked up… and the ball passed through the upper deck, instead of the man's head, as was intended. [60]

For Brown, such violence pervaded southern culture because slavery corrupted character in general, and what he displayed aboard this ship revealed defining aspects of Southern identity. While gambling, cheating, drinking, and violence were not unique to the South, they appeared to exacerbate a social system based on slaveholding that promoted instinctive violence and assertive attempts to impose one's will on others.[61] Moreover, the notion that "nothing serious had occurred" served to indict the onlookers, those so desensitized to immoral behavior that they do not even recognize it as such.

The pervasive immorality dramatized on the steamship affected even those white male characters that displayed comparatively greater sensitivity to African Americans. The authority these men possessed over slaves allowed them, for example, to use female slaves, most often represented as young and light-skinned, to satisfy their sexual urges, and the value of such slaves at auction demonstrated the sexual nature of the system. Brown's examples used in his novel matched the findings of modern historians' analysis of the slave trade and in particular the sexual nature of slave markets.[62] While Brown offered many horrifying examples, perhaps the novel's most disturbing case, Horatio Green's purchase of Clotel,

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[60] Brown, *Clotel*, 60-61.

[61] Levine wrote that Brown "develops… a damning portrayal of slavery as a patriarchal institution that stimulates, rather than restrains, the intemperate desires of the white male masters. Because the masters become 'enslaved' to these desires, even a man with some moral potential, like the Reverend John Peck (discussed later), who purchases Currer, can find himself succumbing to the temptations of the South" (99). In Levine, "'Whiskey, Blacking, and all.'"

[62] See Johnson, *Soul by Soul*; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, and Smithers, *Slave Breeding*.

begins within the framework of a love story. Clotel met Green at a "Negro ball," a gathering, as Brown describes it, of "quadroon and mulatto girls, and white men."[63] Green became immediately attracted to Clotel's beauty, and "so attentive was the young man to the quadroon during the evening that it was noticed by all, and became a matter of general conversation." To Clotel's mother's delight, "from that evening, young Green became a favorite visitor at Currer's house."[64] The romance developed and Green purchased Clotel; eventually, they lived as if they were husband and wife, though removed from the scrutiny of society, a situation typical of such relationships. As the novel progressed, the depth of the characters' feelings for each other came through in terms standard for sentimental fiction of the period, and their life together appeared almost idyllic, though Clotel regretted the time Horatio spent away from her.[65]

Following the birth of their daughter, Mary, Clotel became "still happier," but "her soul was filled with anguish" because according to law Mary was, like her, a slave. In this way Brown presented a situation that mirrored the events within Henry Bibb's *Narrative*. To protect her daughter, Clotel "urged Horatio to remove to France or England, where both her [sic] and her child would be free, and where colour was not a crime." This idea appealed to Horatio, who deeply loved Clotel, but a budding interest in politics and an "ambition to become a statesman was slowly gaining ascendancy over him."[66] Brown's depiction of

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[63] Brown, *Clotel*, 50.
[64] Ibid., 50-51.
[65] Sentimental fiction, sometimes referred to as "woman's fiction" or "domestic fiction", refers to a type of novel popular with women readers during the middle of the nineteenth century. For more on this writing style see Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
[66] Brown, *Clotel*, 70. In some ways this relationship modeled the real life politician Richard Mentor Johnson and his African American wife Julia Chinn. Johnson, Senator from Kentucky and Vice President for Martin Van Buren, unlike other upper class leaders who had African American mistresses but never mentioned them, Johnson openly treated Chinn as his wife. He acknowledged their two daughters as his children, giving them his surname, much to the consternation of some of his constituents. For a recent study of this relationship, see

Clotel and Horatio, rooted in a relationship clearly recognizable as a love story, was surely part of his strategy to uncover the realities of the slave-master relationship in America. Despite very real mutual affection, this coupling was doomed because Green owned Clotel. As his possession, she remained hidden off in the woods and thus separated from the larger, public portion of his life. Because of her enslavement, she could not be his wife, but she could "play" at being a wife, tending his house, mothering his children, offering him love, and receiving his affection. Clotel could not expect any real commitment or protection from him; in this way slavery also hindered white men's protective masculinity. This became even more evident when Green married a white woman whose family connections could advance his political career.

The relationship between Clotel and Horatio not only demonstrated the respective moral fiber of these two characters but also, by implication, revealed the potential ethical condition of both southern white men and the female slaves they used. Despite his imminent marriage, which he unsuccessfully attempted to hide from Clotel, Horatio offered her the chance to continue their relationship; he would maintain her as a kept woman removed from society. But Clotel declined and strove to maintain the ideals of the mid-nineteenth-century "true womanhood", despite the precarious position in which the rejection placed her. In this way Clotel modeled the true woman of separate spheres ideology which Brown's readers would have clearly recognized. When Green "suggested that as he still loved her better than all the world, she would ever be his real wife, and they might see each other frequently," she responded with a "storm of indignant emotion." Brown explained, "True, she was his slave; her bones, and sinews had been purchased by his gold, yet she had the heart of a true woman,

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and hers was a passion too deep and absorbing to admit of partnership, and her spirit was too pure to form a selfish league with crime."[67] As she surely realized, without Horatio's protection and continued support, her future would be uncertain at best. Yet she decided upon a course consistent with the notions of morality embedded within mid-nineteenth-century standards of female identity, behaving as the true woman Brown labels her. *Clotel* thus demonstrated the ethical potential of African Americans who, despite their enslavement, proved to be morally superior to the whites that had been corrupted by their position as masters and their general involvement with slavery as an institution. Clotel was simply a better person than Horatio, and, as we later learned, also a better representative of the true woman than Horatio's white wife.

Horatio's behavior ultimately led to both Clotel's death and his own descent into gambling and alcoholism, unsurprising outcomes Brown associated with the legacy of Jefferson. If a Founding Father could be undermined by slavery, Brown seemed to indicate, the average Southern man would surely find it difficult if not impossible to resist similar corruption. In the formulation of literary scholar Robert Levine, the behavior of slave owners led naturally to other forms of personal dissolution. Throughout *Clotel* "the forever offstage (because dead) Thomas Jefferson emerges as the ur-intemperate master for having fathered two daughters by Currer, the slave woman who formerly 'kept house' for him."[68] Horatio thus followed a sort of exemplary pattern of behavior, symbolized best by Jefferson, for the young southern white man. Horatio did not represent an inherently unethical form of manhood; he did not resemble a monster like the northerner Simon Legree and not even an amoral figure like Haley, both from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Horatio exemplified an ordinary man of relatively

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[67] Ibid., 94.
[68] Levine, "'Whiskey, Blacking, and all,'" 98.

weak character whose ethical flaws become magnified by slavery. His social position allowed him, or perhaps compelled him, to resist moral action when it conflicted with personal ambition or desire. Brown wrote, "He had . . . become accustomed to the dangerous experiment of resisting his own inward convictions; and this new impulse to ambition, combined with the strong temptation of variety in love, met the ardent young man weakened in moral principle, and unfettered by laws of the land."[69] The customs of southern society thus created men like Horatio, who found in the nation's history and their social milieu little to counterbalance weakness of character or a tendency toward unprincipled behavior. Brown led us to believe that within a different social context, one in which slavery did not exist to undermine male character, Horatio could have been a better man.

Brown's use of Horatio Green pointed to the obvious effects that institutionalized slavery had on the character of the southern white man and highlighted the broad regional corruption of the South. Direct participation in slavery, however, was not the only offense for which Brown condemned America's white men. For Brown, America's history made northerners equally responsible for, if less directly involved in, the perpetuation of slavery. The history of national compromise had made this the case, and nothing made the ambivalent position of white northerners clearer than the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which illustrated the North's unambiguous complicity in slavery as a broadly American, not strictly a southern, institution.[70] The passage of this law increasingly implicated northern whites in American slavery because of the legal obligation to become more active participants in the

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[69] Brown, *Clotel,* 70.

[70] The Fugitive Slave Act was especially important for Brown, who stayed in Europe because of it. He had left the United States in 1849 for England, but after its passage stayed in Europe until 1854. Ronald Walters noted that the Fugitive Slave Act "gave credence to the abolitionist argument that slavery rested on a total disrespect for civil liberties and that it could not survive without the support of northerners who were called on to do the slaveholder's dirty work for him" (95); in Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 95.

capture of escaped slaves. Not only did law officers in the North become responsible for capturing escaped slaves, but the obligations of ordinary citizens changed as well, in some ways revealing the very notion of free states to be a myth. For abolitionists, an especially revealing example of how the Fugitive Slave Act repositioned northerners manifested itself in the case of Anthony Burns. As discussed in chapter one, Burns, who had escaped from Virginia and arrived in Boston in 1854, found himself quickly arrested when his owner, Charles Suttle, attempted to recover him. Abolitionists mobilized and subsequently stormed his holding cell, but Burns remained imprisoned. An estimated fifty thousand Bostonians looked on as officials led Burns shackled through the streets of Boston before being returned to Virginia. For many northerners, this episode represented the further encroachment of slave power into northern life.[71] For Brown, his play *The Escape* (modeled on the Burns case) demonstrated the inaction of the large crowd and their ambiguous role as disapproving observers revealed their place in the national compromise.

Brown used his play *The Escape* to identify the position of white northerners, to show that, because of America's history of compromise and its laws, with the Fugitive Slave Act being the most notable and immediately important example, white northerners came to play a role that helped to perpetuate southern slavery. Simply put, a philosophical opposition to slavery held no meaning if not supplemented by some form of active abolitionism, possibly through resistant masculinity. Brown demonstrated this situation in *The Escape* by offering the transformation of the northerner Mr. White. At first this character voiced his opposition

[71] For more on Anthony Burns see Chapter 1 and also Albert J. Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

to slavery without making that opposition real; by the end of the play he became the active abolitionist who literally fought to secure freedom for escaped slaves.[72]

In a departure from the serious treatment found in *Clotel*, Brown approached the topic in a more comic manner in his play *The Escape*, but he nevertheless provided perhaps an even more pointed denunciation of the institution. The plot of *The Escape* was fairly simple. At the heart of the story were two couples, the enslaved Glen and Melinda, who live separately but have been secretly "married," and Dr. and Mrs. Gaines, the owners of Melinda. Much of the play's action was driven by Dr. Gaines's pursuit of Melinda, which included his relocating her to a secluded house where he hoped she would become his mistress. As a result of these unwanted sexual advances, Mrs. Gaines persecuted Melinda, not Dr. Gaines. Eventually, Glen and Melinda decided to escape to achieve a better life for themselves. It is interesting to note their story's similarities to that of Henry and Malinda Bibb. Other crucial characters included Cato, a more or less trusted slave who seemed to have accepted his enslaved status until he escaped at play's end, and Mr. White, the play's only Northerner, who turned out to be the play's most important character.

As in *Clotel*, Brown's depiction of the sexual aspects of slavery remained crucial. He showed how masters used their female slaves for explicitly sexual purposes; a practice that undermined the families of both whites and blacks, and degraded the masculine and feminine virtue of all races.[73] Dr. Gaines, who had a history of sexual relationships with slaves preceding his pursuit of Melinda, served as chief offender. After his friend Major Moore

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[72] For more analysis of Brown's play *The Escape* see Ernest, "The Reconstruction of Whiteness: William Wells Brown's *The Escape*"; Ann du Cille, "Where in the World is William Wells Brown? Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the DNA of African-American Literary History," *American Literary History* 12, no. 3 (October, 2000), 443-462; Sergio Costola, "The Limits of Representation: William Wells Brown's Panoramic Views," *Journal of American Drama and Theatre,* 24, no. 2 (Spring, 2012), 13-31; Freda Giles, "Abolitionist Plays by William Wells Brown" *a Paper Presented at the 96th Annual Meeting of the Association of African American Life and History* (Richmond, VA, All Academic Research, October 4, 2011).

[73] See Smithers, *Slave Breeding*, 20-43.

unintentionally insulted Mrs. Gaines by identifying a slave child as one of the Gaines children, Dr. Gaines tried to put the man at ease by saying, "Oh! Don't let that trouble you. Ha, ha, ha. If you did call him my son, you didn't miss by much."[74] Such a response revealed the social ease with which white southern men dealt with forced miscegenation.[75] Within terms of family, however, such sexual conduct became more troublesome. Mrs. Gaines knew about her husband's behavior, and even though she castigated him for his relationships, she targeted Melinda with her anger.[76] Despite Melinda's clear lack of interest in Dr. Gaines and despite her almost absolute powerlessness, Mrs. Gaines blamed Melinda and consequently tried to force her to commit suicide.[77] Thus slavery undermined both white and black families, making male-female relationships difficult, sometimes impossible, to maintain. As Brown understood it, the sexual subordination fostered by slavery promoted a moral decay difficult for all southerners to escape.

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[74] William Wells Brown, *The Escape, Or, A Leap for Freedom* (ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2003), 73.

[75] According to Brown's biographer William Farrison, the journalist, novelist, and anti-slavery activist Richard Hildreth who had spent time on a southern plantation observed that "a slaveholder might have been 'the father of every infant slave born upon his plantation' without being considered guilty of any crime of any kind as far as other slave holders were concerned—as long as he did not openly acknowledge fatherhood. But it was a 'grave break of propriety, indeed almost an unpardonable crime, for such a father ever, in any way, to acknowledge or take any notice of any of his unfortunate children.'" (149). According to this social guideline, Dr. Gaines' behavior was beyond reproach, and if anything, Major Moore was at fault for calling attention to the fact that Gaines had slave children. See William Edward Farrison, "*Clotel*, Thomas Jefferson, and Sally Hemings," *CLA Journal* 17, no. 2 (December, 1973), 149.

[76] Similar episodes are also found in slave narratives. See Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, eds. Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

[77] Brown's depiction of Mrs. Gaines demonstrated how white women in the South were both victims and victimizers. The historian Chris Dixon noted, "slavery brutalized their fathers, brothers, and husbands," yet "abolitionists suggested white Southern women were also victims of the peculiar institution" (40). As Brown presented it, Mrs. Gaines was a victim of institutionalized slavery, having to tolerate an unfaithful husband demonstrated this, but she also victimized her own slaves rather than confront her husband, who was the real cause of her problems. See Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997). For more on women as part of the slave owning class see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). The latter two deal with white women's violence in gruesome detail.

Early in the play it became evident that Brown believed the immorality of white southerners extended beyond the aspects of their lives directly linked to slavery. As in *Clotel*, where the presence of slavery encouraged intemperance, gambling, and violence, Brown depicted in *The Escape* a society whose people had no ethical compass because their culture rested upon slavery and that white southerners were generally immoral, each interested in only his or her own well-being. The play opened with Dr. Gaines discussing the financial state of his medical practice and he noted that he would like to "have a touch of the yellow fever" in his community to stimulate business," but regretfully acknowledging that "yellow fever is a luxury that we medical men in this climate can't expect to enjoy: yet we may hope for the cholera." To this, Mrs. Gaines responded, "Yes, I would be glad to see it more sickly here, so that your business might prosper. But we are always unfortunate. Everybody here seems to be in good health however, we must hope for the best. We must trust in the Lord."[78] Beyond the clear comic effect here, Brown used this exchange to further his argument that the corrupt moral climate of the South resulted from a culture that both endorsed slavery and degraded southern white manhood. Dr. and Mrs. Gaines became so morally stunted that they saw in a plague the potential for great financial reward rather than widespread pain, suffering, and death. Their callousness here extended beyond their indifference to their slaves: they also displayed no real concern for the whites of their community, a commentary on the myopic self-interest that pervaded a slave society.

While the play's southern white men held importance because they represented the problems with southern manhood, Brown's use of Mr. White, the play's only significant northerner, complicated his earlier treatment of white masculinity and broadened his

[78] Brown, *The Escape*, 44.

examination of whiteness.[79] We learn that White opposed slavery and even voiced that opposition as he traveled through the South, but, significantly, he steadfastly remained a parlor abolitionist. As the literary scholar John Ernest observed, Brown used Mr. White "to reposition white northern sentiment by refiguring the reciprocal relation between white and black. The antislavery cause, in this retelling, should have entailed more than benevolent sentiment."[80] From this vantage point, because White's abolitionism did not extend to any action that would help undermine slavery, he stood as much a part of the decades-old national problem as did Dr. Gaines. As the name "White" indicated, the character was representative: he served as the northern white man who opposed slavery but did little to make that opposition real in a way that challenged or provided an alternative to the institution.

Even though Mr. White spoke out against slavery, Brown complicated his anti-slavery stance by undermining both his character and his conception of humanity. When a slaveowner claimed, "it's right for niggers to be slaves," White replied:

> Well, sir, I am from a free State, and I thank God for it; for the worst act that a man can commit upon his fellow man is to make him a slave. Conceive of a mind, a living soul, with the germs of faculties which infinity cannot exhaust, as it first beams upon

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[79] Whiteness studies is an interdisciplinary arena of academic inquiry focused on what proponents describe as the cultural, historical and sociological aspects of people identified as white, and the social construction of whiteness as an ideology tied to social status. A central tenet of whiteness studies is a reading of history and its effects on the present, inspired by postmodernism and historicism, in which the very concept of racial superiority is said to have been socially constructed in order to justify discrimination against non-whites. Whiteness studies are often seen as an offshoot of Critical Race Theory that examines issues of race including "blackness." For more on information on the history of race in America and whiteness studies see Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); James Campbell and James Oakes, "The Invention of Race: Rereading White Over Black," *Reviews in American History* 21, no. 1 (Mar., 1993), 172; Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: Norton, 2010); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater; Voices from within the Veil* (1920, rprt; New York: Schocken Books, 1969), in particular Chapter 2 titled "The Souls of White Folk"; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[80] Ernest, "The Reconstruction of Whiteness", 1110.

> you in its glad morning of existence, quivering with life and joy, exulting in the glorious sense of its developing energies, beautiful, and brave, and generous, and joyous, and free--the clear pure spirit bathed in the auroral light of its unconscious immortality--and then follow it in its dark and dreary passage through slavery, until oppression stifles and kills, one by one, every inspiration and aspiration of its being, until it becomes a dead soul entombed in a living frame.[81]

While his language may have been consistent with the period's abolitionism, his argument itself seemed rather empty because he failed to back it up in any way and also because it served as a form of morally condescending self-aggrandizement. He used his status as a northerner, as a man from a free state, to demonstrate his own ethical superiority. Moreover, the overwrought language, "the clear, pure spirit bathed in the auroral light of its unconscious mortality" was one example that demonstrated White's romanticizing of human identity. His response had little to do with the day-to-day lives of real people, enslaved or free, and it did nothing to advance abolitionism.

By voicing this position Mr. White endangered his own life. The slaveowners and their sympathizers heard about his anti-slavery views soon blamed him for the escape of some slaves even though White had done nothing wrong and had no intention to aid slaves in their escape. His belief in the abolition of slavery and his willingness to express his views made him a target for anti-abolitionist violence. When White narrowly avoided being lynched, he consequently vowed never again to return to the South. Fleeing to save himself was certainly understandable, but he displayed no real interest in the condition of these slaves and his experience had little if any impact on his abolitionism. He maintained his ideological opposition to slavery but did nothing to hasten its end. Brown used his early depiction of White to set the stage for his character's transformation.[82]

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[81] Brown, *The Escape*, 82.

[82] For anti-slavery violence see, for example, Paul Simon, *Freedom's Champion: Elijah Lovejoy* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994); Williamjames Hull Hoffer, *The Caning of Charles Sumner:*

When White reappeared at the end of the play and once again found himself confronted by the reality of slavery, this time in a northern state, he had to make the choice between action and continued passivity. As Melinda, Glen, and Cato attempted to escape across the American-Canadian border, Dr. Gaines, his overseer Scragg, and some northern officers attempted to capture them. Legally, White should have assisted the deputies in capturing the slaves, but as the escapees battled for their freedom, Mr. White instead redeemed himself by joining the melee and helping the slaves reach Canada. For Brown, this move held major significance: Mr. White, the representative white northerner, finally backed up his words with action and offered a very real challenge to slavery, something too few others had done.[83] The decision to take action at the end of *The Escape* highlighted what Brown believed to be missing in white manhood: the willingness to actively back up one's ethical convictions, to perform resistant masculinity, something black abolitionists had long urged them to do. Brown thus shared the concerns of white abolitionists that white men were defaulting on their ethical responsibilities as true men.

White's initial behavior certainly fit into the American legacy of compromise on slavery, as northerners agreed to accept a system they found distasteful in order to maintain a union from which they benefitted. But, despite the emphasis on union, the national compromise became increasingly difficult to maintain as northerners became more overtly

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Honor, Idealism, and the Origins of the Civil War (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting Over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[83] The call for northerners to staunchly resist slavery can be traced back to the early days of immediate abolitionism. As early as 1833, Garrison in his "Declaration of the National Anti-Slavery Convention," asserted that the "highest obligation" rested "upon the people of the free states, to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States" (93). Until the end of the play, White had taken no action to remove slavery at all, but, as I will demonstrate, White went beyond Garrison's non-violent call to moral and political action by employing physical means to combat slavery, essentially performing resistant masculinity. Quote found in Garrison, *Selections*, 93.

implicated in slavery as a system.[84] White's early passivity corresponded to the "deceptive performance of selfhood, the laying out of a culturally assigned role to veil private motivations" described by Ernest.[85] White's complicated position at the play's end revealed the predicament of the northern white man: legally, they were bound to assist in capturing the escaped slaves; as a representative northerner his impulse was to do nothing; but as an abolitionist he knew that he should take action. White represented the white northerners in Brown's audience, who "faced with the incoherence of the cultural drama that provided them with their scripts of identity, must confront a fundamental question, 'What does it mean to be a white northerner?'"[86] For Mr. White, being a white northerner meant opposing slavery, granting him a position of moral superiority all too easy to assume. It also meant not having to actually do anything to back up his beliefs. But at the play's end, he did not have the option to be both of these at once; or, perhaps more accurately, maintaining inaction in this situation would certainly have made the nature of his position untenable, and thus the fantasy of his manhood, evident. By taking action, White chose to finally align his behavior with his anti-slavery ideology, and perform a resistant masculinity.

That White resorted to physical resistance demonstrated Brown's departure from the anti-slavery strategy consistently championed by Garrison and most of his followers in the decades prior to 1850. From the time Garrison established *The Liberator*, the standard tactics employed by radical abolitionists depended upon moral suasion. In the 1850s, however, Brown and other black abolitionists abandoned this position as one they viewed as no longer tenable.

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[84] See the previous chapters discussion of the Compromise of 1850 and the debates and violence surrounding northerners role in returning fugitive slaves.
[85] Ernest, "The Reconstruction of Whiteness," 1110.
[86] Ibid., 1113.

Garrison argued that in contrast to America's revolutionaries, whose "measures were physical resistance—the marshaling in arms—the hostile array—the mortal encounter," abolitionists would depend upon "the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption—the destruction of error by the potency of truth—the overthrow of prejudice by the power of love—the opposition of slavery by the spirit of repentance."[87] Garrison here predicated successful abolition upon moral influence, a stand Brown seemed to identify as ultimately unworkable. As evidenced through White's character that reliance on such ideology alone not only failed to be effective but could also reinforce the national status quo rooted in regional compromises that perpetuated slavery. Coupling that ideology with direct action, however, provided a workable strategy to combat slavery and give the abolitionist a forum that allowed him to demonstrate resistant masculinity.

Brown's representation of White revealed the extent to which America's compromise on slavery had formed northern character, and his use of Horatio Green underscored the fact that slavery's influence appeared most obviously in the South. Brown, however, created another crucial representative of white manhood in *Clotel*, Reverend Peck, both a northerner and a slave owner, in order to demonstrate the extent to which a white male character could be debased. Peck's status as a man of northern origins, in fact, revealed the power and the allure of American chattel slavery for white men. As Peck admitted himself, he once objected to slavery, but continued exposure to the institution reshaped his character so that he accepted it because, "[he] did not know so much about it" before he became a part of it.[88] His exposure to slavery deadened him to its inherent brutality such that he engaged in some of the most questionable behavior himself. Georgiana, his daughter, revealed that he once

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[87] Garrison, "Declaration of Sentiments," in Garrison, *Selections*, 79.
[88] Brown, *Clotel*, 103. Is it worth noting here that Stephen A. Douglas owned his wife's plantation in Mississippi. It is likely Brown knew this fact and used their real life example as a model for this story.

shot and killed a runaway slave, and that he willingly kept enslaved families separated to serve his own financial interests. Moreover, Brown wrote that "although Mr. Peck fed and clothed his house servants well, he was, nevertheless, a most cruel master," working his slaves from dusk to dawn and doling out whiskey to them when he wanted to demonstrate their contentment to visitors.[89] In short, Peck's personal interests determined his treatment of his slaves.

Though Peck, much like Harriett Beecher Stowe's Simon Legree, had taken on characteristics that Brown associated with southern manhood, his northern origins nevertheless pointed to a national, not a regional, problem. Elsewhere in his work, Brown identifies the North's implication in the racism underlying slavery. In his *American Fugitive in Europe* (1855) he contrasted the North, which he called "the so-called Free States," where he "had been treated as one born to occupy an inferior position," with Britain, where he was "recognized as a *man*, and an equal," and where "the very dogs in the street appeared conscious of my *manhood*."[90] Unlike Peck, most northern men may not have been directly responsible for slavery, but they too were implicated in a corrupt national system, and they too inherited the legacy of Jefferson. Moreover, because Peck was a clergyman, the deeply institutionalized nature of slave culture in the United States became even more apparent. Peck struggled to demonstrate to Carlton, a visitor from the North, how he served the religious needs of his slaves, but his efforts instead revealed the opposite, as the religious instruction was geared to enforce the slaves' subordination and to reinforce white superiority. Like other abolitionists, William Lloyd Garrison especially, who consistently lambasted the

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[89] Ibid., 122.
[90] William Wells Brown, *The Travels of William Wells Brown: The Narrative of William Wells Brown, a Fugitive Slave, and the American Fugitive in Europe, Sketches of Places and People Abroad*, ed. Paul Jefferson (New York: M. Weiner Publishers, 1991), 40.

Northern clergy for both their reluctance to speak out against slavery and their direct participation in the institution, Brown located religious figures as part of the problem, even though at least theoretically, they should have been part of the solution in their capacity as moral figures. For Brown, slavery had become such a part of American national ideology that few could escape its influence. If a northern clergyman, who should embody the highest ethical standards, could be corrupted by slavery, Brown asked, then who could resist its temptations?[91]

Despite his emphasis on debased white masculinity in *Clotel*, Brown also developed a model of white manhood that could challenge the Slave Power. He found a means of addressing the slave problem, like the root of the problem itself, in the nation's origins, specifically within the ideology of national liberty that he largely associated with Jefferson. In *Clotel*'s Carlton, Brown created a man who represented the Jeffersonian ideals Brown embraced, but not the incongruities that produced the nation's troublesome ideology. Carlton, who could and did put into action the anti-slavery beliefs voiced but never enacted by Jefferson, represented Brown's version of an ethically-charged white masculinity conceivable within the terms of traditional patriarchy. His active opposition to slavery clearly set him apart from most of the novel's other white men. Carlton's behavior as the novel unfolded reflected white abolitionist Wendell Phillips's exhortation that Americans challenge slavery at the institutional level, "The difficulty of the present day and with us is, we are bullied by institutions....Now the duty of each antislavery man is simply this, Stand on the

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[91] On slavery and religion see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (Vintage, 1976); John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004); Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

pedestal of your own individual independence, summon these institutions about you, and judge them."[92] Like Mr. White from *The Escape*, Carlton judged slavery as reprehensible, degrading to both blacks and whites in the South, but once given the opportunity, he went beyond simple ideological opposition. Brown made Carlton more than a typical anti-slavery character; instead, in some important ways he placed Carlton clearly outside of mainstream American culture. Early on, Brown presented Carlton as both relatively impoverished and something of a fallen Christian, both of which provided him a valuable perspective on slavery in America. He by no means stood entirely outside the boundaries of mainstream antebellum culture, but his differences allowed him to identify problems inherent to a slave society. This made him atypical, because as Brown demonstrated through other characters—men like Reverend Peck and Snyder, a New York evangelist who preached to the slaves in order to encourage their docility and obedience—northern identity did not in itself provide this perspective. But, Carlton, as an outsider of both the economic and religious frameworks that supported slavery, could offer a lucid critique of the institution.

Brown's use of Carlton effectively anticipated American Studies scholar Russ Castronovo's belief that "Brown argued against slavery and racial prejudice, not by appealing to religious tenets as many white abolitionists and slave narrators did, but by manipulating the discourses of American politics and history."[93] This could only be done through fiction writing and therefore Brown's self-made masculinity shined through. When Carlton offered some of his challenges to slavery, arguments consistent with Brown's views, he often did so with explicit reference to Enlightenment thinkers associated with non-religious visions of society or even atheism. As he debated Peck about slavery and the humanity of African

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[92] Wendell Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters*, (1864 rprt.; New York: Negro University Press, 1968), 46.
[93] Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation,* 165-166.

Americans, Carlton admitted, "I am a disciple of Rousseau, and have for years made the rights of man my study; and I must confess that I can see no difference between white men and black men as it regards liberty." Moreover, Carlton said, "I am no admirer of either the Bible or slavery. My heart is my guide; My conscience is my Bible."[94] Brown remained careful not to alienate his readers by openly endorsing thinkers associated, rightly or wrongly, with atheism, but clearly social critics such as Rousseau provided Carlton a philosophical basis, rooted in Enlightenment thought and secular humanism, from which he could identify the problems inherent to America's perpetuation of slavery. Furthermore, by distancing Carlton from organized American religion, Brown underscored the complaints of many abolitionists that the clergy did little to undermine the slave system and much to support it. Peck's fictional case of using religion to produce obedient slaves modeled the accounts found in numerous slave narratives.[95] Brown found in organized religion itself the elements of American ideology that endorsed slavery. Beyond enforcing subservient slave behavior for the master's benefit, religion existed as part of a broader social matrix that reinforced ethically suspect behavior from men.[96] Peck, as a clergyman himself, and Snyder, as an evangelist, clearly revealed this, as both were characters associated with religion that also displayed markedly little moral fiber.

Ultimately, Peck's daughter Georgiana converted Carlton to Christianity, which aligned him with norms typical of a sentimental novel and contemporary notions of gender and morality. It should be made clear, however, that Carlton's abolitionism resulted not from Georgiana's influence, nor did she make him a more moral person. Instead, while she helped

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[94] Brown, *Clotel*, 77, 78.
[95] See Chapter IX in Douglass, *Narrative*, 69-71, as well as Chapter XII-XV in Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*.
[96] Brown's argument here largely concurred with Frederick Douglass' critique of organized religion in his *Narrative*. See Chapter IX in Douglass, *Narrative,* 69-71.

him to convert in a strictly religious sense, her influence on him regarding slavery functioned on a more practical level. Carlton did not become in any immediate sense a better person by converting to Christianity. Carlton could accept Christianity when it converged with his own beliefs of acceptable social behavior. Where Georgiana did help to reshape Carlton's thinking was in the details of the slaves' situation and how they should be treated following their liberation. Her position as a slave owner who had come to oppose slavery allowed her to educate Carlton regarding the slave system, since he had relatively little personal knowledge about the day-to-day realities of slavery in the South.[97]

Perhaps more interesting than what Georgiana provided Carlton was what Carlton offered Georgiana: the patriarchal authority to challenge slavery. Once Carlton and Georgiana married, they could become effective adversaries of the slave system in ways they could not individually. Brown made clear that Georgiana could not independently free her slaves because as a woman she lacked the cultural authority to do so, even though she legally owned the slaves. As a man, Carlton provided Georgiana the non-legal but nonetheless essential authority to free the slaves simply because of contemporary gender codes. Here, Brown chose not only to withhold criticism of a system that would prevent Georgiana from liberating her slaves but apparently endorsed contemporary beliefs concerning authority, gender, and patriarchal masculinity.

In a noteworthy departure from the views represented by the radical white abolitionists around him, Brown found in patriarchal masculinity not only the roots of American slavery, but also a means to abolish it. Carlton represented the kind of white man

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[97] Brown may have modeled Georgiana on the abolitionist sisters Angelina Grimké-Weld and Sarah Grimké who, like Georgiana, had grown up in South Carolina and come to oppose slavery. See Gerda Learner's biography, Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition*, revised and expanded edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

who could be an effective abolitionist: he rejected the aspects of American ideology that would make him accept slavery as the natural state of racial relations while maintaining the masculine authority associated with patriarchy. In this sense, Brown made Carlton the embodiment of patriarchal manhood at its best, a model for not only white manhood but also African American manhood. Middle class white men could look to the fictional Carlton as an example of how to be an effective abolitionist and African American men who knew the story of Brown's transformation from slave to middle class black intellectual could look to him as inspiration for their lives. Essentially through this work Brown performed a self-made manhood for himself and set a standard for other black men.

For Brown, America's problem with slavery had its roots in the problematic nature of national patriarchy, but unlike white abolitionists who identified patriarchy as the problem, he sought to redeem it. Brown believed men could be ethically responsible while maintaining patriarchal authority. Rather than attempt to reconstruct national power structures along less hierarchical lines, Brown focused instead on how patriarchy had been corrupted by institutionalized slavery, and he explored ways of retaining traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity while establishing that African Americans did indeed conform to conventional notions of gender identity. In this way, he did not aligned with his radical reform colleagues, such as William Lloyd Garrison, even though his actions as an abolitionist were certainly radical. Instead of resisting separate spheres, he used it to advance his cause, as the relationship between Georgiana and Carlton suggested. He also employed the gendered identity central to separate spheres to advance African American equality, establish African American manhood, and perform self-made masculinity.

Brown used gender identity in *Clotel* to disrupt the basis for African American enslavement, with his use of separate spheres which represented his resistance to southern notions of African American sexual and social identity. As argued in the introduction, radical white abolitionists largely rejected separate spheres ideology, finding within it the basis for oppression of African Americans and the subordination of white women. During the 1850s, however, some white abolitionists began to modify their rhetoric, employing separate spheres to offer, as the historian Kristin Hoganson observed, "a broader critique of slavery's effects on gender roles." Realizing that "the Americans that they hoped to arouse could not tolerate an institution that thoroughly corrupted middle-class gender norms." She continued, Garrisonians argued, "slavery desexed all slaves and their owners." They "emphasized slavery's threat to all of society by showing how it subverted the gender order antebellum society was built upon."[98] Thus, white abolitionists, although skeptical of the ideology, did appeal to Americans' belief in separate spheres, but Brown's endorsement of conventional gender roles appeared less a practical move than a conscious attempt to improve the lives of African Americans by relying on a system in which he believed. For Brown, the gendered identities inherent to separate spheres were something to which African Americans could aspire.

The historian Martha Hodes observed that in nineteenth-century America the "dominant ideas about the sexuality of black men and white women were closely bound up with ideas about the sexual depravity of African-American women. All of these ideas were part of a system that ideally would permit white men to control all white women and all

[98] Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists," 559-560.

black people."[99] In *The Escape* and *Clotel*, Brown exposed this system and critiqued the power it provided white men. The parody found in *The Escape* relied on the corruption associated with such sexual dominance and underscored the effects upon all involved. Brown used a more subtle approach in *Clotel*, describing his main African-American female characters—Currer, Clotel, and Althesa—in terms readily identifiable to his readers as epitomes of Victorian womanhood, as true women. His depiction of African-American men was perhaps less transparent, as they were most often not his focus in *Clotel*; his use of George Green, however, one of Horatio Green's slaves, did point to his underlying concerns about the construction of African-American masculinity.[100]

Brown used George in ways that would be acceptable to a white audience, or at least a white audience outside of the South. We learn that George "was as white as most white people" and that by having waited "on educated white people, he had become very familiar with the English language."[101] Moreover, "he had heard his master and visitors speak of the down-trodden and oppressed Poles; he heard them talk of going to Greece to fight for liberty, and against the oppressors of that ill-fated people."[102] These discussions of oppression, resistance, and liberty played a role in charging George with "the love of freedom, and zeal for the cause of his enslaved countrymen."[103] George cherished freedom for both himself and other African Americans; as a result, he participated in a slave revolt, demonstrating his resistant masculinity. From the southern white perspective, such action marked him as a

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[99] Martha Elizabeth Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 5.
[100] The slave narrative by Harriet Jacobs is the most often the document analyzed for sex and slavery by many scholars due to the fact that it was female authored and a first hand account. A close reading finds solid comparisons between Jacobs's life and the fictional women of *Clotel*. See Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (1861, rprt; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
[101] Brown, *Clotel*, 201.
[102] The references here are to revolutions in Greece in 1821 and Poland in 1830.
[103] Brown, *Clotel*, 201.

threat to society. Questions of George's character, however, became more complicated when he later redeemed himself by risking his life to save a box of valuable documents during a fire when no other man would have done so, which made him a community hero. Moreover, his impassioned speech at his trial aligned him with American revolutionaries, the freedom fighters who established American independence from British rule: "Did not the American revolutionists violate the laws when they struck for liberty? They were revolters, but their success made them patriots--we were revolters, and our failure makes us rebels."[104] This approach, typical of abolitionist literature, especially that of ex-slaves, identified freedom-loving African American men with their white analogs: both crave freedom, and both will fight to achieve it, here Brown presented resistant masculinity through his work. In this way Brown's strategy invested George with characteristics typically identified with exemplary white masculinity; not only do stories of America's revolutionary past appeal to him, but he himself embodied characteristics of America's revolutionaries. The construction of African American manhood here stood out as both familiar, paralleling the exemplary form of American masculinity, and radical in its rejection of notions of black racial inferiority.

Ultimately, George must escape the United States to reach freedom, but despite this flouting of national law, Brown characterized him as a rather moderate, generally non-threatening, sympathetic figure. Brown carefully constructed George's character to appeal to a broad audience, making him not only acceptable to those who already opposed slavery, but also made him a representative man who shared the beliefs of whites who valued freedom and liberty and who are perhaps not yet abolitionists. As part of this effort, Brown made him essentially white, heroic, and self-sacrificing, not unlike how he and other authors

[104] Ibid., 203.

constructed the figure of the "tragic mulatto" woman.[105] This presented a rather stark contrast to the more aggressively radical African American figures that Brown at other points praised. In *Clotel*, Brown openly admired Nat Turner, and in his later work, most notably *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*, he similarly celebrated other radical figures that would have provoked anxiety or even fear in his white contemporaries.[106] Moreover, in a post Civil War version of *Clotel*, Brown refigured George to be a more aggressive and, not coincidentally, a blacker character—more like a bold revolutionary than a relatively non-threatening hero of a domestic novel. Such a transition revealed Brown's growing comfort at presenting a fuller picture of African-American manhood, not simply one that a mainstream white audience would willingly accept.

In *The Black Man*, Brown used a series of historical sketches to represent an African-American masculinity consistent with the contemporary version of idealized manhood. Central to this depiction were characterizations of African-American men as freedom-loving revolutionaries accomplished in areas typically regarded as reserved for white men. Though biographer William Farrison asserted that "Brown did not arrange the sketches in any specific order, unless it was the order in which he wrote them," close examination reveals a careful organization geared to a specific purpose: to establish a full picture of African American masculinity corresponding to the kind of masculinity widely accepted at the

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[105] The tragic mulatto was a fictional character that appeared in American literature during the nineteenth century from as early as the 1840s. The "tragic mulatto" was an archetypical mixed-race person, who failed to completely fit in the "white world" or the "black world". As such, the "tragic mulatto" was depicted as the victim of the society divided by race, were there is no place for one who is neither completely "black" nor "white". The female "tragic mulatto" was a stock character of abolitionist literature, the offspring of the white slave owning master. This character allowed abolitionists to draw attention to the sexual exploitation in slavery, and unlike the suffering of the field hands, did not allow slaveholders to retort that the sufferings of Northern free labor factory workers were no easier, since the Northern mill owner would not sell his own children into slavery. For more on the history of the "tragic mulatto" see Ariela Julie Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[106] Brown, *The Black Man*.

time.[107] Rather than arrange the sketches chronologically or thematically, Brown tended to alternate revolutionary or military figures with men (he included only three women in the fifty-seven sketches) accomplished in the arts or sciences. For example, his first six sketches discussed Benjamin Banneker, a post-revolutionary renaissance man; Nat Turner, leader of a slave rebellion; Madison Washington, leader of a shipboard slave revolt; Henry Bibb, an escaped slave and abolitionist who set up a colony far ex-slaves in Canada; Placida, the noted Dominican insurrectionist and poet; Jeremiah B. Sanderson, a highly educated man who gave sermons "generally beyond the comprehension of his hearers, except those well-read;" and Frederick Douglass, a "distinguished individual whose name… is more widely known than that of any other living colored man."[108] Such organization served two purposes: first, it established that black men were, like white men, freedom lovers who will fight to achieve their liberty (Brown's frequent mention of Washington and Jefferson reinforced this notion). Second, it offered readers the opportunity to learn about the notable African American men who had succeeded in other endeavors—intellectuals, doctors, poets, scientists—which rounded out the scope of African American male accomplishment. In this way Brown demonstrated the importance of resistant masculinity and the fact that some black men established their manhood through other means, namely intellectual prowess.

His goal here was not to present African-American men as deserving freedom, which other abolitionists had already done and which he assumed as a given, but to reveal that despite enormous obstacles they had already established themselves as complete self-made men. As Brown wrote in his preface, "it will meet the sanguine hopes of the writer…if this

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[107] Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 368.
[108] Brown, *The Black Man*, 92, 181.

work shall aid in vindicating the Negro's character, and show that he is endowed with those intellectual and amiable qualities which adorn and dignify human nature."[109]

Brown's representation of African American male achievement, in *The Black Man*, subverted the notion that masculinity, the primary requirement for American citizenship, was reserved for white men alone. Though Brown's biographies seem rather conventional to readers today, he used this work to revise contemporary notions of the racial construction of manhood. Brown also depicted men like Nat Turner and Madison Washington, threatening to whites because of their challenges to white authority, as heroic figures whose behavior remained consistent with the American revolutionary spirit, who rebelled not against another nation but against their own nation and the oppressive authority of whites. Like earlier white American revolutionaries, these men symbolized the American desire for liberty; they were willing to die, and possibly to kill, to achieve the rights they had been denied.

Significantly, Brown used these figures to represent an African American masculinity that fits well within the boundaries of patriarchal manhood. Brown's radical move here erased the racial component of masculinity, eliminating whiteness as the fundamental characteristic. This move contrasted with those of white abolitionists who also chose to eliminate the racial component of manhood, but who also challenged the notion that patriarchy operated as an essential component of being a man. While white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison sought to resist the patriarchy of American society, Brown often embraced it, hoping, in fact, to provide African American men access to it.

As this depiction of African American men revealed, Brown's examination of masculinity challenged the racial aspects of what defined a man in America. Throughout his work, Brown consistently identified the notion that whiteness equaled superiority as absurd,

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[109] Ibid., 6.

and the white men in his works often proved themselves to be, in fact, inferior to black men. The black men he wrote about were exceptional because they subverted widely accepted racist notions of African American inferiority and on their own demonstrated their masculinity in a number of ways. Moreover, Brown used these men to show black men as central to American identity, just as central as white men. Brown used such characters to revise the racial stratification of American society, so in this respect Brown's work was indeed radical. Nevertheless, Brown's conception of masculinity itself, outside of its racial aspects, fit comfortably within contemporary notions of hegemonic manhood. Unlike white abolitionists, Brown sought not to change the type of manhood that was most valued; instead, he endorsed what was valued, with some modification of his own, and attempted to demonstrate that the African American men could in fact be that kind of man, often despite enormous challenges.

From the 1840s until the start of the Civil War black abolitionists, such as Bibb, Brown, and Douglass, joined the ranks of other free men who strove to achieve the ideal of the self-made man. For these men however, it took a special self-made masculinity to pull themselves from the depths of slavery to the point of middle class respectability as antislavery activists. Each demonstrated this form of masculinity through their work as abolitionists and also stood as a symbol of black manhood to others within the African American community. While Henry Bibb and Frederick Douglass each performed self-made masculinity through their professions as antislavery lecturers and newspapermen, William Wells Brown took a unique path and proved his manhood by becoming the first African American to write a novel. In *Clotel* Brown not only challenged white masculinity and racism through his antislavery fiction, but also provided examples of superior black

manhood. Brown's first book focused on the history of African Americans and balanced the stories of freedom fighting revolutionaries performing resistant masculinity with poets, scientists, and writers performing a unique intellectual masculinity that set them apart as African American representative men.

CHAPTER 4: Intellectual Masculinity—1845-1863

In 1860 as part of speaking tour in support of the Southern Democratic presidential candidate John C. Breckinridge, the United State Senator from Alabama, the fire-eater, and leading proponent of secession, William Lowndes Yancey gave a speech at Faneuil Hall in Boston, "the heart and soul of abolitionism."[1] Not ever one to shy away from confrontation, and possibly hoping to provoke one, Yancey delivered a speech in defense of slavery. The speech reiterated the familiar proslavery arguments including topics such as his belief of the natural inferiority of blacks, the right of whites to dominate supposedly inferior races, and the Constitution's protection of slavery. Yancey went on to address the economic connections that the North, particularly New York and Boston, had to the slave system and the economic impact that election of Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans would produce. In an effort to instill fear in his listeners he even argued that freedom for the slaves would produce a mass migration of blacks to Boston. Yancey said,

> If the Republican policy is carried out, you make the people set these negroes free, and by law drive them out of the State of Virginia; and when they come by hundreds of thousands upon Massachusetts, when you have doubled your pauper houses and jails, then you will begin to pass laws to drive back this great herd.[2]

Reports of the event stated that his speech received both applause and jeers from the Boston crowd.

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[1] Eric H. Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 265. In the 1850s the fire-eaters were a group of extremist pro-slavery Southern politicians who urged secession from the United States. Additionally, they sought to reopen the international slave trade, which had been illegal since 1808. For more on the Fire-Eaters see Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992). For more on Yancey see John Witherspoon DuBose, *The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey: A History of Political Parties in the United States, from 1834 to 1864; especially as to the Origin of the Confederacy* (2 vols; 1892 rprt; New York: Peter Smith, 1942).

[2] "Refuge of Oppression. Speech of Hon. William L. Yancey," *The Liberator*, October 26, 1860.

In the crowd that night were a number of Boston's abolitionist leaders and antislavery intellectuals, both black and white, including William Wells Brown. Historian William Farrison noted that after the meeting "Brown wrote to Yancey the next day inviting him to attend a meeting the Negroes of Boston were planning" and that the "business of the meeting was to be a review by Brown of Yancey's speech." Farrison went on to write that "[n]ot surprisingly at all Yancey neither acknowledged receipt of Brown's letter nor attended the meeting."[3]

Undeterred by Yancey's failure to attend, Brown presented a systematic and well-argued intellectual rebuttal of the fire-eater's speech. Brown began with Yancey's "long argument" regarding the financial benefits of slave labor over free, then moved on to what he called Mr. Yancey's "ignorance of history" concerning the Founding Fathers' views on black citizenship and the history of various enslaved peoples including the Britons' and Anglo-Saxons' enslavement to the Romans and the Normans, respectively. In his speech he referred directly to the book by Hinton R. Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South*, to dispute the financial aspects of slavery.[4] Additionally he drew on works by David Hume, Thomas B. Macaulay, and R. B. Lewis, as well as those of the ancient Greeks Euclid, Homer, and Plato.[5] Brown declared, "The Romans, Saxons, and Normans who swallowed up the Britons, and

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[3] William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown: Author & Reformer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 320-321.

[4] Helper was a Southern critic of slavery from North Carolina. While in the North he published *The Impending Crisis* in which he argued that slavery hurt the economic prospects of non-slaveholders, and was an impediment to the growth of the entire region of the South. See Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South; How to Meet It*, ed. George M. Fredrickson (1857 rprt; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1968), and David Brown, *Southern Outcast: Hinton Roawn Helper and* <u>*The Impending Crisis of the South*</u> (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

[5] In the speech Brown quoted from Hume's *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Ceasar to the Abdication of James the Second*, 1688, vol. 1 (1754), from Macaulay's *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, vol. 1 (1848), and from Lewis's *Light and Truth; Collected from the Bible and Ancient and Modern History, Containing the Universal History of the Colored and the Indian Races, from the Creation of the World to the Present Time* (1844), noted in Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 320-321. See notes 16 and 17 in particular.

gave them a name and a language, received their civilization from Egypt and Ethiopia. When Mr. Yancey's ancestors were bending their necks to the yoke of William the Conqueror, the ancestors of his slaves were reveling in the halls of science and learning."[6]

The intellectual basis for Brown's argument was clear even though he cited no authorities for his statements during the speech. Brown presented a direct, robust, and engaged public response to William Lowndes Yancey and his proslavery rhetoric. This was but one example that showed by 1860 Brown had evolved into a leading black abolitionist and intellectual who consistently demonstrated his intellectual masculinity. The focus here is the evolution of this intellectual masculinity for black abolitionists such as Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, Martin Delany, and in particular Frederick Douglass.[7]

As discussed in the introduction, the theoretical concept of intellectual masculinity is composed of various performed masculinities (resistant, protective, self-made, and engaged intellectual activity), with the goal of demonstrating manhood as an intellectual engagée through dramatic attacks on society, in particular the Slave Power.[8] These engaged intellectuals challenged hegemony by means of ideological apparatuses such as education and the media.[9] Their challenges or attacks on the Peculiar Institution were not limited to

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[6] *Liberator*, October 26, 1860. Quoted in Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 321.

[7] The central figure for this chapter will one again be Frederick Douglass. As in previous chapters I will, however, include both William Wells Brown and Henry Bibb. I have chosen to include Martin Delany here as a stand in for Henry Bibb. Due to Bibb's death in 1854 at the age of 39 his views on events in the late 1850s and on the Civil War can never be known. However, like Bibb, Delany was a black intellectual leader, a newspaperman, and promoter of emigration away from the United States. His transformation after the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation is interesting example of intellectual masculinity in action and deserves attention here.

[8] Jean Paul Sartre, *"What is Literature?" and Other Essays* (1965 rprt; Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 38. See David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), who argued that there was no such conspiracy, though most abolitionists and Republican Party members so believed, as well as Michael Landis, *The Northern Democracy, the Democratic Party, and the Destruction of the Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014, forthcoming, who made a stronger case that such a conspiracy actually existed.

[9] Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 304.

physical violence. A contemporary and fellow intellectual, Ralph Waldo Emerson, insisted that thinking, writing, and speaking were ideal forms of action and thus he did not differentiate antislavery discourse from more physical methods. Writing of the heroic role that an orator could play, he concluded, "His speech is not to be distinguished from action. It is the salt & electricity of action. It is action, as the General's word of command or chart of battle is action."[10] Therefore the actual blows Bibb, Brown, Delany, and Douglass struck against the institution of slavery varied significantly. Their activities began in their minds, joining Emerson, who insisted, "to think was to act." Their engagement, however, their intellectual masculinity, included much more than contemplation.[11]

Black abolitionists including Douglass, Brown, and others found militant engagement in the antislavery project an easier step to take than did their white counterparts, such as Emerson and William Lloyd Garrison. Frustrated by the racial politics of antebellum America, African American intellectuals abandoned their early alliances. Douglass came to reject the pacifistic politics and paternalism of the Garrisonian wing of radical abolitionism, eventually recasting America's founding documents as antislavery instruments. Brown also broke with his Boston brethren and actively recruited troops for the Massachusetts 54th and 55th regiments of the United States Colored Troops, the USCT. Martin Delany went even further than Douglass or Brown in terms of resistant masculinity by enlisting and serving as an officer in the USCT.[12]

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[10] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, ed. William H. Gilman et al, (16 vols; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1960), 9: 425.
[11] Emerson, "Spiritual Laws," in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, eds. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson, (10 vols; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-), 2: 94.
[12] For more on Delany's activity in the USCT, see Frank A. Rollin, *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany, Sub-Assistant Commissioner Bureau Relief of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandon Lands, and Late Major 104th U.S. Colored Troops* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1883); Dorothy Sterling, *The Making of an Afro-*

The thought and action of white intellectuals Theodore Parker and Thomas Wentworth Higginson suggest that they also grappled with the extent of violent engagement in the 1850s and early 1860s. Although Parker's speeches and sermons called for abolitionists to take up the sword, he wrestled frequently with his own willingness to clash physically with the Slave Power, as well as the likelihood that slaves would follow suit. Higginson, in turn, lacked Parker's reservations about his own desire or African Americans' ability to destroy the Slave Power. Before the war he battled slave-catchers in Boston and by 1863 travelled to South Carolina to take charge of the first unit of African American soldiers before ultimately hanging up his sword for a genteel career as a cultural critic after the Civil War.[13]

Inclusion of white intellectuals within a discussion of black manhood must be handled with caution and with an understanding of white northern intellectual views on race.[14] A primary reason for this caution centers on the fact that the racism of many white intellectuals clouds the evidence of their interaction with black thinkers. Nell Irvin Painter, in her history of whiteness, is the latest historian to examine the racial attitudes of white intellectuals. Her identification of Emerson as the "philosopher king" of American whiteness, while challenged by some historians, focused attention on the racist ideas common among white intellectuals in general and Transcendentalists in particular.[15] With only a few

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American: Martin Robison Delany, 1812-1885 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971); Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

[13] See James W. Tuttleton, *Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978); Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, ed. Christopher Looby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[14] For more on the paradoxical views on race within the northern intellectual community, in particular those in Boston, see Ira Lee Berlet, "Free, Yet Inferior: The Paradox of Race among Boston's "Representative Men", 1846-1865" (M.A. thesis, Southern Methodist University, 2005).

[15] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: Norton, 2010), 151- 189. Painter has been criticized for being unfair to Emerson by, among others, Eric Foner, in his review, "The White Side of History: Sketches of a Caucasian Past"," *Harper's Magazine*, September 2010, 74-78.

exceptions, many white abolitionists held similar ideas. There is, then, a paradox evident in white intellectual and Transcendentalist ideas about race.[16] Some ideas implicit in Transcendentalism encouraged adherents to become abolitionists, however, these ideas did not necessarily guide believers to shed their racist assumptions.

The alliances and relationships between white and black activists and thinkers were often strained by whites' attitudes. That these alliances survived and even flourished offered evidence of the savvy and patience of black activists and the genuine attempts that some, though not all, white activists made to transcend their own racial positions. Some white abolitionist thinkers, however, understood that they often placed themselves ahead of black leaders, and that this practiced need to be discontinued. "We white Anglo-Saxon Abolitionists are too apt to assume the whole work as ours," announced abolitionist and minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson to a packed house at New York City's Mozart Hall on a May evening in 1858. By underestimating "the great force of the victims of tyranny," he continued, white abolitionists overlooked the fact that "to be free 'themselves must strike the first blow.'"[17] Higginson's choice of topics would have seemed familiar to the black abolitionists in the audience that night, for the question of who should take up arms against the Slave Power underlay much antislavery rhetoric during the 1850s. Several months earlier, for example, fellow antislavery minister Theodore Parker engaged in an impromptu public debate with black abolitionist Dr. John Rock about whether people of African descent could, in fact, free themselves.[18] And a year later John Brown did his best to prove Higginson correct, launching his ill-fated attempt to capture arms from the federal garrison at Harper's Ferry and thereby spark a slave revolt across the mountains of Virginia. But even

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[16] See Berlet, "Free, Yet Inferior."
[17] *Liberator*, May 28, 1858.
[18] See Chapter 1 for details of this debate.

more than the question of who should destroy the institution of slavery, Higginson's audience would have recognized the very words he used — "to be free themselves must strike the first blow"—because, in some variation, they had long formed a common refrain in radical abolitionist circles and exemplify a form of intellectual masculinity performed by a number of black abolitionists.

Those black abolitionists in antebellum America who were intellectuals engaged in broad Atlantic conversations about philosophy, politics, art, and the purpose of ideas. They wrote themselves into the great currents of thought that were exchanged between London and Paris, Haiti and New Orleans, Concord, Massachusetts and Königsberg, Germany.[19] While earlier generations of black intellectuals, like the Haitian Revolutionaries, had been influenced by Enlightenment ideals, this later generation tended to engage with Romanticism, the great successor to Enlightenment thought. Black intellectuals throughout the North read Romantic poets, agreed with idealist philosophy, and adopted Romantic styles of dress and self-presentation. Black intellectuals like Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass should not be read as simply absorbing or imitating white philosophy and ideas; rather these thinkers played crucial roles in creating these ideas in the American context. It is this interest in Romantic literature and philosophy, an interest shared by black intellectuals throughout the Atlantic world that shaped the contours of the antislavery organizing among black abolitionists.[20]

As early as 1837, a group of African Americans in New York City protested state limits on suffrage by quoting the words of "a great champion of religious and political

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[19] See W. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 45-65, 183-209.
[20] For more on the transatlantic exchange of Romantic notions of heroism and reform ideas, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 41-71; McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery*, 27-30.

liberty," who said, "they who would be free, must strike the first blow." Six years later, radical abolitionist editor William Lloyd Garrison turned to the same words in an address that he directed to people in bondage. He argued that slaveholders, by virtue of their glorification of the Revolutionary War, implicitly gave those they held in bondage the right "to wage war against them." Slaves, by Garrison's logic, had every right to follow the example of American patriots, who, he said, cried: "Hereditary bondmen! know ye not,/Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow."[21] Three years later, black abolitionist editor Martin Delany changed the slogan of his antislavery newspaper to the same version of the call to self-enacted liberation employed by Garrison. Delany's short-term co-editor and fellow black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, in turn, frequently used the identical slogan both in print and on the antislavery platform. He punctuated his well-known tale of physical confrontation with the slave breaker Covey with the motto in his 1855 autobiography. Eight years later, he called on the black troops of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment to put aside their personal hesitations about northern prejudice and go to war because "Action! Action! Not criticism, is the plain duty of this hour," concluding, "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow."[22]

Despite the prevalence of this call to action in antislavery discourse, it was not the creation of Douglass, Delany, Higginson, nor any other American abolitionist. In fact, English Romantic poet Lord Byron published this line in 1812. "Hereditary Bondsmen!

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[21] *The Colored American*, August 9, 1837. William Lloyd Garrison, "Address to the Slaves," in Stanley Harrold, *The Rise o f Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 173, 176. Garrison, however, was a pacifist, and he quickly retreated from his rhetorical appeal to self-enacted emancipation, cautioning those in bondage to demonstrate patience. For more see Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, esp. 17-29.

[22] Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 60-61. Douglass, "Men of Color, To Arms!," *Douglass' Monthly*, Mar. 21, 1863. Douglass also suggested that women needed to fight for their rights, insisting that "with her as with us, 'Who would be free themselves must strike the blow.'" (John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001], 226.)

know ye not," wrote Byron in the second canto of his semi-autobiographical epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?" Although Byron described Childe Harold as a fictional character, he also admitted that he had written much of the poem "amidst the scenes which it attempts to describe." Traveling across the Mediterranean region in the early nineteenth century, the Romantic poet confronted— and was disturbed by—Turkish domination of Greece. His call to "Hereditary Bondsmen" in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* reflected both a specific desire for the Greeks to win their independence from the Ottoman Empire and a general sympathy for heroic resistance to tyranny.[23]

That Byron's words of self-reliant liberation littered the pages and echoed through the assembly halls of antebellum America is not surprising: the Romantic poet loomed large over the young nation. Although Byron never visited the United States, his works quickly spread across antebellum America after they were first published there in 1811. Just after he died in 1825, the *North American Review* published a forty-seven page obituary, which concluded, "The death of Lord Byron, without depressing the price of stocks or affecting the election of the President, has produced a deep and general feeling of regret throughout the country."[24]

Although he was not accepted wholesale in America—after all, his Romantic excesses, particularly his scandalous eroticism, challenged the strict pieties of the Christian republic—even stern moralists lamented his passing. Byron was a favorite for example, of orthodox minister Lyman Beecher, father of Harriett Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward

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[23] George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto 2, stanza 76, in *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed., Earnest Hartley Coleridge (13 vols.; New York: C Scribner's Sons, 1899), 2: 151; Earnest Hartley Coleridge, preface to the first and second cantos of *Childe Harold Pilgrimage*, in *The Works of Lord Byron*, 2: 3. For a discussion of Byron's commitment to political freedom and social justice, see Paul Trueblood, "Byron's Championship of Political Freedom," *Byron Journal* 4 (1976): 22-33.

[24] Peter X. Accardo, "Byron in America to 1830," *Harvard Library Bulletin* (Summer, 1998): 6; Charles E. Robinson, "The Influence of Byron's Death in America," *Byron Journal* 5 (1977): 50.

Beecher. Acknowledging both the poet's appeal and his shortcomings, Lyman Beecher wondered wistfully upon Byron's death "what a harp he might have swept" had he been converted to God's work.[25]

Antebellum Americans were also drawn to the Romantic poet's actions, for he not only sought to capture the ethos of self-liberation in his verse, he also tried to live by it. Born to English aristocrats, Byron was unwilling to rest comfortably in his station. He wrote and co-edited the literary and political journal, *The Liberal*. And he eventually sought to put his political beliefs into action, traveling to Greece, where he fought (and died) in the Greek War of Independence, a true demonstration of engaged manhood.[26]

While Byron's life and work spoke to many antebellum Americans, his potent concoction of romantic emotionalism, self-exploration, and heroic calls for political and social liberation were particularly inspirational to American reformers. As a young man, Abraham Lincoln became devoted to Byron's work, pouring over *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* with friends.[27] Even Byron's "look" inspired American reformers. Abolitionist Gerrit Smith not only read the poet's work closely as a student at Hamilton College in the early part of the century, he mimicked his hairstyle and "Byron Collar"— adopting a style that he kept through the 1850s. Although William Lloyd Garrison declined to emulate the poet's choice of collars, he, too, adopted "a Byronic upsweep" hairstyle for a portrait painted by a friend. And like Lincoln and Smith, Garrison also devoured Byron's work as a young

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[25] Annie Fields in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), 39.
[26] Jonathan David Gross, *Byron: The Erotic Liberal* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 153-70.
[27] Stewart Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* (DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 180.

man. He read the poet's stanzas on the Battle of Waterloo repeatedly, concluding that they were "unsurpassed" for "rousing the blood like a trumpet call."[28]

The widespread use of Byron's words of self-enacted emancipation, combined with the popularity he enjoyed among Americans in general and reformers in particular, underscores the degree to which his Romantic prose and heroic posture permeated antebellum American reform culture. Although reform movements abounded in 1830s and 1840s America, some historians suggested that it was on the wane by the 1850s.[29] While others, such as historian George Fredrickson, pushed the date of the shift from idealism and opportunity to discipline and order by about a decade. He argued that the Civil War, not the 1850s, marked a change in the philosophy of northern reformers—particularly intellectuals—from millennial hope and boundless idealism to conservative practical methods associated with the emerging bureaucratic state.[30] The scholar, Louis Menand, also highlighted the central role that the Civil War played in changing America's reform culture. He traced the disillusionment of American intellectuals with idealism to the horrors of that bloody conflict.[31] In the final analysis, whenever antebellum reform declined, Byron's call to action had an impact on the various reform movements. And because Byron's call to arms turned up most often in African American newspapers and conventions, historians typically interpreted it as evidence of a step towards separatism and Black Nationalism.[32] Whether or not this was true, the significance of Byron's influence on black abolitionists and on

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[28] Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men*, 60-61; Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 36, 38.
[29]John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Winter, 1965), 656.
[30] See George M. Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
[31] Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).
[32] See Jane H. Pease and William Henry Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 13.

American reformers to become engaged intellectuals contributed to their performance of intellectual masculinity.

Although antislavery is a historical topic that has been well mined, to say the least, the rise of antislavery violence in the 1850s and the masculine nature of black abolitionist engagement has received insufficient attention. To be sure, political historians have analyzed nearly every angle of the rise of the sectional crisis and the Republican Party from the mid-1840s to 1861.[33] More often than not, however, these scholars have minimized or ignored the efforts of antislavery activists who operated outside traditional political channels and paid limited attention to antislavery violence for black abolitionist masculinity. Moreover, those works that have paid significant attention to the rise of antislavery violence in the 1850s tended to focus on the abandonment of Garrisonian non-resistance by a small number of antislavery radicals. These abolitionists, so the story goes, shrugged off pacifistic stances, experimenting with—and sometimes embracing unabashedly—violent tactics in the face of the frustrating political defeats of the decade, especially the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. Scholars have often framed such reversals as the product of ideological accommodation or compromise, the exploitation of "intellectual loopholes."[34] Bibb, Delany,

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[33] See, for example, Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Louis S. Gerteis, *Morality and Utility in American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballatine Books, 1988); Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.; Jonathan Halperin Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[34] Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism; Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornel University Press, 1973), 239. For more on the rise of antislavery violence in the 1850s, see John Demos, "The Antislavery Movement and the Problem of Violent 'Means'," *The New England Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (Dec., 1964), 501-526 and James Brewer Stewart, "Peaceful Hopes and Violent Experiences: The Evolution of Reforming and Radical Abolitionism, 1831-1837," *Civil War History* 17, no. 4 (1971), 293-309. Two more recent works give the rise of antislavery violence in the 1850s give more in-depth analysis. See John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum*

Brown, and Douglass, however, needed no such loopholes. They were neither committed pacifists, nor did they reject unconditionally the laws of man in favor of the laws of God. What they did share was a commitment to an intellectual masculinity that informed their willingness to consider various methods to end slavery including antislavery violence. And this shared perspective, in turn, even seemed to explain the thoughts and actions of figures such as Emerson or possibly Garrison, for whom violence had only marginal appeal.

Indeed, intellectual masculinity could lead to the endorsement of—if not engagement in—a range of antislavery tactics: from denouncing slavery on the abolitionist platform, to traditional political agitation, to participation in armed struggle against slavery. In antebellum parlance, this "type" of abolitionism might be described as "resistant"— a term that emerged in the antislavery arguments of a small group of non-resistant abolitionists whose best-known proponent was William Lloyd Garrison. Non-resistance was a pacifist reform philosophy that rejected the use of coercive force, whether through political channels or extralegal violence, in favor of affecting a change of heart through moral suasion.[35] Yet while black abolitionists turned increasingly toward both legal and extralegal resistance in the 1850s, they did not reject moral suasion. Failing to draw the same distinctions between non-resistant and resistant tactics as did Garrisonian non-resistants, black abolitionists using an intellectual masculinity simultaneously embraced a variety of means to end slavery.

Many of the recent histories of antebellum black intellectuals have emphasized the performative nature of antebellum black intellectual life. The performance studies scholar

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America (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999) and Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of* Men. For discussion of pre-1850s ambivalence about the question of violence, see Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

[35] For more on antislavery tactics, see Perry, *Radical Abolitionism* and Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969).

Tavia Nyong'o, for example, built on the conclusions of literature scholar Homi Bhabha and other post-colonial theorists to find, in the prose of black thinkers, a complicated performance of racial hybridity.[36] In less theoretical prose, historian John Stauffer explored the self-presentation of Frederick Douglass and other black abolitionists as manifested in photographs, private letters, and writings. Stauffer continued his exploration of Douglass's self-presentation and his findings suggested that Douglass's and Abraham Lincoln's interest in being "self-made" men was as much about a process of the performance of a controlled and manly self as it was the bourgeois project of economic improvement.[37] Works such as these have introduced valuable concepts into our study of black intellectuals, rightly reminding us, as W.E.B. Du Bois would have been well aware, of the necessity for cautious and savvy self-presentation (what Du Bois called "the veil") in a hostile and racist world.[38] How people conceive of themselves and their relationship to the outside world is a historical and socially determined project, but the intellectuals in this story, black as well as white, took seriously the process of self-creation, and were interested in divine and aesthetic influences on the self. The manhood of antebellum black intellectuals cannot be reduced to a single performance of masculinity; their reality within a subordinated group required multiple performed masculinities.

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[36] Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (2nd ed.; New York: Routledge, 2004).

[37] Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men*; John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Twelve Books, 2009).

[38] In *The Souls of Black Folk*, arguably W.E.B. DuBois' most famous work, he introduces two concepts that describe the quintessential black experience in America— the concepts of "the veil" and "double-consciousness." According to DuBois the veil is a visual manifestation of the color line and is worn by all African Americans because their view of the world and its potential economic, political, and social opportunities is so vastly different from that of white people. See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Du Bois, *Darkwater; Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

In actions and ideas—in speeches, pamphlets, and fists raised against "slave-hunters"—black activists throughout the antebellum North placed themselves at the center of one of the most important intellectual movements of the nineteenth century. By 1860, most northern intellectuals, black and white, had arrived at a position regarding the end of slavery that included violent means. They arrived at this position gradually after careful consideration, after they had used other means, and after a transformation that produced a generation of intellectual engagée determined to bring an end to the peculiar institution. These engaged intellectuals displayed a basic commitment to transcendent values—in nineteenth-century terms, to a higher law (a term used by New York Senator William Henry Seward on the floor of the U.S. Senate during debates over the Compromise of 1850). This component of activist reform was exemplified by both William Henry Seward's and Theodore Parker's vehement denunciation of the Fugitive Slave Law in favor of God's moral law; a source into which they insisted every individual could tap directly. Yet they also located their appeals to the higher law within American liberal traditions. Frederick Douglass, for example, stressed the egalitarian potential of the Declaration of Independence and eventually rejected critiques of the Constitution as pro-slavery in favor of an interpretation of it as a "GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT."[39] In the end Douglass, Brown, and other black abolitionists embraced a heroic vision of individual action epitomized by Byron's call to self-enacted emancipation. As with other components of their intellectual manhood, this heroic strain also resonated strongly in the broader culture, particularly in the literature of the period.

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[39] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," in Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan, (5 vols; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979-1992), 2: 385. Hereafter *FDP*.

In the late summer of 1837, Emerson stepped in front of an audience assembled for Harvard's annual Phi Beta Kappa meeting, which included U.S. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, Oliver Wendell Homes, Sr., James Russell Lowell, and Richard Henry Dana, to deliver his speech, "The American Scholar."[40] Given before a daunting collection of American intellectuals, the address took direct aim at the young nation's intellectual culture, which both his audience and his host, the Phi Beta Kappa society at Harvard, had helped to construct. In a speech that Holmes called "our intellectual Declaration of Independence," Emerson lamented that American letters were painfully subservient to Europe. Yet Emerson was optimistic that the time was coming "when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill."[41]

Emerson envisaged a new role for the American intellectual, "the thinking man," premised on a conception of thinking as a form of action. Thinking men would look beyond institutions and books. They would no longer be just purveyors of the "mind of the past"—forced to mimic rather than create, unable to think for themselves. "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe," he insisted, and as such "the spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame." Americans, Emerson urged, must reject the idea that Europeans should do their thinking for them, just as they must cast aside the notion that thinking was something apart from action. Rather, he insisted, "action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet a man. Without it, thought can never ripen into truth." By this statement, Emerson did not mean to denigrate

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[40] Robert Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire, A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 262.
[41] Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 44; Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson, (10 vols; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-), 1: 52.

contemplation; quite the contrary, he often insisted that thought did not receive the respect it deserved when compared to its more overt counterpart. And Emerson emphasized the productive and proactive components of silent moments. "Inaction is cowardice," he insisted, "but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action." In his essay "Intellect," Emerson further developed his active vision of contemplation. "What is the hardest task in the world?" he asked himself, and responded, "to think." Tracing the intricate process by which intellectual labor yielded profitable output only after extensive effort, Emerson concluded that the path to wisdom was not straightforward: "So now you must labor with your brains, and now you must forbear your activity, and see what the great Soul showeth."[42] By the mid-1840s, Emerson proposed not only thinking, but public speaking as a form of heroic action: "There is no orator who is not a hero," he wrote in his journal. "The orator must always stand with forward foot in the very attitude of advancing. His speech must be just ahead of the whole human race, or it is prattle. His speech is not to be distinguished from action. It is the salt & electricity of action. It is action, as the General's word of command or chart of battle is action."[43] Emerson, in short, framed the American intellectual role—"man thinking"—as both dynamic and heroic: remaking the world with new ideas.

The black abolitionists and intellectuals Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass set out to remake the world with an idea: that slavery should end. Using their intellect, public speaking, and their writing they aggressively sought to change the

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[42] Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1: 69, 1:59, 1:59; "Intellect," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2: 197.
[43] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, ed. William H. Gilman and et al, (16 vols; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1960), 9: 425.

society around them. Employing these methods of intellectual masculinity they eventually began to promote the use of physical action—violence—as a way to end slavery. In essence they promoted a resistant masculinity in others that they themselves had each experienced.[44] Frederick Douglass's transformation from escaped slave to engaged intellectual served as a model for how these men became part of the earliest incarnation of DuBois's "Talented Tenth" and showed his growing intellectual masculinity.

Frederick Douglass clearly appreciated Ralph Waldo Emerson's antislavery work and used Emersonian themes in his famous lyceum lecture, "Self-Made Men."[45] Henry Bibb's paper (published in Canada) declared, "our motto must therefore be self-reliance," a trait the editors defined as the development of the free black community and emancipation in America.[46] Perhaps the most remarkable illustration of a black appropriation of Emerson came when the *Pine and Palm*, a short-run Boston newspaper that was partly funded by the Haitian government and run by the abolitionist James Redpath, quoted Emerson on the "condition of success in life," while advocating black emigration to Haiti. More so than white intellectuals, they saw Haiti as a central part of these transatlantic networks of thought and ideology.[47] Thus they combined impulses toward personal growth with political visions of uplift and emancipation, exerting their intellectual masculinity in a number of arenas.

Black radicals, because of their lived experience on the margins of antebellum society, had long believed that certain laws—those that threatened their freedom and the

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[44] See Chapter 1 on resistant masculinity.
[45] Buell, *Emerson*, 255-260.
[46] "American Slavery," *Voice of the Fugitive,* August 13, 1851.
[47] "Out West," *Pine and Palm,* June 12, 1862; see Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

safety of their friends and family—should be disobeyed.[48] Significantly, then, long before white thinkers began questioning, in the abstract, whether all laws ought to be obeyed, black activists had acted in disobedience to any law that mandated the rendition of fugitive slaves. During the same time white thinkers like Henry David Thoreau or Theodore Parker argued about when and why it might be justified to disobey the law, black activists acted on this. Activists like Frederick Douglass had purposely bought tickets in white-only railroad lines throughout the 1840s in order to challenge the segregation of public facilities.[49] Throughout the nation, black activists took the lead in openly protecting fugitives and disobeying the fugitive slave acts of 1793 and 1850. They lacked full citizenship, and so were unable to plead their cases in a fair courtroom, but for obvious reason they still wanted to protect loved ones. An unintended consequence of their second-class citizenship was that they developed new forms of resistance that aided in the fight against slavery and created one of the most important American political traditions. The white theorists of civil disobedience, most notably Parker and Thoreau, were well aware of this activity, and the successes of these black activists went a long way toward convincing later theorists that men did not need to follow laws slavishly in order to act justly. Every major antebellum work dedicated to civil disobedience referenced fugitive slaves as prior examples of the conflict between morality and government.[50]

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[48] For a discussion of the contribution of black abolitionists to the civil-disobedience tradition, see Lewis Perry, "Black Abolitionists and Civil Disobedience," in Karen Halttunen and Lewis Perry ed. *Moral Problems in American Life: New Perspectives on Cultural History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 103-21.
[49] James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North,* rev. ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 2000), 107; William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991), 92-93.
[50] In "Civil Disobedience" Thoreau wrote, "The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race, and should find them; on

Historian Joyce Appleby wrote that the "higher law" tradition in American legal thought traces back to dueling conceptions of the Jeffersonian "law of nature" and the Federalist "law of conscience."[51] She correctly stated that ideas about natural law, and discussions of when it is right to violate a law, have long roots in American thought— fueled by the legacies of the Reformation and memories of the English Civil War—well pre-dating antebellum reform activism, the rise of a significant free black intellectual community, and immediate abolitionism. But for the radicals on various vigilance committees, a "higher law" denoted more than simply old ideas about natural law and resistance to tyrants being obedience to God.[52]

Black activists fought back with words as well as actions. The black minister J.C.W. Pennington authored one of the most influential texts arguing against social contracts. In 1842, in response to a fugitive slave case in Boston, Pennington had given a remarkable sermon to his congregation in Hartford, Connecticut entitled *Covenants Involving Moral Wrong are Not Obligatory Upon Man*. Printed into pamphlet form, it almost certainly circulated among Boston's black and abolitionist communities. A former slave from Maryland, Pennington had long and lasting connections to Boston's African American community. Pennington helped William C. Nell organize conventions of black activists, and in 1849 he attended the World Peace conference in Paris with William Wells Brown.[53]

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that separate, but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not *with*, but *against* her…" Thoreau, *Collected Essays and Poems,* 213.

[51] Joyce Appleby "Americans' Higher-Law Thinking behind Higher-Lawmaking" *Yale Law Journal* 108, no. 8, (June 1999): 1995-2001.

[52] A vigilance committee was a group formed of private citizens to administer law and order where they considered governmental structures to be inadequate. In the years prior to the Civil War, groups worked to free slaves and transport them to freedom.

[53] For more on Pennington, see Christopher L. Webber, *American to the Backbone: The Life of James W.C. Pennington, the Fugitive Slave who Became One of the First Black Abolitionists* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2011).

As the examples of Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and others shows, black abolitionists who traveled in Europe demonstrated a deep interest in democratic politics. William Wells Brown visited Paris as a delegate to the World Peace Conference in 1849 and noticed reminders of the recent revolution everywhere he went. As he entered the city, he noted that "a few months before was to be seen the flash from the cannon and the musket, and the hearing of the cries and groans behind the barricades."[54] By the Church of the Madeleine, he recalled, "it was near this spot that some of the most interesting scenes occurred during the Revolution of 1848."[55] Brown met a number of the members of the European left on his trip, including Victor Hugo, Marc Beranger, and, most interestingly, Louis Blanc, the socialist who had designed the national workshops that guaranteed work for the urban working classes. Brown made a point of visiting Robespierre's home—the revolutionary history of France and its excesses alternately fascinated and disgusted him. Part of his unsettled feeling clearly came from the fact that France, headed for the reactionary dictatorship of Louis Napoleon, was currently invading Italy in order to "put down the friends of political and religious freedom."[56] Throughout his visits it was clear that for a touring abolitionist like Brown there was a natural affinity between American abolitionists and European democrats.

Even with their admiration for democratic revolution, resorting to political arguments was a form of bad faith for many abolitionists well into the 1840s because Southerners used the Constitution to protect slave property and Garrisonians used the pro-slavery interpretation of the Constitution as justification for their refusal to engage in political antislavery; all in all,

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[54] William Wells Browns, *Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1852), 30.
[55] Ibid., 31 (quote), 35, 81, 113.
[56] Ibid., 48.

many Americans used the Constitution as a placeholder to justify their actions. An action did not become morally correct, the radicals argued, simply because a majority voted for it. At about the same time Thoreau made this same point in his famous *On Civil Disobedience*, this argument became commonplace among black intellectuals.[57] In 1847, William Wells Brown, for instance, wrote a public letter to white abolitionist Samuel May in the *Liberator* (one of the few newspapers Thoreau read regularly), and argued, "the fact that a majority are against us, does not make them right or us wrong."[58]

The key factor was that, for radicals, the "higher law" had a dual meaning. It referred to the idea that there were standards of justice that were more important and lasting than the codes implemented by men. This was how politicians like William Seward, from whom the abolitionists stole the term, invoked it, as a purely political and ethical judgment. For Transcendentalists and black intellectuals, higher law also referred to a celebration of the spiritual, poetic, and aesthetic values that the world contained: ideals that they strove to make real in their behavior and politics. Influenced by British romantics like Thomas Carlyle (who ironically was pro-slavery) and the Swedish religious eccentric Emmanuel Swedenborg, they held the outside world to be representative of higher spiritual realities.[59] From German Romantics like Friedrich Schiller, they inherited the idea that humans fulfilled themselves through self-expression and aesthetic creation. Only through understanding this dual nature of the term can make sense of one of the stranger elements of antebellum politics: that Thoreau used the exact same phrase debated in political pamphlets and on stump speeches to

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[57] Henry David Thoreau's form of civil disobedience was tax evasion. This was in response to the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848. He was jailed in 1846; he took to the Lyceum lecture circuit in 1848 to lecture on civil disobedience, and published the book *Civil Disobedience* in 1849.

[58] *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, ed. Peter C. Ripley (5 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), volume 4; hereafter *BAP*.

[59] As Emerson put it: "I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or real." Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 25.

describe how simple living and an acquaintance with the wild sides of nature would "preserve his higher or poetic faculties."[60] Just as the Emersonian idea of a principled "manhood" connected inward-looking impulses of individual purity, with the outward-looking striving for unity with the Over-soul, so the idea of higher law connected allegiance to outward laws of ethical duty with the search for spiritual and artistic meaning within. The inward became outward and the outward became the inward. By emphasizing the self-expressive meanings of "higher law," they distinguished their project from the Revolutionary-era ideology that held that "resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." For radical abolitionists and black intellectuals resistance could be both an individual act, less concerned with collective rebellion, and an example of moral principles each of which further demonstrated their intellectual masculinity.

This dual nature of a "higher law" played on antebellum ideals that righteous political activity was the sign of a poetic and authentic life. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, for instance, melodramatically declared "existence looks worthless" under the rule of slave-catchers, and that he could "only make life worth living for, by becoming a revolutionist." Higginson was convinced that Northerners would begin to challenge the slave power only when they learned that "life is something more than dress and show… there is some nobler aim in existence than a good bargain, and a fast horse, and an oyster supper."[61] As historian John Stauffer showed, black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass also connected their political activism to a Romantic Byronic lifestyle.[62]

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[60] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley, (150th anniversary edition; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 214.
[61] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Massachusetts in Mourning: A Sermon Preached in Worchester, on Sunday, June 4th, 1854* (Boston: James Munroe, 1854), 13.
[62] Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men*, 60-62, 150-151.

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" asked Douglass of the crowd of over five hundred people who had assembled in Rochester's Corinthian Hall on July 5, 1852.[63] "A day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim," he answered. To the slave, continued Douglass, America's purported commitment to liberty, equality, religion, and morality were "mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy." You could canvas the whole world and still not find a nation that rivaled the United States in terms of "revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy."[64]

Yet, for all his contempt, Douglass did not call for his audience to abandon the United States. Nor did he dismiss America's foundational documents as corrupted or debased by the hypocritical purposes to which they were put. Quite the contrary, he found reasons for optimism in the very principles and institutions to which America was failing to live up to. The Declaration of Independence announced "saving principles" that should be followed "on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at *whatever cost*." And the United States Constitution, insisted Douglass, when interpreted correctly, was a "GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT."[65] His spirits were buoyed not only by the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, but also by what he termed "the genius" of American institutions and the revolutions in commerce, communication, education, and travel that seemed to be simultaneously uniting and transforming every nation on the planet.

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[63] Douglass had been invited by the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society to give a Fourth of July Address. He gave the address on July 5th because July 4th fell on a Sunday in 1852. David F. Ericson, *The Debate Over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 189-190, n. 36.
[64] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," in *FDP* 2: 371.
[65] Ibid., 2: 370, 385. "Whatever cost," emphasis added.

Despite America's failings, Douglass concluded his address on a note of millennial optimism, citing a poem by William Lloyd Garrison, entitled, "The Triumph of Freedom."[66]

Standing before the large audience, Douglass, who had been born a slave, seemed to embody the very contradiction that he traced in his address—the dichotomy between America's extraordinary potential and tragic reality. On the one hand, he was the most famous abolitionist in Rochester, perhaps the most recognizable in the nation. Douglass had taken his freedom as a young man and over the course of the 1840s earned a reputation as an inspiring and tireless antislavery lecturer. Since 1847 he had published his own antislavery weekly newspaper in Rochester.[67] By 1852 he emerged as one of the leading figures in the struggle against slavery from upstate New York and, as a result, Douglass had been invited to give the annual Independence Day lecture to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society.

On the other hand, as an African American, Douglass found that white society systematically deprived him and others of many of the rights and privileges outlined in the document that was signed on the Fourth of July, 1776—a point that he emphasized in his address. Adopting the rhetorical stance of the outsider, he repeatedly insisted that the national holiday marked his audience's freedom, but not his own. Although Douglass expressed admiration for the "fathers of this republic," he also stressed his ambivalent relationship to the Fourth of July. "It is the birthday of your national Independence," he told his audience "of your political freedom." It was "the first great fact in your nation's history—the very ring-bolt in the chain of your yet undeveloped destiny." Speaking to a predominately white audience, he announced, "I am not included with in the pale of this glorious anniversary...this

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[66] Ibid., 2: 387-388. "The Triumph of Freedom" first appeared in the *Liberator*, January 10, 1845.
[67] Douglass's paper was initially called the *North Star*. In 1851 he merged the *North Star* with the *Liberty Party Paper*, under a new title, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

Fourth [of] July is yours and not mine."'[68] As much as he was the honored guest asked to speak on the nation's birthday, he was also, according to the laws of the land, treated like a slave or a fugitive.[69]

Douglass's Fourth of July address, then, underscored its author as at once an insider and an outsider, a charismatic leader who the laws of the land sought to subdue. It also raised a number of questions about Douglass, his antislavery agenda, and his relationship to America: Why, for one, was he so dedicated to the United States? How could he combine such a vigorous critique of the realities of life for African Americans, both in the North and the South, with an equally vigorous defense of American institutions? More specifically, how could he look to the United States Constitution, a document many abolitionists denounced as a proslavery tool, for the salvation of all Americans, black and white?

Historians and biographers suggest a psychological answer to these questions. More than a half-century ago, for example, historian Benjamin Quarles argued that when compared to Douglass's one-time mentor, William Lloyd Garrison, the black abolitionist was a politician of sorts; that is, he had a politician's faith in compromise.[70] Douglass's willingness to work for reform through established political channels, in other words, indicated that he had the temperament of a pragmatic reformer, especially when compared to a revolutionary such as Garrison, who rejected not only slavery and prejudice, but also the political

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[68] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," in *FDP*, 2: 360, 363, 368.

[69] Although technically a free man—his freedom had been purchased by abolitionist allies in the late 1840s—Douglass, like many African Americans, argued that American laws, particularly the1850 Fugitive Slave Act, deprived him of the rights enjoyed by free citizens.

[70] Douglass, wrote Quarles, "had a practical sense of what the exigencies of a situation demanded." Benjamin Quarles, "The Breach between Douglass and Garrison," *Journal o f Negro History* 23 (Apr., 1938): 152. For a similar evaluation, see Tyrone Tillery, "The Inevitability of the Douglass-Garrison Conflict," *Phylon* 37 (June, 1976): 137-49. Several scholars also frame Douglass as a reformer but note that his turn to violence contradicted this position. For example, see Leslie Friedman Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change: The Views of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)," *Journal of Negro History* 61 (Jan., 1976): 61-72 and Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), esp. 165-93.

institutions and practices upon which the country was founded. On the eve of the Civil War, in fact, Douglass himself suggested that in comparison to Garrison, his position was "one of reform, not of revolution."[71]

The characterization of Douglass as a reformer captures some of the contours of his thinking quite well. He did have a strong pragmatic streak. While still a member of Garrison's radical abolitionist organization, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), he displayed a willingness to balance practical considerations with his idealistic beliefs. During the 1840s, he subscribed to the basic tenets of Garrisonian abolitionism: he advocated moral suasion over political abolition and antislavery violence, denounced the Constitution as proslavery, and called for disunion. But he often modified Garrisonian arguments to fit his own beliefs and experiences. Douglass denounced the Constitution, for example, not only because it seemed a corrupt bargain with slavery, but also because it, in effect, undercut the possibility of slave rebellion by marshaling the political and military power of the North against those in chains. And Douglass, in turn, tended to pragmatically base his critique of slave insurrection on its dubious efficacy given contemporary political circumstances, rather than its immorality.[72] Never an orthodox Garrisonian, he frequently tempered his antislavery enthusiasm with a strong dose of pragmatic realism.

Yet, another side of Douglass that can get overlooked when the label "reformer" is attached to him, namely his proclivity to romanticize American ideals that he so clearly displayed in his Fourth of July speech.[73] Douglass's devotion to the principles and values of

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[71] Douglass, "The Constitution of the United States: Is it Pro-slavery or Anti-slavery?," in Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner, (5 vols.; New York: International Publishers, 1950-1971) 2: 480. Hereafter *DLW*. He explained that he was committed to working for the abolition of slavery by using the government and the Constitution.
[72] See Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 67-68.
[73] The primary reason that Quarles and other scholars maintain that Douglass played the reformer to Garrison's revolutionary was that such a conclusion helps them explain the breach between the two in the early 1850s.

the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution was not founded solely upon a practical commitment to democratic procedures; to piecemeal reform and compromise. He appealed directly—and passionately—to the militant spirit of American revolutionaries and the egalitarian ends of the Declaration of Independence. Later, rejecting the Garrisonian interpretation of the Constitution, he urged Americans to look past contemporary interpretations of America's foundational compact to the higher goals it espoused. The Constitution, he concluded, "contain[s] principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery."[74] Thus, he re-imagined America's liberal tradition and urged a romantic interpretation of its most important documents.

Just as Douglass called the United States to live up to the principles upon which it was founded, he urged individuals, particularly black Americans, to take an active hand in their own liberation and uplift.[75] He closely linked the romantic project of re-conceiving the central documents of American liberalism to a second romantic liberal strain that was crucial to his thinking: gradual self-cultivation. Turning frequently to Byron's words and Emerson's ideals of self-enacted liberation, Douglass stressed the moral and psychological effects of working for one's own elevation. His autobiographies were a prime example of the pursuit of individual uplift. So, too, was his antislavery newspaper, the *North Star*, whose creation

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Although this schema accounts for a number of the fundamental differences between the reform ideas of Douglass and Garrison, it fails to capture the breadth of Douglass's thought. Moreover, it can even make his thought appear paradoxical. Historian Leslie Goldstein, for example, concludes that in departing from his qualified Garrisonianism, "Douglass moved from the position of a revolutionary who opposed violence to that of a reformer who favored violence" (Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 62). In other words, Douglass turned at once to the piecemeal reform of democratic politics and to political violence that seemed to undercut any commitment to liberal government. To Douglass, though, politics and violence were both tactics that had positive and negative qualities. The fact that he never embraced either as the best and only response to slavery suggests, at the very least, that the interpretation of him as a compromise-oriented reformer is insufficient.

[74] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," in *FDP*, 2: 386.

[75] For a suggestive discussion of the correspondence between the personal changes outlined in Douglass's autobiographies and the national transformation for which his Fourth of July address calls, see Gregg D. Crane, *Race, Citizenship, and Law in American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2002), 115-124.

he defended by arguing that it would accomplish for African Americans what their white allies could not. Douglass's antislavery approach, thus, drew on the romantic liberal conception that true freedom and elevation for African Americans had to be achieved at least in large part by their own hands—it had to be self-made. Even slave rebellion and violent resistance against slave catchers, Douglass came to insist, could be justified because of the transformative power of individual action.

In sum, the faith in the Constitution that Douglass expressed in his Fourth of July speech found roots in more than just his pragmatic sensibility. It was also the product of his romantic conception of America's liberal tradition. Douglass appealed to what the Constitution—and thus America—could be, not what it was. This romantic liberal call, in turn, dovetailed with Douglass's emphasis on self-enacted emancipation that emerged in his antislavery rhetoric. Douglass looked to what people could be, if unencumbered, not just merely who they were.[76]

If elevation was the tactic, most male black intellectuals agreed on the goal: manhood. Since pro-slavery thought so consistently denied black humanity and relied on feminizing black men, achieving and protecting their manhood became an important goal.[77] This rhetoric signaled a rejection of pro-slavery thought that legally defined them as chattel and ideologically denied their fundamental humanity. At the level of gender relations, both slavery in the South and endemic poverty in the North (which forced most black women to work outside the home) undercut the ability of black men to protect (and control) their wives and children. At the same time seizing manhood was also about gaining the rights of equal

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[76] For more on Douglass and his efforts at self-making see "Self-Made Men: Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass," in Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136-156.
[77] Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas about White People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41.

citizenship, most of which, like the right to vote and participate in militias, were associated with masculinity in antebellum America. Manhood stood in for what one scholar has called, "that aspect of the humanity of people of color most profoundly compromised by slavery and 'racialization.'"[78] Sometimes it was even a virtue explicitly attainable by black women, as when one black minister wrote, "in urbanity and manly deportment… colored men and women have shown themselves not inferior."[79]

Achieving manhood, for black intellectuals, did not necessarily mean embracing crude machismo. William Wells Brown, according to some scholars, aimed his writings and lectures at a primarily female audience.[80] He described the depredations suffered by enslaved women with compassion and generally avoided "masculine bravado" in his writing, preferring humor and empathy, styles that may have appealed to a middle-class feminine audience. But even for Brown, elevating himself and other African Americans to manhood remained a central part of his rhetoric. Referring to Canada, he celebrated that "the American Slave can find a spot where he may be a man."[81] Like Henry Bibb, he associated the ability to educate oneself after emancipation with a central privilege of manhood, and one of the fundamental characteristics that separated being a man from being "upon a level with the beasts of the field."[82] Brown had a particularly dark metaphysical reading of his experiences of slavery, referring to them as "murder of the soul" and comparing enslavement to the experiences of the German Kaspar Hauser, who had supposedly been raised in a sensory-deprivation cell with no human contact or use of language. Just as for Hauser, the effect of

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[78] Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 278.
[79] John W. Lewis, *The Life, Labors, and Travels of the Elder Charles Bowles* (Watertown: Ingalls & Stowell's Steam Press, 1852), 252, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/lewisjw/lewisjw.html; (accessed January 7, 2014).
[80] William Wells Brown, *The Works of William Wells Brown: Using his "Strong Manly Voice,"* eds. Paula Garrett and Hollis Robbins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), xvii-xxviii.
[81] Ibid., xviii, 13.
[82] Ibid., 4.

slavery was to "obliterate his mind, and annihilate his intellect."[83] Certainly an exaggeration of the anti-social aspects of slavery, this gothic vision of Hauser nevertheless illustrated, as a foil, what Brown sought in his own manhood: the free exercise of his intellect, an elevation of his mind and soul, and personal autonomy. He found this, Brown told audiences, in the remarkable freedom and equality he enjoyed in England, France, and Germany, and which he hoped someday would also mark America.[84]

The elevation that black intellectuals claimed for themselves, then, yoked Romantic strivings towards an integral relationship with the universe to very concrete demands for equal treatment, active citizenship, and manhood. John W. Lewis, a black Baptist minister, defined manhood in dualistic terms, seeing a "noble specimen of manhood" as occurring when "the moral faculties have predominated over the animal or lower propensities of the body."[85] The result was that African Americans associated manhood with self-development, autonomy, self-assertion, and, perhaps most important, activity within reform movements. Unlike white abolitionists they tended not to assume that their antislavery activism would bring the condemnation of the community upon them, and often articulated this vision of assertive black activism as part of a community-project of elevation. The political impulses found in black ideas about manhood may well have influenced white intellectuals and Transcendentalists, who came in contact with them in intellectual clubs and activist meetings.

Intellectual improvement was one aspect of this striving toward manhood. Another was the willingness—cautiously expressed at first, proudly by the late 1850s—to use violence in order to protect family and friends and achieve justice for the larger community.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown: Author & Reformer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 145-167.
[85] Lewis, *The Life, Labors, and Travels of Elder Charles Bowles*, 253.

Unlike cattle, slaves occasionally ran away, burned barns, and killed their masters, and this pointed to one of the fundamental contradictions in the whole intellectual structure of pro-slavery thought. Being able and willing to use violence for self-protection demonstrated the agency of the enslaved in a way that proved their inherent humanity. The issue of violence even had ramifications on the controversy over so-called "racial science," which often portrayed Africans as contented and cowardly. Even radical white abolitionists like Theodore Parker often claimed that the African race was by nature forgiving and slow to take up arms.[86] Therefore black appeals to manhood were often paired with calls to violence. For instance, a meeting of black Bostonians in the wake of the Fugitive Slave Law called on black Northerners to "*manfull*y assert their independence, and to martyr-like DIE freemen, rather than LIVE SLAVES."[87] In speeches in support of the idea of a black militia, Robert Morris, abolitionist and one of the nation's first black lawyers, linked citizenship, previous martial experience (in the American Revolution), and political antislavery with the willingness to use "every *manly* effort to raise ourselves in the scale of being."[88]

These appeals to black manhood, while widely disseminated throughout the free North, competed with new and confident black women's rights activists. Black feminists like Sojourner Truth and Francis Ellen Watkins Harper reminded audiences that masculinity was not the only model for self-creation and self-presentation. Moreover, black women often used the rhetoric of manhood as well, though it could have different connotations. Going back to the 1830s, black orator Maria Stewart had asked black men, "if you are men, convince

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[86] Theodore Parker, *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker*, ed. Francis Power Cobbe (London: Trübner, 1863), 4:217.
[87] Bruce Laurie, *Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 235; Daniel Littlefield, "Blacks, John Brown, and a Theory of Manhood," in Paul Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching on: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 67-97.
[88] See "Speech of Robert Morris, Esq. Before the Committee on the Militia, March 3d, 1853, " Robert Morris Papers, Boston Athenaeum.

[whites] that you possess the spirit of men."[89] Indeed, black women often used a rhetoric encouraging black men to achieve manhood. For black women intellectuals like Stewart, though, appealing to manhood could also be a way to criticize black men, to call on them to be more temperate, more restrained, and more responsible.

Some, like Douglass, received some criticism for their actions both from black women and the white abolitionists around them. Early in his career Douglass's intellectual talents actually raised problems for him with both his audiences and his AASS mentors. The former questioned the veracity of his claims. He appeared far too poised, educated, and eloquent to have been raised a slave. For this reason, Douglass's antislavery associates advised him to take pains to avoid appearing beyond the pale of a former bondsman. "Better to have a little of the plantation manner of speech than not," they advised, "'tis not best that you seem too learned." AASS leaders discouraged Douglass not only from sounding too eloquent or appearing too poised, but from doing anything other than just giving his account of slavery. "Give us the facts," said John A. Collins to Douglass, "we will take care of the philosophy." Garrison, for his part, said simply, "tell your story, Frederick." While Douglass viewed himself as going to "Massachusetts Abolition University," Garrisonian abolitionists saw him as a finished product—as a vessel into which they would pour their ideas. But Douglass had trouble simply leaving the critique and analysis to others. "It did not entirely satisfy me to narrate wrongs," he explained in 1854, "I felt like denouncing them."[90]

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[89] Quoted in James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," in *Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston,* ed. Donald Jacobs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 134; Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: Study in Activism, 1820-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992. See Walther, *Shattering of the Union*, 75, for critical letter from Barbara Ann Stewart to Frederick Douglass, pounding him.
[90] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 220.

Indeed, over the course of the 1840s, Douglass articulated an antislavery position that spoke to both of these urges. As much as he was personally committed to Garrison and the AASS during the first stage of his antislavery career, he demonstrated a clear willingness to depart from their philosophy and stewardship when he felt it necessary. In the words of historian Waldo Martin, he "found Garrisonian nonresistance lofty and impractical."[91] Thus, throughout much of the 1840s Douglass followed the lead of Garrison and promoted moral suasion, refrained from any form of support for political action, and promoted the view that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document. The Constitution was not just flawed in its origins—"a guilty compromise" in Garrison's words—it also had significant present-day consequences. Without the Constitution, he frequently implied, slaves would have the opportunity to rise up and seize their own liberty. "We don't ask you to engage in any physical warfare against the slaveholder," Douglass told the crowd at the 1845 meeting of the AASS. "We only ask that in Massachusetts, and the several non-slaveholding States which maintain a union with the slaveholder that you will stand off," he continued. "Leave us to take care of our masters."[92]

Douglass's repeated references to slave rebellion, in turn, highlight his most significant departure from Garrisonian thinking: the question of antislavery violence. To be sure, Douglass was nominally opposed to violence. "I would suffer rather than do any act of violence—rather than that the glorious day of liberty might be postponed," he insisted in 1842. "I would not hurt a hair of a slaveholder's head." And when Henry Highland Garnet championed militant rebellion in a speech at the 1843 National Negro Convention in Buffalo, urging slaves throughout the country to rise up against their masters, Douglass dissented. He

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[91] Martin, *Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 24.
[92] Douglass, "My Slave Experience in Maryland," in *FDP*, 1: 33.

said that Garnet's message was too militant—it had, in his words, "too much physical force." As the minutes of the meeting later reported, Douglass "was for trying the moral means a little longer."[93] He feared that his fellow black abolitionist's address might spark a catastrophic insurrection rather than peaceful emancipation, in which he had faith. Violence, he implied, was not yet advisable. Four years later, he made a similar point, urging at the National Convention of Colored People at Troy, New York, that widespread slave insurrection was unwise at this juncture: "With the facts of our condition before us, it is impossible for us to contemplate any appeal to the slave to take vengeance on his guilty master, but with the utmost reprobation." To do so, he concluded, would be "the perfection of folly, suicidal in the extreme."[94] In both these cases, Douglass's primary objection to violence was pragmatic, marking a clear break from orthodox Garrisonianism: he worried about the success, not the morality, of slave rebellion.[95]

Douglass, in sum, constructed his own antislavery platform during the 1840s by sifting Garrisonian ideas for what he found efficacious. Although he was dedicated to most of Garrison's positions—dis-unionism, moral suasion, the proslavery character of the Constitution, the corruption of American churches—Douglass did not leave the thinking to his AASS colleagues. His suggestion that he had attended "Massachusetts Abolition University" was apt. He studied under Garrison and his fellow radical abolitionists, but Douglass also tested the theories he heard, developing his own in turn. And by 1847, he was ready to graduate.

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[93] Douglass, "Love of God, Love of Man, Love of Country," in *FDP*, 2: 104; *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens Held at Buffalo* in Howard H. Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 13.
[94] *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People and their Friends, in Troy, N.Y.* in Bell, ed., *Minutes*, 31.
[95] For a similar interpretation, see Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 65-66.

In August 1845 Douglass set sail for Great Britain. He would spend almost two years touring Ireland, Scotland, and England, delivering hundreds of antislavery lectures, and becoming a celebrity to reform-oriented individuals there. Douglass had several reasons for traveling across the Atlantic. First of all, he was following a long-standing tradition in the antislavery community. Antislavery activists in Great Britain and the United States had enjoyed significant ties for years and touring the former was all but a rite of passage for American abolitionists.[96] Second, Douglass had just published his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and he hoped to promote it abroad. Third, the publication of his autobiography put Douglass at risk of re-enslavement. By providing the details of his life as a slave, he identified himself to his former owners, thereby opening himself up to the danger of capture.

Douglass's British tour was a resounding success. He spoke to overflowing halls and made innumerable contacts with British reformers. "I go back to the United States not as I landed here," he declared in his April 1847 farewell speech in Bristol, England. "I came a slave; I go back a free *man*. I came here a thing—I go back a human being."[97] With this statement, Douglass flagged the newfound sense of belonging that he experienced in Great Britain. As he wrote to Garrison from Dublin in 1845, "I find myself not treated as a color, but as a *man*—not as a thing, but as a child of the common Father of us all." Douglass also meant that he gained his freedom while in Great Britain literally: several of his American friends, fearing for his safety if he returned, had purchased and legally freed him during his stay there. The antislavery lecturer returned to the United States without concerns of

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[96] McFeeley, *Frederick Douglass*, 117-118. See also McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery*; Richard J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).
[97] Douglass, "Farwell to the British People," in *FDP*, 2: 50.

recapture. Legally, he was free. This was not the first time that Douglass described himself as making a transition from a thing to a human being. Two years earlier he made a similar point in his *Narrative* by highlighting his struggle with Covey as an incident in which, in this case, he transformed himself. "You have seen how a *man* was made a slave," he wrote of Covey's abuse, "you shall see how a slave was made a *man*."[98] Douglass summoned a fighting "spirit" and successfully defended himself in an extended struggle. He described his battle with Covey as "the turning-point in [his] career as a slave" in all three of his autobiographies. In the 1855 edition, he added, "I was a changed being after that fight. I was nothing before; I WAS A *MAN* NOW. It recalled to my crushed self-respect and my self-confidence, and inspired me with a renewed determination to be a FREEMAN."[99]

The turning points to which Douglass attached the most importance were those in which he was the driving engine. Although he was personally grateful for those moments when he benefited from the assistance of others, increasingly over the late 1840s and early 1850s, he stressed that improvement had to come from oneself. More so than any other romantic liberal, in fact, Douglass turned to Byron's words, both in print and on the stump, to make this point. In an August 1847 meeting of the Eastern Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, he complained of limitations on the right of suffrage for free blacks in the North, urging "colored men" that "who would be free, themselves must strike the blow." Less than a year later, he noted in his antislavery newspaper, the *North Star*, that while "white friends" of the African Americans were removing many of the barriers that they had constructed, "the

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[98] Douglass to Garrison, September 16, 1845, in *DLW*, 1: 120; Douglass, *Narrative*, 68 ("a *man*"); Douglass, *Narrative*, 74. See also Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 151 and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 177.
[99] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 151.

main work must be commenced, carried on, and concluded by ourselves."[100] Again, he used Byron's call to underscore his point. Each of his autobiographies likewise drew upon this call to action. Douglass employed Byron's phrase to punctuate the description of his fight with Covey in both his 1855 autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, and in his 1892 autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*.[101] Even his 1845 autobiography seemed to owe a debt to the British Romantic poet. When he turned to the question of the importance of his struggle with Covey in his *Narrative*, the antislavery author employed a remarkably similar syntax to Byron's famous call, while also expressing virtually the same sentiment. "He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced," wrote Douglass, "who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery."[102] Finally, when the abolitionist dabbled in fiction, he still looked to Byron's words. In his short story, "The Heroic Slave," Douglass quoted Byron's call as an epigraph to introduce the installment of his tale in which the protagonist, Madison Washington, leads a violent slave rebellion aboard the *Creole*. Writing fiction, however, for Douglass was not a turning point. His next demonstration of intellectual masculinity came with his career as a newspaper editor.[103]

The one intellectual institution to which African Americans did have access was the press. But even this venue had limits, as the black militant Benjamin Roberts discovered in 1838 when he tried to start an independent black-run newspaper. White abolitionists quickly

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[100] Douglass, "The Material and Moral Requirements of Antislavery Work," in *FDP*, 2: 89; Douglass, "What are the Colored People Doing For Themselves" in *DLW*, 1: 314-15. For additional examples of Douglass's use of Byron's call, in both his newspapers and antislavery addresses, see *FDP*, 3: 202,431, 566; *FDP*, 5: 95,166-67; *DLW*, 2: 374,436; *DLW*, 3: 318; and *DLW*, 4: 381. See also Peter Wirzbicki, "Black Intellectuals, White Abolitionists, and Revolutionary Transcendentalists: Creating the Radical Intellectual Tradition in Antebellum Boston" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2012); Wolfgang Mieder, *"No Struggle, No Progress": Frederick Douglass and His Proverbial Rhetorical Civil Rights* (P. Lang: New York, 2001), 229-30.
[101] See Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 153 and Douglass, *Life and Times*, 178.
[102] Douglass, *Narrative*, 74.
[103] For more on "The Heroic Slave" by Douglass see Ronald T. Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 17-36. For Douglass's life as a newspaper editor see McFeely, *Frederick Douglass,* 146-162.

cut off funding and attempted to silence Roberts' *Anti-Slavery Herald*, leaving him to fume that he was "aware that there has been and now is, a combined effort on the part of certain professed abolitionists to muzzle, exterminate and put down the efforts of certain colored individuals effecting the welfare of the colored brethren."[104] Later, in 1854, Samuel R. Ward, who had run a short-lived black newspaper in Boston in the 1850s, complained of a type of paternalist abolitionist who "a thousand times would … rather see us tied to some newspaper that represents us as being about mid way betwixt slaves and men, than to see us holding up a bold front, with a press worthy of entire freemen."[105] Well-known, too, was the hostility with which white New England abolitionists greeted Frederick Douglass's attempt to form his own newspaper. Throughout the antebellum period, then, the dominant position of the *Liberator*, combined with white abolitionists' attempts to contain black intellectual activity and an independent black press, slowed but could not contain the growth of black intellectual masculinity.

Douglass's faith in the power of self-enacted emancipation, in turn, informed what he would later count as another turning point in his life: starting his own antislavery newspaper, the *North Star*, in 1847. With limited experience from publishing his Narrative, Douglass had spent days and nights toiling to produce his four-page weekly paper. Yet "it was the best school possible for me," he later concluded. Not only did publishing his paper force Douglass to think, read, and write carefully, it made him self-reliant. "It made it necessary for me to lean upon myself," he wrote, "and not upon the heads of our Anti-Slavery church, to be a principal not an agent."[106]

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[104] Quoted in James Stewart Brewer, *Abolitionist Politics and the Coming of the Civil War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 82.
[105] *Provincial Freeman,* June 10, 1854.
[106] Douglass, *Life and Times*, 326-327.

When Douglass returned from Great Britain earlier that year, he brought more than just a new sense of humanity and a guarantee of his liberty, he carried funds to finance his newspaper. Douglass had several goals in mind for his paper. For one, he hoped it would bolster the AASS's fight against slavery. He also thought it would function as "a telling fact against the American doctrine of natural inferiority, and the inveterate prejudice which so universally prevails in this country against the colored race." Finally, Douglass believed that as a black-led institution that struggled for abolition and black uplift, his paper would help African Americans play a central role in their own improvement.[107]

With this last goal, Douglass drew on the philosophy self-help that predominated in black reform circles in antebellum America. Beginning in 1827 with the publication of the first black newspaper, John Brown Russworm's *Freedom's Journal*, many African American reformers stressed that the elevation of the black race was the most important goal for which they should work.[108] Proponents of black elevation constructed uplift broadly, so as to incorporate moral elements as well as what they called "physical" elevation—economic and political gain. "Our oppressors have divested us of many valuable blessings and facilities for improvement and elevation," wrote Douglass in the same vein, "but, thank heaven, they have not yet been able to take from us the privilege of being honest, industrious, sober, and intelligent."[109] Douglass, of course, did not put elevation ahead of the abolition of slavery on his list of priorities; instead, he folded them together in his antislavery newspaper.

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[107] Douglass to the Boston *Daily Whig*, June 27, 1847, in *DLW*, 1: 253.
[108] For a good overview of African American support for black elevation in the mid-nineteenth century, see Frederick Cooper, "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50," *American Quarterly* 24, no. 5 (Dec., 1972), 604-625.
[109] Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 126; *North Star*, July 14, 1848.

Douglass's British supporters, who raised over £500 with which to purchase a printing press, agreed with the prospective editor's hopes for the paper. They concluded that they were providing him an essential tool for freedom: "the most powerful lever for the attainment of emancipation." His Boston friends and colleagues, in contrast, were not nearly as supportive. In fact, Garrisonians objected to the venture on a number of grounds. A new black-run antislavery journal was not necessary, announced the *Liberator* in June 1847, for a number of other African American antislavery papers existed. Even if this had not been the case, the article continued, Douglass lacked the necessary experience to succeed in publishing his own paper: "He has no practical acquaintance, and the prosecution of which might, in the end be attended with pecuniary embarrassment to himself." Finally, critics asserted that the venture would distract Douglass from his important role as an antislavery lecturer, where "his extraordinary powers can be the most successfully employed for the promotion of the anti-slavery cause."[110] Some of these reasons, to be sure, were well founded. Garrison and his colleagues worked long and hard merely to keep the *Liberator* afloat; if anyone understood the precarious nature of producing a viable antislavery newspaper it was they. Nevertheless, leading Garrisonians also seemed to have had little faith in Douglass himself—indeed, they demonstrated a paternalistic attitude that had been latent since his early days as an antislavery lecturer. Just as Garrison and his colleagues resisted Douglass's desire to do more than tell his story on the antislavery stage, they questioned the necessity of his striking out on his own.[111]

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[110] *Liberator*, June 18, 1847; *Liberator*, June 25, 1847. See also *Liberator*, July 23, 1847.
[111] McFeeley, *Frederick Douglass*, 147. Fore more on the paternalism that Garrisonians displayed towards Douglass, see Jane H. Pease and William Henry Pease, "Boston Garrisonians and the Problem of Frederick Douglass," *Canadian Journal of History* 2, no. 2 (September, 1967), 29-48.

In October 1847 Douglass settled in Rochester, New York.[112] A growing city on the Erie Canal, Rochester was located in the "Burned-over District" of western New York. Home to waves of revivalism in the early nineteenth-century, the "Burned-over District" was fertile ground for a range of reform movements, from communitarianism to abolitionism. Douglass, who had toured through western New York extensively as an antislavery agent, was thoroughly acquainted with the merits of the region. He also thought that by establishing his paper there he could build an audience without undercutting the circulation of the Boston based *Liberator* and the Philadelphia based *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.[113]

Douglass arrived in Rochester with $4,000 and the promise of more funds to come from his British supporters. "I have already bought an excellent and elegant press, and nearly all the necessary printing materials," wrote Douglass to J. D. Carr, who had given him the money to buy it. He hoped to begin publication by the beginning of 1848. He enlisted Martin Delany, a black abolitionist from Pittsburgh who had published his own antislavery weekly newspaper for four years, to join him as co-editor. William C. Nell, a black Garrisonian from Boston, also joined the new venture, serving as the *North Star*'s printer. The first issue of the *North Star* was published on December 3, 1847. Although dedicated primarily to the destruction of slavery, the new paper, Douglass insisted, would address a range of reform topics, from temperance to capital punishment. He also stressed that his paper should not be interpreted as a lack of appreciation for the devotion of "the noble band of white laborers"

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[112] See Frederick Douglass to Amy Post, October 28, 1847. Original at the University of Rochester Library, Rochester, N.Y. Copy in the Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit-Mercy.

[113] For a classic study of the antebellum revivalism of western New York, see Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1950); or for a more modern study see Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For a recent exploration of antislavery agitation in the Burned-over District, see Milton C. Sernett, *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002); Douglass, *Life and Times*, 322.

who played an essential role in the antislavery fight. Instead, the *North Star* was premised on the conviction that it "would do a most important and indispensable work, which it would be wholly impossible for our white friends to do for us."[114]

Douglass rejected claims that the creation of a black institution was a capitulation to racism, insisting, instead, that it would open the door to African American participation in the antislavery struggle. "Facts are facts," he wrote, "white is not black, and black is not white." The acknowledgement of race did not degrade black Americans and "there is neither good sense, nor common honesty, in trying to forget this distinction." The problems African Americans faced, moreover, extended beyond merely tearing down the obstacles to black equality in the North and South. African Americans, argued Douglass, must also have opportunities. They must participate in the destruction of slavery—in the process—themselves. "The white man is only superior to the black man, when he outstrips him in the race of improvement," emphasized Douglass, "and the black man is only inferior, when he proves himself incapable of doing just what is done by his white brother." There needed to be black lawyers and black editors, black merchants and black teachers: "It must be no longer white, intelligent, and black, ignorant; but we must take our stand side by side with our white fellow countrymen, in all the trades, arts, profession and callings of the day." An African American journal such as the *North Star* would not reinforce racial prejudice, it would underscore that "man's greatness consists in his ability to do, and the proper application of his powers to things needful to be done, and not in the color of his skin."[115]

Indeed, Douglass maintained that the *North Star* would work to combat both legal limitations on African American rights in the North and South and, in turn, the racial ideas

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[114] McFreeley, *Frederick Douglass*, 152; *North Star*, December 3, 1847.
[115] *North Star*, January 8, 1848.

that often supported them. While it decried and sought to redress the limitations on the liberty and equality of African Americans, both free and enslaved, the paper was also a means by which those involved in the paper's operation could work toward uplift for black Americans. The venture, then, was a direct response to the widespread negative stereotypes about African Americans. If he and his partners were able to establish a successful black antislavery paper, they could strike a blow against racist assumptions about black Americans and further demonstrate their intellectual masculinity. [116]

Less than a year after he began the *North Star*, Douglass published a lengthy column that framed the new venture explicitly along romantic liberal lines. "What are the colored people doing for themselves," Douglass asked in the title of the article. White antislavery allies, he suggested, contribute great and important work, but it will all be in vain if African Americans do not pull their own weight. "If there be one evil spirit among us," he wrote, "it is that lazy, mean and cowardly spirit, that robs us of all *manly* self-reliance, and teaches us to depend upon others for the accomplishment of that which we should achieve with our own hands." In characteristic fashion, Douglass then turned to Byron's call to self-enacted emancipation to bolster his point. The following year, in a May 7, 1849 lecture that Douglass delivered to an African American audience in the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, he stressed the importance of self-help to overcome both the legal and psychological barriers faced by black Americans. Although "everywhere we are treated as a degraded people," Douglass implored his black audience, "the worst part of all is, that we are contented under these circumstances!" The solution was to look beyond what white friends and allies could do, for "equality and respectability can only be attained by our own exertions." Self-help was essential to African Americans shedding the psychological

[116] Frederick Douglass to Elizabeth Pease, November 8, 1849, Boston Public Library.

shackles of oppression. Douglass thus rejected the idea of relying on others—whether human or divine: "It is a ridiculous and absurd notion to expect God to deliver us from bondage. We must elevate ourselves by our own efforts."[117]

His call, then, was not solely individualistic. Douglass asked African Americans to reflect not only on what they were doing to elevate themselves but also to elevate their community. He noted that immigrants from Europe and laborers were banning together and working to improve their conditions and themselves, yet "out of five hundred thousand free colored people in this country, not more than two thousand can be supposed to take any special interest in measures for our own elevation; and probably not more than fifteen hundred take, read and pay for an anti-slavery paper." He contrasted this lack of participation in black uplift organizations with mass black participation in groups such as the free-masons or churches.[118]

Douglass had spent much of the 1840s working as an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. Yet, at the same time, he formulated a philosophy of individual uplift that compelled him to seek out a new role—to want to be more than just an AASS spokesman. The *North Star* seemed an ideal way to him to take a more engaged stand in the struggle against slavery, to be a principal, not just an agent and served as an avenue for increased intellectual engagement. To some critics, however, it seemed to be a departure from an integrated vision of America. But, for Douglass it had a different effect. He eventually formulated an antislavery philosophy that drew directly on America's revolutionary heritage, calling American institutions to live up to the liberal values upon which the country was founded.

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[117] Douglass, "What are the Colored People Doing for Themselves?," in *DLW*, 1: 314-318. Emphasis is mine. Douglass, "Of Morals and Men," *FDP*, 2: 170.
[118] Douglass, "What are the Colored People Doing for Themselves?," in *DLW*, 1: 314-318.

When Frederick Douglass moved to Rochester to start the *North Star*, his Garrisonian allies in New England feared not only that his venture might fail but also that he might fall under the sway of the political abolitionists, such as Gerrit Smith, who predominated in the region. Douglass, however, was still committed to Garrisonian positions on the Constitution, non-voting, and disunion. Indeed, he frequently mounted public defenses of Garrisonian principles when confronted by political abolitionists at antislavery conventions. In an 1850 debate on the "character of the Constitution of the United States," for example, Douglass castigated the document and the union it created on largely Garrisonian grounds. He also rejected voting, stating, "I would rather lose my right arm, than to put a vote in an American ballot box, to have another do that which I would not do myself." Finally, he called for disunion and the slave rebellion he thought it would bring: "Dissolve the Union, and they will raise aloft their unfettered arms, and demand freedom, and, if resisted, would hew their way to Liberty, despite the pale and puny opposition of their oppressors."[119]

Yet Douglass's former colleagues' worries were not entirely unfounded. Despite his commitment to non-voting and disunionism the new antislavery editor made no effort to hide the fact that he was broadening his network of allies and that his ideas had evolved. In just the second issue of the paper, he printed a letter he had received from Gerrit Smith, with which the political abolitionist enclosed a check for a two-year subscription to the *North Star* and a deed to forty acres of land in upstate New York.[120] Douglass publicly thanked Smith

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[119] See Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 96-126; Douglass, "Is the Constitution Pro-Slavery?," in *FDP*, 2: 222.

[120] A wealthy man, Gerrit Smith had extensive property holdings in several states. One of his reform initiatives was to provide land to African Americans in New York. Eventually, three thousand black New Yorkers received deeds, though few settled on their new plots. See John R. McKivigan, "The Frederick Douglass-Gerrit Smith Friendship and Political Abolitionism in the 1850s," in Eric J. Sundquist, ed., *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 211. For more on Smith, see Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Man*.

for his generosity in his paper, noting that while he had never had the pleasure of meeting "this distinguished friend of the slave" because of differences regarding antislavery tactics, he hoped this would not always be the case. He even extended an olive branch of sorts to Smith, asking, "If our hearts are one, why should a difference of mind divide us?" Although the new editor specifically stressed his differences with Smith on the Constitution and the Union, he nonetheless made it clear that he held Smith in high esteem. Two years later, Douglass wrote to Smith that the *North Star* was an avowedly non-partisan paper, a stance, he believed, had strained his relations with Garrisonians.[121]

By 1849, moreover, Douglass's views on the proslavery nature of the Constitution began to soften. Although he still believed, as he always had, that "the original intent and meaning of the Constitution" reinforced the institution of slavery, he admitted in the *North Star* that a strict reading of the Constitution indicated that it was not "a pro-slavery instrument." A month later, Douglass reported that his recent concession to political abolitionists had stirred up a hornet's nest. Letters from a range of perspectives flooded the Rochester office. Declaring his paper neutral on this issue, Douglass insisted that the *North Star* did not adhere "to the creed of either Anti-Slavery party." Sounding an Emersonian note, he concluded, "The only truly consistent *man* is he who will, for the sake of being right today, contradict what he said wrong yesterday."[122]

Douglass then set about clarifying his position. He came down, in short, somewhere between the Garrisonian and Liberty Party positions. Standing alone, the Constitution might not be a proslavery instrument, he admitted. Still, the proslavery intentions of many of its framers suggested that it was quite the opposite:

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[121] *North Star*, January 17, 1847; Douglass to Gerrit Smith, March 1849 in *DLW*, 1: 370.
[122] *North Star*, February 9, 1849; *North Star*, March 16, 1849. Emphasis is mine.

> Had the Constitution dropped down from the blue overhanging sky, upon a land uncursed by slavery, and without an interpreter...no one would have imagined that it recognized or sanctioned slavery. But having a terrestrial, and not a celestial origin, we find no difficulty in ascertaining its meaning in all the parts which we allege to relate to slavery. Slavery existed before the Constitution, in the very States by whom it was made and adopted. —Slaveholders took a large share in making it. It was made in view of the existence of slavery, and in a manner well calculated to aid and strengthen that heaven-daring crime.

In theory, the Constitution might be antislavery, but in fact—in light of those that wrote it and the ways it was used—it supported the "peculiar institution." Yet Douglass was willing to entertain further arguments. Addressing himself directly to Gerrit Smith, he stated that if he could be convinced that the Constitution could be made an anti-slavery instrument, he would devote his energy to supporting—and promoting—such an interpretation.[123]

In early 1851 Douglass still equivocated on the issue. During an anti-fugitive slave bill convention in Syracuse, he repeated that he still "did not believe that the Constitution was anti-Slavery," although he "wished he could." He nonetheless stressed that there was a good deal of common ground between those that thought it proslavery and Liberty Party supporters such as Gerrit Smith: "That the law is unconstitutional—unrighteous—that it ought not to be executed—that we will resist: here is the common ground, enough for all to stand on." Two weeks later, in a letter to Smith, Douglass again noted that since he believed the framers of the Constitution to be proslavery, he did not think the document itself was an antislavery instrument. Yet Smith seemed to have convinced him on one point. "I have about decided to let Slaveholders and their Northern abettors have the Laboring oar in putting a proslavery interpretation upon the Constitution," he wrote. No longer would he occupy his time denouncing the Constitution. He wondered, though, whether it is "good morality to take advantage of a legal flaw and put a meaning upon a legal instrument the very opposite of

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[123] *North Star*, March 16, 1849.

what we have good reason to believe was the intention of the men who framed it?"[124] Did the practical potential of an antislavery interpretation, he wondered, trump the intentions that the framers had for the document?

Four months later Douglass gave his answer. At the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, surrounded by Garrisonians, he publicly renounced the proslavery interpretation of the Constitution. The specific catalyst was a proposal that the AASS would only endorse papers that rejected the Constitution as a proslavery document. When Douglass addressed the question, he spoke in what Samuel J. May described as a "hesitating and embarrassed" fashion.[125] Most likely his uncharacteristic reticence was due to the radical position he took: Douglass not only rejected the proposed exclusionary position, he also took the opportunity to state that after extensive study he had revised his position on the Constitution, determining that, by the letter of the document, it was an antislavery weapon.

When Garrison heard Douglass state that the Constitution could work against slavery, he could not believe his ears. "There is roguery somewhere!" he declared. Several weeks later, in the pages of the *Liberator*, Garrison explained this response as the product of Douglass's failure to give a context or any sort of explanation for his shift. "I said that while the slaveholders and slave-breeders of the South were professing the most ardent attachment to the Union and the Constitution," wrote the long-time editor, "while all the political parties, whether Whig, Democratic, Free Soil or Liberty League, were equally earnest in asserting their loyalty in this particular...there must be deception either on one side or the other in the

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[124] Douglass, "Resistance to Blood-houndism," in *FDP*, 2: 278; Douglass to Gerrit Smith, January 21, 1851, in *DLW*, 2: 149-150.
[125] See Douglass, "Change of Opinion Now," in *DLW,* 2: 155-156; McFeeley, *Frederick Douglass*, 169, regarding May. Douglass's attempt to sway the meeting failed and the AASS officially prohibited members to support papers that did not reject the Constitution as proslavery.

use of terms." Soon, a strong animus developed against Douglass among many leading Garrisonians.[126]

Douglass was justified in his fear that his new position on the Constitution would spark attacks from his "old companions." As much as the AASS leaders were "noble champions in the cause of freedom," he noted, "they are not after all the most charitable in construing the motives of those who see matters in a different light from themselves."[127] The following year, he told Smith, "they accuse me now of having sold myself to one Gerrit Smith, Esq., and to have changed my views more in consequence of your purse than your arguments!" At the annual AASS meeting in 1851, Douglass reported feeling like an enemy and deserter. When he asked why he was being "treated as an alien," his former colleagues and mentors gave him an earful. The accusations that flowed back and forth between the two parties were, to some extent, rooted in personal issues that exacerbated the tensions, including mutual feelings of betrayal and a paternalistic attitude that the Boston circle of Garrisonians had displayed toward Douglass since he first began lecturing for the AASS.[128] At a fundamental level, though, there were also significant philosophical differences between the two parties.

Although Douglass remained vague about the details of his newfound view of the

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[126] *Liberator*, May 23,1851. Ironically, just over a decade earlier, Garrisonians themselves had felt the victim of political abolitionists who wanted to make voting a requirement for all members of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. See Lydia Maria Child to William Lloyd Garrison, Sept. 2, 1839, in *Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880*, ed. Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland (Amherst, Mass., 1982), 120; Douglass to Gerrit Smith, May 1, 1851, in *DLW*, 2: 153.
[127] Douglass to Gerrit Smith, May 21, 1851, in *DLW*, 2: 156.
[128] Douglass to Gerrit Smith, May 24, 1852, in *DLW*, 2: 174; Douglass to Gerrit Smith, May 15, 1852, in *DLW*, 2: 180. The details of the breach between Douglass and the Garrisonians have been thoroughly analyzed by several scholars, and there is no need to recapitulate them here. See Quarles, "Breach Between Douglass and Garrison," 144-54; Pease and Pease, "Boston Garrisonians and the Problem of Frederick Douglass," 29-47; and Tillery, "Inevitability of the Douglass-Garrison Conflict," 137-49.

Constitution at the 1851 AASS meeting, he soon clarified them. His new vision of the Constitution drew on a variety of arguments. First, Douglass suggested in a lengthy article in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, the new antislavery weekly he formed by combining the *North Star* with the Gerrit Smith's Syracuse based *Liberty Party Paper*, one must consider the intention of the framers of the Constitution.[129] Although he admitted that some of the framers supported slavery, he insisted that the best minds in Revolutionary-era America, North and South, "looked upon [slavery] as a great evil" and "held [it] to be an expiring institution." "The writing of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Monroe...and a host of other great men, fathers of the Republic," Douglass concluded, "all go to establish this conviction." He speculated that no more than a dozen members of the Constitutional Convention expected slavery to have a long life in the United States. Even more, Douglass argued that the explicit endorsement of liberty and justice in the preamble of the Constitution, on the one hand, and the lack of any specific reference to slavery, on the other, further suggested the antislavery intentions of the framers: "The great principle which they laid down as the fundamental objects of the Government and the completeness with which they have excluded every word sanctioning the right of property in man, is no slight

[129] Douglass's arguments drew on a stream of interpretation that historian William Wiecek has labeled radical constitutionalism. Although non-resistant abolitionist like Garrison lumped all proponents of an antislavery reading of the Constitution together, it is useful to distinguish between moderate constitutionalists and radical constitutionalists. Consisting mostly of moderates of the Liberty Party, moderate constitutionalists argued that the Constitution did not grant the federal government the power to establish or abolish slavery. Moderates such as William Seward and Salmon P. Chase focused on ending slavery in Washington, D.C. and preventing its expansion into the territories. Radical constitutionalists, in contrast, argued that the Constitution did not support slavery anywhere and clearly granted the authority to abolish it to the federal government. They included abolitionists who had been in the radical wing of the Liberty Party during the 1840s, such as Gerrit Smith—Douglass's new partner. See William M. Wiecek, *The Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism in America, 1760-1848* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1977), 202-27 and 249-75.

testimony in proof of the intention to make the Constitution a permanent liberty document."[130]

Not surprisingly, Douglass also cited practical reasons to view the Constitution as antislavery. "A great obstruction," he wrote, "to the spread of action-producing Anti-Slavery principles in the United States is the too general impression that the federal Constitution is a Pro-Slavery instrument— it is not so." By arguing that the foundational document of the United States sanctioned, and worked for, slavery, anti-Constitution Garrisonians effectively undercut realistic attempts to combat the institution. Even if the Garrisonian position was theoretically valid—a point, of course, that he now refused to concede—the practical implications of such an admission undercut any real effort to effect change. "What I contend is," Douglass concluded, "that if the Constitution shall be presumed to favor liberty, and to be consistent with its noble preamble, its language will inevitably secure the extinction of human slavery, and forever, in this Republic."[131]

Yet Douglass's main point over shadowed his practical arguments for the Constitution as an antislavery tool: the Constitution was prima facie an antislavery document. Paying particular attention to the general goals articulated in the preamble of the Constitution, such as "establish[ing] justice and promot[ing] the general," Douglass insisted that given a fair reading, no proslavery interpretation of the Constitution was possible.[132] One did not need extensive training in the law to read the document appropriately. "I hold that every American citizen has a right to form an opinion of the constitution, and to propagate that opinion, and to use all honorable means to make his opinion the prevailing

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[130] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, July 24, 1851. This was Abraham Lincoln's position as well; see James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).
[131] Douglass, "Antislavery Principles and Antislavery Acts," in *FDP*, 2: 349.
[132] Ibid., 2: 347.

one," Douglass insisted. "Read its preamble, consider its purposes," he urged the crowd listening to his Fourth of July address. "Is slavery among them? Is it at the gateway? Or is it in the temple? It is neither." Quite the contrary, a "plain reading" of the Constitution, Douglass concluded, will find it "to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery."[133]

A year later, Douglass and his fellow delegates to the Colored Convention in Rochester applied this romantic vision more broadly. Noting that they "cannot announce the discovery of any new principle adapted to ameliorate the condition of mankind," the delegates rested their argument on American principles and wisdom:

> That "all men are created equal": that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are all the right of all; that "taxation and representation" should go together; that governments are to protect, not to destroy, the rights of mankind; that the Constitution of the United States was formed to establish justice, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to all the people; that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God—are American principles and maxims, and together they form and constitute the constructive elements of the American government.[134]

Just as Douglass hoped that individuals would look first to themselves when seeking elevation, he believed that Americans, regardless of their race or status, could invoke the values of the nation to reform it. His political split with Garrison at this point concluded, but their general disagreement began earlier regarding the use of violence.

Douglass, for his part, had abandoned the Garrisonian non-violence position several years earlier—a departure that was informed both by his practical bent and his faith that even violent resistance provided an avenue of self-cultivation. Of course, Douglass had been somewhat amenable to slave rebellion for much of the 1840s. And a meeting in 1847 with John Brown stoked this resistant fire. According to Douglass, the two abolitionists discussed

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[133] Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," in *FDP*, 2: 385-386.
[134] Douglass, "The Claims of our Common Cause," in *DLW*, 2: 255. It is worth noting that the larger share of these ideas and catch phrases are from the Declaration, not Constitution.

various antislavery strategies extensively. Brown rejected both moral suasion and political abolitionism as insufficient. He outlined, in contrast, a plan in which armed abolitionists would travel down the Allegheny mountain range into the South, eventually destroying the institution of slavery from within. Replete with "natural forts" and "good hiding-places," the Alleghenies, Brown believed, were God's predetermined key to destruction of slavery. More positively, Brown articulated a justification for slave rebellion that dovetailed with his own belief in self-enacted emancipation. "No people," said Brown, "could have self-respect, or be respected, who would not fight for their freedom."[135] Although Douglass was not convinced to take up Brown's plan, he did admit that after the meeting he began to lose his faith in the "peaceful abolition" of slavery.

Around the time Douglass's ideology supporting the use of violent action began to change, the Fugitive Slave Act passed Congress in 1850 and the landscape of antislavery activity changed. As white Northerners quickly became aware, the law made it their official duty as citizens to help return fugitive slaves. Many abolitionists understood this official duty encroached on their ability to protect their manhood. After 1850, a gendered language became particularly common among those advocating the disobedience of the Fugitive Slave Law. Theodore Parker told an audience that there were universal moral laws, common to all of humanity, in obedience to which one "attains moral manhood." "Individuals are not simply abstract Man", Parker continued, and so "in real life have to take on particular roles in society." So be it, Parker declared, as long as "it be remembered that I am a man first of all, and all else that I am is but a modification of my manhood, which make me a clergyman, a

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[135] Douglass, *Life and Times*, 340. For more on Brown's early impact on Douglass and the question of antislavery violence, see Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change," 66-70 and James H. Cook, "Fighting with Breath, Not Blows: Frederick Douglass and Antislavery Violence," in John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 138-139, 156-157, *n*. 32; Douglass, *Life and Times*, 340.

fisherman, or a statesman… valuable in so far as they serve my manhood, not as it serves them."[136] This, Parker argued, was the dilemma now facing all Massachusetts men as a result of the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law: whether their particular position as a Federal Marshall, policeman, judge, or juror would override their moral duty as human beings. Parker made clear that those who violated this rule, those who turned in a fugitive slave, risked their very manhood. Of a hypothetical man who followed his official duty, rather than his moral duty, Parker wrote, "his individual manhood is covered up and extinguished by his official duties; he is no longer a man but a mere president, general, governor, representative, sheriff, juror, or constable."[137] Nothing threatened the independent judgment of a "man" as much as mainstream politics. Abolitionist Samuel Johnson said it simply when he wrote in the *Liberty Bell,* "In our republican ethics, the man is postponed to the politician."[138] During the aftermath of Harper's Ferry, Henry C. Clarke wrote a lengthy letter to politician Henry Wilson, disappointed that Wilson had opposed Brown's raid. "As a MAN," Clarke wrote, Wilson followed his natural tendency to sympathize with the oppressed. As a politician, on the other hand, he suppressed them on the altar of sectional amity, compromise, and political ambition. The demands of being a Republican politician were incompatible with the demands of manhood: "Thus the REPUBLICAN is above the MAN; the unprincipled, compromising politician is allowed to triumph over the godlike heir of immortality….The naturally generous, humane, and noble MAN sunk in the cowardly, scheming, sneaking, crawling, loathsome politician!" The most famous use of this rhetoric occurred in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, when the fictional Senator Byrd, despite his support

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[136] Parker, *Collected Works*, 5:136, "attains moral manhood"; 5:140, "Individuals".
[137] Ibid., 5:152-153.
[138] Samuel Johnson, "Practical Anti-Slavery," in *The Liberty Bell 1849,* ed. Maria Weston Chapman (Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1849), 106.

for the Fugitive Slave Act, aids a fugitive. Stowe titled the chapter, "In which it Appears that a Senator is but a Man."[139]

This language echoed earlier debates within the abolitionist community. Their emphasis on the rigorous demands of manhood also made abolitionists scorn any attempt at compromise and demand strict adherence to principle. White abolitionist Allen C. Spooner, for instance, decried the "want of rugged, athletic, and vigorous manhood" in the free states. Instead, Spooner wrote, "this is a timorous, time-serving, and mealy-mouthed generation… we surrender our manhood, and go about trembling, smiling, cringing, trimming, and grimacing, to the end of our unprofitable days." Spooner, interestingly, after an essay condemning the lack of manhood in Americans, called upon "the manhood and the womanhood of the land to awake" and condemn slavery. The Boston native and abolitionist Maria Weston Chapman, one of the few women to deploy this language, did so in a letter asking Wendell Phillips to find contributors for the *Liberty Bell*, an antislavery magazine she edited. "Pray ask for contributors from such of your correspondents as are good writers and true men," she wrote, going on to define her language, "Which last I mean in the smallest sense of the words—men that have never cheated us."[140]

Three years after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Douglass started using similar language and suggesting that violent resistance might be necessary, even in the North. At a rally in October to protest the law in Boston, he sounded a familiar theme. Five hundred thousand African Americans in the South, he intoned, were no match for 18 million southern

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[139] Henry C. Clarke, *No Rights, No Duties: or, Slaveholders, as Such, Have no Rights; Slaves, as Such, Owe no Duties. An Answer to a Letter from Henry Wilson, Touching Resistance to Slaveholders being the Right and Duty of the Slaves, and of the People and States of the North* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1860), 21-22; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852; rprt.: New York: Signet Classics, 1998), 86.

[140] Allen C. Spooner, "Words to the Wavering," in *The Liberty Bell 1844,* ed. Maria Weston Chapman (Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1844), 9-14; Maria Weston Chapman to Wendell Phillips, August 27, 1841, Wendell Phillips Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

whites. Thus, he concluded, we "proclaim no united resistance to this law." Still, he continued, we "are resolved rather to die than go back." Early the following year, Douglass implied that William Ellery Channing's notion that slaveholders could be stopped with just a frown was admirable but ineffectual. If someone should attempt to return him to chains, he noted, "I should strike him down—not with malignity, but as complacently as I would a bloodhound, and think I was doing God's service."[141]

In the wake of the violence that followed an attempt to capture fugitive slaves in Pennsylvania in September 1851, Douglass critiqued non-resistance for encouraging the "aggression of slave-catchers." Whereas Garrison had long rejected rebellion in favor of "submission and peace," his black counterpart, by early 1851, explicitly rejected "the lamb-like submission with which men of color have allowed themselves to be dragged away from liberty, from family, and all that is dear to the hearts of man."[142] A year and a half later, Douglass asserted his right "to take the life of a kidnapper who would seize him from his family to reduce him again to slavery."[143] Violence was the only response that could counter the encroachment of the Slave Power, he concluded: "The only way to make a Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make half a dozen or more dead kidnappers."[144] Finally, in a June 1854 editorial, Douglass published a theoretical defense of violent resistance. He argued that just as one can be deprived of one's liberty if he or she abuses it, one's life could also be taken if one lived in violation of God's plan. "Life," Douglass wrote, "is but a means to an end, and must be held in reason to be not superior to the purposes for which it was designed

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[141] Douglass, "Do Not Send Back the Fugitive," in *FDP*, 2: 248; Douglass, "Resistance to Blood-houndism," in *FDP*, 2: 278.
[142] *Frederick Douglass' Newspaper*, September 25, 1851, "aggression of slave-catchers"; *Liberator*, January 8, 1831.
[143] Douglass, "Antislavery Principles and Antislavery Acts," in *FDP*, 2: 347.
[144] Douglass, "Let All Soil Be Free Soil," in *FDP*, 2: 390.

by the All-wise Creator." In an editorial written the following week, Douglass once again demonstrated his willingness to endorse antislavery violence, urging "every colored man" to have "a good revolver, a steady hand, and a determination to shoot down any man attempting to kidnap."[145]

In addition to his theoretical justifications for matching slave-catcher's violence, Douglass underscored the transformative potential of resistance. In his 1853 short story, "The Heroic Slave", Douglass described the exploits of Madison Washington, a slave who had, in fact, played a central role in a revolt aboard the slave-ship *Creole* in 1841. Washington, for Douglass, was a romantic hero with "manly form"—tall, handsome, and blessed with "Herculean strength." He seemed every bit the self-reliant individual that Douglass championed in the *North Star*. Despite repeated escape attempts and the assistance of Mr. Litswell, an antislavery sympathizer from Ohio, Washington failed to escape from slavery for good. Eventually, aboard the *Creole* as it sailed for New Orleans, he led nineteen fellow slaves in a successful uprising. Despite the violent revolt, the heroic slave rejected the label "black murderer." "We have struck for our freedom," he announced to one of the white crew, "and if a true man's heart be in you, you will honor us for the deed."[146]

By the mid-1850s, then, Douglass had departed from Garrisonian abolitionism on two major fronts. He was devoted simultaneously to an antislavery reading of the Constitution and political abolitionism, on the one hand, and to antislavery violence on the other. By this

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[145] Douglass, "Is it Right and Wise to Kill a Kidnapper?," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 2, 1854; Douglass, "The True Remedy for the Fugitive Slave Bill," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 9, 1854.
[146] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 4, 1853, "heroic slave"; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 25, 1853. Douglass's depiction of the rebellion aboard the *Creole*, in fact, spends a good deal more time tracing the measured restraint of his characters rather than the use of political violence in the story. See Richard Yarborough, "Race, Violence, and Manhood: The Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass's 'the Heroic Slave'," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 175. For the *Creole* uprising, see George Hendrick and Willeen Hendrick, *The Creole Mutiny: A Tale of Revolt Aboard a Slave Ship* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2003).

point his evolving intellectual masculinity had fully separated him from Garrison. While these might seem inconsistent, even paradoxical, commitments, they were not. First of all, both drew upon Douglass's practical bent. Traditional liberal politics seemed more viable to him than changing the hearts and minds of Americans through moral suasion.[147] And although the Constitution had once seemed a corrupt bargain with slavery that served to keep slave rebellion in check, he increasingly focused on the antislavery elements that he found latent within it. The Constitution appeared to Douglass to be a tool that might be exploited for antislavery purposes. Similarly, antislavery violence, like a black newspaper, had practical merits since both worked to combat stereotypes of black passivity and inferiority by demonstrating the capacity of African Americans to overcome obstacles, improve themselves, and demonstrate their manhood.

As the 1850s progressed intellectually masculine rhetoric and resistant masculine activities increased. In 1854 the monumental Anthony Burns case catapulted the city of Boston and the abolitionists that lived there into chaos.[148] The resulting violence encountered by both black and white abolitionists in the short term required their resistant masculinity, however, it also increased their intellectual engagement over the next decade. Other events such as the trial of Margaret Garner (1856), the caning of Charles Sumner (1856), Bleeding Kansas (1856), the Dred Scott decision (1857), the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue (1858), and John Brown's Raid (1859) all contributed to both increased rhetoric

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[147] A strong persistent critique of William Lloyd Garrison's form of moral suasion was that he was concerned more about eliminating sinful behavior among whites in society than in liberating or aiding blacks. In essence, he cared about the spiritual well being of whites, while Douglass and black abolitionists cared about the actual liberty of blacks, which presents a big divergence in motives for antislavery action.

[148] See Chapter 1 pages 32-34 for details of this event, as well as Earl M. Maltz, *Fugitive Slave on Trial: The Anthony Burns Case and Abolitionist Outrage* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010).

condoning violence (resistant masculinity), as well as an expanded efforts promoting voluntary emigration away from the United States (protective masculinity).[149]

In response to these events black abolitionists produced speeches and articles with such titles as, "The End of All Compromises with Slavery—Now and Forever" (1854), "Is It Right and Wise to Kill a Kidnapper?" (1854), "The Doom of the Black Power" (1855), "The Ballot and the Bullet" (1859), and "Capt. John Brown Not Insane" (1859).[150] The language and topics increasingly acknowledged the failure of moral suasion and the need to persuade those who could vote to use the ballot as a means to end slavery. Yet, they also understood that the time for violent confrontation was upon them. While some black abolitionists remained determined to stay in the United States and fight for both the freedom of the enslaved, an increasing number looked to voluntary emigration as the only option for equal treatment and citizenship.

For many years Henry Bibb stood out as a leading supporter of voluntary emigration. Early in his abolitionist career he wrote, "I had broken the bands of slavery, and landed myself in Canada, where I was regarded as a *man*." He went on to help form the Refuge Home Society in Canada and travelled extensively promoting the area as an option for escaped slaves.[151] Both William Wells Brown and Martin Delany also became advocates for voluntary emigration. Brown for a short time worked as a promotion agent for emigration to Haiti and Delany campaigned for voluntary emigration to Africa. "Our elevation," Delany maintained, "must be the result of self-efforts, and work of our own hands."[152] Moreover,

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[149] See Chapter 1, 35-56.
[150] See Douglass, *DLW*, 2: 282, 284, 363, 457, 458. In this instance "Black Power" refers to the Slave Power and not our modern understanding of that phrase.
[151] Bibb, Narrative in Osofsky, *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 65. Emphasis is mine. See Chapter 2 for details of Bibb's effort to promote emigration to Canada and the formation of the Refugee Home Society.
[152] Martin Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852, rprt; Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1993), 14.

while colonizationists wanted to rid themselves of African Americans for what appeared to him to be racist reasons, his primary goal was to foster black uplift. Delany, in short, outlined an alternative liberal utopian state where African American emigrants would work side by side with native Africans. In addition, he insisted that this effort would not mean the abandonment of fellow African Americans still in chains. Rather, "as the redemption of the bondman depends entirely upon the elevation of the freeman; therefore, to elevate the free colored people of America, anywhere upon this continent; forebodes the speedy redemption of the slaves." He did not make entirely clear the mechanism by which black progress would aid the enslaved, but his faith that it would do the job was obvious. "Let us apply, first, the lever to ourselves; and the force that elevates us to the position of *manhood*'s considerations and honors, will cleft the manacle of every slave in the land."[153]

In 1861 on his way to tour and lecture in Canada, William Wells Brown gave a speech in Troy, New York, on the topic of Haiti. Much of the presentation came from his previous lecture titled, "St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and its Patriots," but near the end of the speech he cautiously opened the door to Haitian emigration.[154] Initially he promised not to make "an appeal in favor of emigration," yet he did propose "to lay before you merely the advantages which that Government [Haiti] in its liberality holds out to all colored persons to become citizens, and to share with them the blessings of liberty." During the tour of Canada, Brown sent several reports to the abolitionist and editor of the *Pine and Palm*, James Redpath, detailing his findings regarding the possibility of Canadian blacks immigrating to

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[153] Ibid., 205-206.
[154] William Wells Brown, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and its Patriots; A Lecture Delivered before the Metropolitan Athenaeum, London, May 16, and at St. Thomas' Church, Philadelphia, December 20, 1854* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1855).

Haiti.[155] In one report Brown noted considerable interest in Haitian immigration due to the racial prejudice and poor treatment they received in Canada. As previously stated, even Frederick Douglass, a long time critic of any form of black emigration away from the United States, came to see it as a practical option. Scholars claim that he began to support emigration when politics proved useless in attaining black emancipation and equality.[156] To show his support, Douglass allowed full-page ads to run in his newspaper the *Douglass Monthly* to recruit black Americans to Haiti.[157] By the middle of 1861, no prominent black leaders publically promoted stay-at-home-at-any-cost beliefs.[158]

In 1861, as Douglass prepared for a trip to Haiti, he was informed that South Carolina had fired on Fort Sumter. He canceled his trip immediately. For much of the early portion of the Civil War Douglass and other black abolitionists took a wait-and-see approach rather than leave the United States at once.[159] After Lincoln's support of emancipation was clear, however, Douglass became an opponent of all emigration projects. He believed that once emancipation became a Union goal, the aim of full black equality would soon be coming. Indeed, Douglass's turn against emigration and his influence over black opinion partly explain his dampened enthusiasm for the Haitian project.[160]

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[155] Brown, *Pine and Palm*, August 31, 1861, quoted in Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 342; Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 342.
[156] *Pine and Palm*, September 14, 1861, 4; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 222; Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, 280-283; McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 183-200.
[157] See "Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of Colored People, Cleveland, Ohio, August, 24-26," (Pittsburg: A.A. Anderson Publishing, 1854); The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, "In Motion: The African American Migration Experience," The New York Public Library, http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm?migration=4&topic=5 (accessed Nov. 16, 2013).
[158] It should be noted that black desire for emigration and white desires for blacks to emigrate derive from very different motives. These black leaders did not promote the racist colonization efforts of the American Colonization Society that was based on a quiet white supremacy. My point here is that all major black leaders were open to emigration as a personal choice for blacks and this indicates a consensus.
[159] *Douglass' Monthly,* May 1861; Bell, *A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861*, 221.
[160] *Douglass' Monthly*, January 1861, May 1861. See also Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 74.

As the Civil War began many northern African American men believed that their opportunity had arrived to fight and to demonstrate their manhood. Many black intellectuals believed that Byron's call to arms, the time to bring about self-enacted emancipation, was upon them. As early as May 1861 a contributor wrote in *Douglass' Monthly*, "Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service, and formed into a liberating army, to march into the South and raise the banner of Emancipation among the slaves."[161] In April of that same year a similar letter ran under the header, "Black Regiments Proposed." Nevertheless, during 1861 and 1862 the possibility of both emancipation and African American men serving as troops remained in doubt.[162]

Scholars of late have greatly increased our understanding of the relationship between Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, as well as the struggle within Lincoln's administration regarding emancipation and the arming of black troops.[163] For black intellectuals and abolitionists the delivery of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, stood out, in the words of Frederick Douglass, as "the most memorable day in American Annals."[164] At first cognizant that the Proclamation did not go as far as everyone hoped, William Wells Brown predicted that its ultimate result would be the complete abolition of slavery and he expressed the hope that with freedom for the slaves would come

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[161] *Douglass' Monthly*, May 1861, in *DLW*, 3: 94.
[162] See "Black Regiments Proposed," in *DLW*, 3: 96-98.
[163] See Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican*, 173-208. See also Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (NewYork: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012); James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Knopf, 2014).
[164] Douglass, "January First, 1863," in *DLW*, 3: 306.

equal citizenship for all. One kind of evidence of full citizenship, he asserted, was the right of all physically qualified men to serve in state and national militias.[165]

Three weeks later Brown got his wish when Secretary of War Edwin Stanton authorized Massachusetts governor John Andrew to raise two regiments of black troops. The struggle to open the door to African American soldiers had ended with the announcement in the Proclamation that black men would "be received into the armed services of the United States." Because Massachusetts had only a small free black population, Governor Andrew called on Major George L. Sterns to head a recruitment effort that would reach into New York and other Northern states. It was at that point that Stearns reached out to Frederick Douglass and other black abolitionists for help.[166]

The time had come. Black abolitionists now had the perfect opportunity to fully demonstrate their intellectual masculinity. As they stood "with forward foot" their speech became "the salt & electricity of action" just as "battle is action."[167] As they recruited black men to join the fight, they resisted the Slave Power, they protected the Union and the black community, and they fully established themselves as engaged intellectuals.

For some black abolitionists, however, this transformation to a recruiter of black soldiers after having been supporters of emigration appeared curious. Martin Delany, for example, held such a strong commitment to leave the United States that it seemed to Frederick Douglass he would do so in 1862. Douglass wrote that Delany was "fully

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[165] Liberator, February 6, 1863; Anglo-African, February 14, 1863; see also Farrison, *William Wells Brown*, 380.
[166] Abraham Lincoln, "The Emancipation Proclamation," National Archives and Records Administration, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/ (accessed March, 10, 2014); Oakes, *The Radical and Republican*, 205-208; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 548-549; McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 222-224.
[167] Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, 9: 425.

determined to emigrate in the course of the present year."[168] The pull, however, toward the freedom and possibilities for the future that the Emancipation Proclamation established were too strong.

Not long after Lincoln issued the Proclamation, Delany and others abandoned their plans to emigrate. When Governor Andrew issued a call for black troops to fill the second Union regiment comprised of black enlisted men (the Massachusetts 54th), Delany along with Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and William Wells Brown, became recruiter.[169] Scouring Illinois and Ohio for potential enlistees, Delany quickly helped to fill the 54th and later the 55th Massachusetts Regiments. The first African American to be rewarded a state contract for recruiting (by Connecticut), he opened offices in Cleveland and Chicago to accomplish the task. He eventually helped to recruit five thousand black soldiers for the 29th Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers and signed up men for Rhode Island and Ohio companies as well.[170]

Delany's recruiting appeals to black volunteers focused on three key points. First, he insisted that African American men needed to counter the widespread notion that "the negro won't fight; he's a coward naturally." Second, he called on black Americans to come to the aid of their downtrodden brothers and sisters in chains: "The millions of your brethren still in bondage implore you to strike for their freedom." Finally, Delany made a patriotic appeal. "Your country calls you," he implored. "Instead of repelling, as hitherto, your patriotic

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[168] *Douglass' Monthly*, August 5, 1862, 695.

[169] The First South Carolina Volunteers, made up of freed slaves from South Carolina's Sea Island region, were the first black regiment to fight for the Union in the Civil War. See William Wells Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* in *William Wells Brown: A Reader*, ed. Ezra Greenspan (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 329-384; George Washington Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*, ed. John David Smith (1887 rprt.; New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

[170] Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 283-287.

offers, she now invites your services."[171] Both the struggle against the South in general and the call for assistance from African Americans in particular provided evidence enough to Delany, once again, that the U.S. seemed a place conducive to black uplift. While his recruitment poster read that America no longer repelled African American offers of assistance, it just as well could have read that it no longer seemed to repel African Americans. Delany went on to serve as an officer in the USCT. After some effort he convinced Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton that they should create "an army of blacks, commanded entirely by black officers, except such whites as may volunteer to serve." "This army," he continued, would "penetrate through the heart of the South, and make conquests, with the banner of Emancipation unfurled, proclaiming freedom as they go, sustaining and protecting it by arming the emancipated, taking them as fresh troops, and leaving a few veterans among the new freedmen when occasion requires." Later, Secretary Stanton assigned Delany the rank of major and appointed him to Charleston under Major General Saxton. "I propose to commission you at once, and send you South to commence raising troops, to be commanded by black officers," said Stanton, "on the principles you proposed, of which I most highly approve."[172] By late February 1865, Delany had signed his oath of office, declaring his faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. Soon after, Major Martin Delany left to assume his new command in South Carolina.[173]

For Douglass and Brown, serving in the USCT remained out of the question. Both were needed elsewhere. With regard to William Wells Brown, his support for the American

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[171] Recruitment Poster, reproduced in Dorothy Sterling, *The Making of an Afro-American: Martin Robison Delany, 1812-1885* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 234-235.
[172] Frank A. Rollin, *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany, Sub-Assistant Commissioner Bureau Relief of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandon Lands, and Late Major 104th U.S. Colored Troops* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1883), 168, 173-174.
[173] Ullman, *Martin R. Delany*, 299.

Civil War came slowly. With Fort Sumter recently fallen, on April 23, 1861, he spoke unsympathetically at Boston's Twelfth Baptist Church about the possibility of black soldiers' acceptance into the Union army. He feared their unequal treatment and expressed distrust of the Union leadership.[174] Like others around him, the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st 1863 changed everything. For the remainder of the conflict Brown labored energetically on behalf of the Union cause. Rather than take an active role in the fighting himself, he relied on his intellectual abilities and advocated the incorporation of blacks, both those born in freedom and those recently freed into the ranks of the Union army. He not only argued the case in journalistic pieces and lectures, but also took up the role of military recruiter. Although he had no sons to give the Union army as Frederick Douglass did, Brown worked to sign up volunteers from across the Northeast to join the Massachusetts 54th and 55th Regiments. Brown also went on to write a history of the USCT, *The Negro in the American Rebellion.* In this historical study he recorded these words from a send-off speech for the 54th as they left Boston to fight: "[To] the Fifty-fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers… I, trust all who belong to it, [have] the character, the *manly* character, the zeal, the *manly* zeal of the colored citizens of Massachusetts and of the other States which have cast their lot with ours… this noble corps, [is] composed of men selected from among their fellows for [their] fine qualities of *manhood*." Many African Americans within that assembled corps were on their way to demonstrate the manhood of their race. As they left Byron's words, through Douglass's address, reminded them that those "Who would be free themselves must strike the first blow."[175]

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[174] Brown, "Sentiments of the Colored People of Boston upon the War," *Liberator*, April 26, 1861. See also Greenspan, ed., *William Wells Brown: A Reader*, 329.
[175] Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion*, in Greenspan, ed., *William Wells Brown: A Reader*, 356. Emphases are mine. Douglass, "Men of Color, To Arms!," in *DLW*, 3: 318.

Frederick Douglass had long believed that the war would not be won as long as the Union refused "to employ the black man's arm in suppressing the rebels."[176] After Governor Andrew issued his call, Douglass jumped at the chance to assist in the effort. The March 1863 issue of *Douglass' Monthly* focused on the call for volunteers and contained the famous essay titled "Men of Color, To Arms!" In this now famous broadside Douglass shared that he initially "predicted that the war…would not be fought out entirely by white men." He held this opinion because he believed "the arm of the slave was the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder." The time had come for "Action! Action!" of brave soldiers. His role, while important, remained limited to words. Douglass continued, "Words are now useful only as they stimulate the blows. The office of speech now is only to point out when, where, and how to strike to the best advantage." Using his manly voice he told the young men of New York that it was "'Now or Never.' Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster. 'Who would be free themselves must strike the first blow.' 'Better even to die free, than live as slaves.' This is the sentiment of every brave colored man amongst us." His next words were ones full of masculine intent, ones that encompassed resistant, protective, and self-made masculine opportunities for the young black men who chose to serve their country. Douglass wrote:

> I now for the first time during this war feel at liberty to call and counsel you to arms. By every consideration which binds you to your enslaved fellow-countrymen, and the peace and welfare of your country; by every aspiration which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children; by all the ties of blood and identity which make us one with the brave black men now fighting our battles in Louisiana and in South Carolina, I urge your to fly to arms, and smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave.[177]

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[176] *Douglass' Monthly*, August 1862.

[177] Douglass, "Men of Color, To Arms!," in *DLW*, 3: 317-318. Again, the First South Carolina Volunteers, made up of freed slaves from South Carolina's Sea Island region, constituted the first black regiment to fight for the Union in the Civil War. At the time Douglass wrote this broadside freed slaves had also started fighting in a

Many of those soldiers who enlisted did so largely because of the work of engaged intellectuals like Frederick Douglass. They heard or read his words and became convinced that they too could attain a measure of manhood through physical action.

Soon after the publication and distribution of this broadside Douglass then joined Delany, Brown, and others on the lecture circuit, recruiting volunteers. He traveled across upstate New York, persuading men to enlist. Douglass proudly informed Gerrit Smith that the first man Douglass had signed up was his own son, Charles. In all Douglass sent over one hundred men from upstate New York to serve in the Massachusetts 54th. In March he traveled with one contingent arriving in Boston on the 27th with his sons Charles and Lewis, his eldest.[178]

In May 1863, after their training, the famed 54th Massachusetts Regiment marched through the streets of Boston. On the 28th, thousands of Bostonians lined the streets cheering the men as they paraded by the State House and Boston Common. At the parade ground Governor Andrew and high-ranking military officials reviewed the troops. Frederick Douglass attended the ceremonies, commending the "*manly* bearing" and "admirable marching" of the men he had worked hard to recruit. After wishing his sons farewell, he, along with Brown and Delany, returned to the task of recruiting with renewed zeal.[179]

In all, 180,000 soldiers, a substantial proportion of eligible black men joined the USCT, as well as 18,000 in the Union Navy. The engaged intellectual activities of Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and others contributed greatly to the successful enlistment

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volunteer unit in Louisiana. See Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion* in *William Wells Brown: A Reader*, 329-384 and Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion*.

[178] McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 224.

[179] *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, May 28, 1863; Oakes, *The Radical and Republican*, 205-208; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 548-549; McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 222-225; *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, May 28, 1863.

of so many black men. These men, fought with distinction at Port Hudson, Milliken's Bend, and Fort Wagner, and for the most part earned respect from both white soldiers and civilians.[180] The intellectual masculinity of Douglass and others helped those soldiers begin to perform their own resistant masculinity and to further demonstrate their manhood. In an address at National Hall in Philadelphia, Douglass pinpointed the ultimate goal of their performance of manhood. He asserted, "this is no time for hesitation….Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder…there is no power on earth…which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States. I say again, this is our chance, and woe betide us if we fail to embrace it."[181]

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[180] Barbara Brooks Tomblin, *Bluejackets and Contrabands: African Americans and the Union Navy* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2010); Oakes, *The Radical and Republican*, 206-208; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 550; McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 226-228.
[181] Douglass, "Should the Negro Enlist in the Union Army?," in *Douglass' Monthly*, August 1863.

EPILOGUE

On May 19, 2013, President Barack Obama delivered the commencement address to the graduates at Morehouse College. Founded in 1867, Morehouse College is an all-male historically black college located in Atlanta, Georgia. The topic of his speech was manhood in the twenty-first century. One hundred and ten years after W.E.B. Du Bois' call for a "talented tenth" President Obama made a similar call for a "class of highly educated, socially conscious leaders in the black community."[1] While he did not mention Henry Bibb or William Wells Brown, the President did speak of Du Bois and other black leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Benjamin Mays, the latter a former president of Morehouse College. Quoting Mays, President Obama called on graduates to not only be "clever graduates—but rather honest men, men who can be trusted in public and private life—men who are sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society and who are willing to accept responsibility for correcting (those) ills."[2] It is true that within the African American community the talented tenth "is a sensitive touch point among many African Americans" and the idea that this group "pulls up 'all that are worth saving' particularly rankles many African Americans today." A closer reading of the speech, however, shows the President proposed a new form, a New Talented Tenth lacking the "academic elitism" of the earlier concept and instead focused on "character and duty to others."[3] In this new form, the president called on the Tenth to return to their communities to be good family men, to work hard and be successful in their chosen profession, and to use

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[1] Barack Obama, "Transcript: Obama's Commencement Speech at Morehouse College," *The Wall Street Journal*, http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2013/05/20/transcript-obamas-commencement-speech-at-morehouse-college/ (accessed March 14, 2014), 8.
[2] Ibid., 3.
[3] Theodore Johnson, "President Obama and the New Talented Tenth," Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/theodore-johnson/president-obama-and-the-n_1_b_3308859.html (accessed March 14, 2014), 1.

their intellectual prowess to uplift the black community, America, and the world. In essence President Obama called on these men to perform protective masculinity, self-made masculinity, and an intellectual masculinity when he said he expected them to become a "legacy of leaders—not just in our black community, but for the entire American community [and]… .To transform the way we think about manhood."[4]

It is evident from President Obama's speech, as well as the state of various academic fields, that the issue of black masculinity and manhood remains a significant topic. One aspect of masculinity not found in the President's speech was any reference to physical or resistant masculinity. This does not mean that the masculinity of this New Tenth lacks a physical component or shirks their responsibility when called upon to serve their country's military. It does mean that at this time black men have moved well beyond the limited "bodily aesthetic" of manhood which historian Kathleen Brown argued was the only avenue for "male self-assertion" within slavery.[5] In the twenty-first century they should focus on protection of their family, success in the workplace, and the use of their intellectual abilities to uplift their community.

The historical record is clear: black men since the end of the Civil War have continually struggled to demonstrate their manhood and claim full rights of citizenship. Today's African American men, however, do not face slavery or the age of Black Codes or the era of the most egregious Jim Crow segregation or the impact of legal rulings such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), yet they continue to struggle against racism and the

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[4] Obama, "Transcript," 9.
[5] Kathleen M. Brown, "'Strength of the Lion...Arms Like Polished Iron': Embodying Black Masculinity in an Age of Slavery and Propertied Manhood," in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 189.

superstructures of society that oppress them.[6] At times they may need to perform a resistant masculinity in self-defense, a protective masculinity as they help their families, and a self-made masculinity in their efforts to establish their careers. As a highly educated black man himself and considering the venue at which he spoke, most likely the type of manhood President Obama hoped the young graduates would demonstrate would be one based on intellectual masculinity.

From the earliest days after emancipation and the end of the Civil War, African American men struggling against great obstacles and demonstrated time and again that they were men and should be treated as such. After their efforts in the military to help the Union win the war, their attention initially turned to their wives and families. Historian Eric Foner, in his masterful *Reconstruction*, demonstrated that, much like Henry Bibb, freedmen during Reconstruction first performed protective masculinity in their effort to demonstrate manhood. Foner wrote that many were "astonished by the eagerness with which former slaves in contraband camps legalized their marriage bonds." He contended, "Of all the motivations for black mobility, none was more poignant than the effort to reunite families separated during slavery." Their understand of family obligations and the effort they exerted to reunite with loved ones displaced by slavery surprised many white liberals of their time. And the fact that by 1870, "a large majority of blacks lived in two-parent family households," flies in the face of how many people today view the history of the black family.[7] Nonetheless, individuals such as Bibb, Brown, and Douglass, or many in the black community in general, understood

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[6] Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935,* ed. David Forgacs (1988 rprt; New York: New York University Press, 2000), 189-199. In Marxist theory, on which Gramsci's ideas are based, the superstructure of a society includes things such as its culture, institutions, and political power organization. These are the items that help to maintain hegemony for the dominant group.

[7] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 84, 82, 84.

the importance of protective masculinity and it served as a visible step towards their demonstration of manhood.[8]

Along with protection of their families, black men in the post Civil War era endeavored to establish careers and provide for their families as best they could. For most, however, their options were limited to agricultural pursuits, but for a few opportunities in business or other professions emerged in the late nineteenth century.[9] As previously stated, throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, the ideal of the self-made man pervaded American society. Some men in the African American community in fact achieved the goal of becoming self-made; in no way could they rest on their ancestors' laurels, yet they proved themselves in the public sphere and found success in the new and rapidly expanding economic order. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War urban centers of the Reconstruction South served as bases of success in business and society for some black men. This success may have been limited to "mostly light skinned" elites, however, over time in other enclaves in the North and West, as well as the South, black men performed a self-made masculinity by finding success in black owned businesses and further demonstrated their manhood.[10] Others, after attending colleges or universities, such as Morehouse and Howard University in Washington, D.C., like Morehouse, founded in 1867, pursued professions in law, the arts and politics. These successful men included: W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Charles Houston, Carter G. Woodson, James Baldwin, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and

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[8] For more on the development of the black family see Herbert George Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 263, 416-417.

[9] See John N. Ingham, "African American Business Leaders in the South, 1810-1945: Business Success, Community Leadership and Racial Protest," *Business and Economic History* 22, no. 1 (Fall, 1993), 262-283 and Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 435-454.

[10] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 397-398. For more on successful black business see Ingham, "African American Business Leaders in the South," 262-283, and Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 435-454.

Cornel West.[11] Many men performed a self-made masculinity of personal uplift through education and eventually fulfilled the original call for leadership for a talented tenth. Like William Wells Brown, these men through their work demonstrated a self-made masculinity that added to their performance of manhood.

From this group performing self-made masculinity there also emerged those who engaged in dramatic attacks on society in order to transform it profoundly.[12] Many have considered Du Bois as the individual that took up the mantle from Frederick Douglass as the "great African American public intellectual."[13] In an interesting twist of fate, in 1895, the year that Frederick Douglass died, Du Bois became the first person of African descent to take a Ph.D. from Harvard. Du Bois's most lasting performance of intellectual masculinity was his writing. As a poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, sociologist, historian, and journalist, he wrote twenty-one books, edited fifteen more, and published over 100 essays and articles. Additionally, in 1905 Du Bois helped found and served as general secretary of the Niagara movement, an African American protest group of scholars and professionals. In 1909 he ranked among the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and from 1910 to 1934 served it as director of publicity and research, a member of the board of directors, and editor of *The Crisis*, its monthly magazine.[14] In many ways Du Bois continued and surpassed the standard set by Douglass as an intellectual

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[11] For more on these and other black intellectual leaders, see Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Zachery R. Williams, *In Search of the Talented Tenth Howard University Public Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Race, 1926-1970* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

[12] Jean Paul Sartre, *"What is Literature?" and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 38.

[13] Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West, *The Future of the Race* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996), 115.

[14] For more on Du Bois' life, see Manning Marable, *W.E.B. DuBois: Black Radical Democrat* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1986); David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Holt, Henry & Company, Inc., 1994); David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2009).

engagée. He set the stage for many other African American intellectuals to follow through his relentless efforts to change society as he performed intellectual masculinity at the highest level. Two leading black intellectuals of the late twentieth and early twenty-first, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Cornel West, have moved their efforts of publicly engaged intellectuals from the academy into the world of popular culture.[15] They demonstrate that like Bibb, Brown, and Douglass their engaged intellectual masculinity is such that they are willing to consider various methods to challenge the racist institutions and the superstructures of society that continue to oppress their community.

In 1996, Gates and West published *The Future of the Race*, a slim volume examining the Du Bois' essay "The Talented Tenth," and the meaning of Du Bois' call for black intellectual leadership at the end of the twentieth century. Their rational for the book, they argued, was to continue part of their role as black intellectuals, which they saw as "to analyze, and reinterpret for our generation, the great writings of the black past, showing how they continue to speak to us today."[16] Both Gates and West challenge the practicality of Du Bois's thesis and the mechanism by which it could be attained. They argue his concept maintains faulty perceptions of how, when, and why intellectual prowess is to be obtained and how it should be employed. They also see the need for a new form of talented tenth, a "Guiding Hundredth," with goals very similar to those proposed by President Obama in 2013.[17] In the 1990s, much like today, it may be the best of times for the heirs of the talented

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[15] In addition to his scholarly studies as a literary critic and work as director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has worked on numerous documentary film projects including *Finding Your Roots* (PBS, 2012) and the mini-series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (PBS, 2013). Cornel West, a philosopher and activist currently at Princeton University, makes frequent appearances as a commentator on both television and radio. Additionally he has appeared in Hollywood films such as *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*, and has released several spoken word and hip hop albums.
[16] Gates and West, *The Future of the Race*, vii.
[17] Ibid., 126.

tenth, but things are much worse for the growing black underclass. According to statistics gathered by the NAACP, one in six black men had been imprisoned as of 2001. If the present trend persists, one in three black men born today can anticipate spending time in prison at some point during his life.[18] Among the biggest factors contributing to this development is lack of education, lack of economic opportunity, poverty, and persistent racism. In many ways what some see as the solutions to these problems begins with the leadership of men such as those Morehouse graduates, or like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., or W.E.B. Du Bois or Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass. These new African American leaders can look to Bibb, Brown, and Douglass as exemplars of the intellectual masculinity needed to be this generations "exceptional men" who will uplift their community. The sociologist Michael Kimmel wrote about the "Contemporary 'Crisis' of Masculinity" for the general American man in his study *Manhood in America*. It is clear that for African American men their "crisis of masculinity" is great and what is needed are intellectually masculine leaders who, in the President's words, are "Men who refuse to be afraid."[19]

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[18] NAACP, "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet (accessed March 30, 2014), 1.
[19] Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 187-282; Obama, "Transcript," 9.

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